



UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

Organized systems and the ambiguities of behavior and change

Lessons from universities and jazz orchestras

ISL WORKING PAPER

2013:5

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ISSN 1893-2347

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Introductionⁱ

Institutional change entails balancing multiple competing, inconsistent and often loosely coupled demands and concerns, often simultaneously (Olsen 2013; Wilson 1989: 327).

The ambition of this chapter is to discuss how organizations balance seemingly conflicting patterns of behaviour and change. Two common dynamics often observed in organizations are discussed below: First, organizations viewed as sets of formal structures and routines that systematically bias organizational performance and change, and secondly, organizations as loosely coupled structures that enable improvisation with respect to organizational performance and change. How organizations live with and practice such seemingly contradictory dynamics is empirically illuminated in two types of organizations that are seldom analysed in tandem – university organizations and jazz orchestras. These conflicting organizational dynamics pinpoint one classical

dilemma in university and jazz life beleaguered on the inherent trade-off between instrumental design and the logic of hierarchy on the one hand and individual artistic autonomy and professional neutrality on the other. '[T]he purpose of developing the jazz metaphor is to draw out the collaborative, spontaneous and artful aspects of organizing in contradiction to the engineered, planned and controlled models that dominate modern management thoughts' (Hatch 1999: 4). This dilemma highlights competing understandings of organizational life, of institutional change, and of what the pursuit of organizational goals ultimately entails (Trondal 2010a).

The ambition of this chapter is also to suggest some conditions under which these organizational dynamics may unfold, and with what consequences for organizational behaviour and change. First, three conditions are discussed: (i) size and organizational ambiguities, (ii) history and organizational ambiguities, and (iii) tempo and organizational ambiguities. These conditions are empirically illustrated primarily from the world of jazz. Secondly, six implications of how formal organization may affect organizational behaviour and change are discussed - primarily with illustrations from university organizations: (i) Organizational loose coupling and the role of staff demography, (ii) organizational loose coupling and the impact of scientific disciplines, (iii) administrative capacities and staff mobility, (iv) administrative capacities and university life, (v) steering and scientific excellence, and (vi) the sheer rationale of academic life.

As an introductory note, as well, organizations tend sometimes to face turbulence, fierce critique and the sudden danger of institutional breakdowns. Thus, lessons may be drawn from organizations where turbulence is common and where seemingly un-organized

processes are quite regular. University organizations and jazz orchestras represent such types of organizations. Still, this study argues and empirically substantiates that the 'normal' behaviour of both academic staff at universities and jazz musicians tend to be a balancing-act between two patterns of behaviour and change – one pattern that is fairly organized by stable routines and one pattern that is seemingly loosely coupled and largely temporarily arranged. These two worlds of change targets two classical questions of organizational life: To what extent are universities and jazz orchestras largely meritocratic communities of peers established on the basis on the principle of the autonomy of the knowers, and to what extent are such organizations chiefly instruments to achieve societal goals that are exogenous to the organization itself (Hecló 2008)?

The chapter is sequenced as follows. The next section illuminates how formal organizations may affect human behaviour and organizational change. Section A offers empirical illustrations from university organizations, while section B gives some examples from jazz orchestras.

A) Organizational structures, ambiguities and the university

organization

The analytical distinction suggested above between two patterns of organizational dynamics should be considered as a continuum. We should expect to see complex, multifaceted and ambiguous patterns of organizational behaviour and change. Still, increasing the conceptual complexity to capture maximum variation does not fully solve this problem. Our primary analytic goal is to contribute to a conceptual simplification that brings us closer to an understanding of how rules and ambiguities may be balanced.

Loose couplings and garbage cans

The garbage can model suggests that decision-making processes consist of relatively loosely coupled set of problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities (Cohen et al. 1976: 26-27). Such decision structures are generally characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. Loosely coupled organizations, such as universities, have been seen as loosely coupled meritocratic communities of fellow peers that enjoy large degrees of autonomy from state, society and markets. This conception views universities as republics of autonomous peers where behavioural freedom is a *raison d'être*. In historical context, university autonomy was essentially about the relative independence of universities vis-à-vis state governments, not independence generally vis-à-vis societal stakeholders writ large. Autonomy in this regard has been core to the definition of universities and also seen as a core ingredient of its *modus operandi*. According to this idea, organizational change is seen as the outcome of the choices made by autonomous actors in organizations. Change is *initiated and pursued* by loosely coupled organizational members. Moreover, the justifications of organizational change will be based on criteria endogenous to scholarly disciplines and university departments. In university organizations justification for change is likely to be found in scholarly arguments rather than in utility arguments of states and markets. Organizational change will be seen as promoting the quality of science for its own sake, and not merely for instrumental purposes.

For centuries the norms, resources, organizational capacities, routines and personnel of some parts of European states – such as universities - were loosely coupled to European government(s). Particularly, the field of research and higher education was loosely

coupled to the Westphalian state (Olsen 2007; Weick 1976). Since medieval times one endogenous aspect of research and higher education has been its insensitivity to national borders and national governance (Scott 1998; Teichler 2004). During these periods, students and university teachers were internationally free floaters – relatively speaking - between the best universities in Europe (Amaral 2001: 124). Universities were merely *host* institutions, and not government agencies. In the middle ages the Catholic Church, through the international Church administration, the Catholic educational system and the common Latin vocabulary, was an important facilitator of standards of research and higher education throughout Europe, not primarily states. National top civil servants were socialized into European cosmopolitans through the Catholic Church. European universities also contributed to secular learning and socialization of national civil servants and contributed to shared notions of appropriate policy standards among top civil servants throughout Europe (Knudsen 2002). University staff in Europe was subject to transnational diffusion and learning among communities of scholars. By contrast, there was a lack of organizational capacities, recourses, routines and traditions – both in governments and universities - for instrumentally research and educational activities at European universities. Subsequently, the internationalization of university staff was loosely coupled to government goals (Trondal 2010b).

The European university organization is often seen as loosely coupled – both internally and vis-à-vis governments. Internally, universities are often loosely coupled between the administrative pillar with the director (or equivalent) at top and the scientific pillar with the principal (or equivalent) at top. In such organizations the executive leadership in the administrative pillar may have trouble steering the research activities in the scientific

pillar. In addition, it is often assumed that the internal coupling of the scientific pillar is loosely coupled between the principal, the dean and the professor. Decisions made by the dean may only marginally guide the research activities of the professor. Moreover, the research activities at universities are often more loosely coupled to the formal university organization than the educational activities. For example, most of the administrative capacities at European universities are today earmarked for educational purposes. Only a small fraction of the university administration is a research support system. Consequently, the potential for hierarchical steering of the research activity at European universities is modest and the leeway for academic staff to steer their own research portfolio is correspondingly wider.

Loose coupling and demography: Loosely coupled organizations increase the explanatory potential of demographic characteristics among organizational members (Selden 1997). We may assume that the positional level among faculty members will be of outmost importance to explain their research activity, both with respect to research volume and quality. One prediction thereof would be that scholarly hierarchies inside universities primarily explain the research behaviour of staff. Professors are thus expected to be more research active than assistant professors. We may also assume that experienced scholars with doctoral degrees are generally more active in research than junior scholars without a doctoral degree. In sum and hardly surprising, experienced professors are assumed to be more active in research than young assistant professors due to their international attractiveness and research networks (Olsen and Svåsand 1971).

Loose coupling and science: Another prediction would be that disciplinary differences would accompany different patterns of research behaviour between different university faculties and departments. One example could be variation in the internationalization of research activity among academic staff. Different disciplines may have different levels of international contact. More precisely, the so-called “hard” sciences are often assumed to be generally more internationally oriented than the “soft” sciences (Kyvik and Larsen 1997). Conceptualised as a continuum, “hard” and “soft” disciplines are characterised by degrees of paradigmatic status and consensus (Becher 1989; Braxton and Hargens 1996; Smeby 2000). To understand disciplinary differences in international communication patterns the nature of research subjects and audience structure is of particular relevance (Kyvik 1991; Kyvik and Larsen 1997). Some disciplines are global in the sense that research results are not influenced by the country or region where the research is undertaken. Experimental physics is one example of such a discipline. On the other hand some research subjects are situated in a social, cultural, biotopical and geographical context that makes the research results particularly regionally oriented. Such research subjects are more often found in soft than in hard fields of science. A national and regional lay audience is also more common in the former than the latter scholarly field. It is therefore reasonable to assume that internationalization varies accordingly between hard and the soft fields as well as between individual disciplines. The internationalization of research activity among academic staff thus results from endogenous characteristics of disciplines, relatively de-coupled from actions and initiatives from the university leadership – or say, from national governments. Hence, “[p]rocesses of internationalisation are neither supported nor effectively hindered by government actions...” (Gornitzka et al. 2003: 26). This is the century-old mode of “voluntary” internationalization where such processes are loosely coupled to

hierarchical command and organizational design (Engel 2003: 244). Secondly, this conception of 'internationalization by "choice" and discipline' suggests that the internationalization of academic staff is organised through academic networks, often limited to small groups of scholars that share some basic perceptions of appropriate scholarly standards (Knudsen 2002: 38). Processes of transnational imitation through epistemic networks are less guided by government command than by learning processes among circles of peers. Network models blur the distinction between scientific centres and peripheries, and the mosaic of international contacts among university researchers may be complicated to picture. Still, a network approach assumes that international contacts cluster around fairly stable networks of actors, disciplines, paradigms and research programmes (Smeby and Trondal 2005).

Ambiguities and organizational structures

The garbage can model was initially not assumed to be free of organizational structures. Already included in the original garbage can model was the idea that formal organizations may bias degrees and types of ambiguities in decision-making processes and organizational change. Formal organizations may facilitate couplings of streams in decision cycles. 'Organizations regulate connections among problems, choice opportunities, solutions, and energy by administrative practice' (Cohen et al. 1976: 31). Organizations sometimes develop capacities to act. Such organizational capacities involve attention structures and access structures (Cohen et al. 1976; March and Olsen 1976: 40). 'The less the organizational regulation of the four streams ...the more important the timing of the four streams for a decision process and its outcome' (Cohen et al. 1976: 32). In the latter, one implication might be a relative de-coupling of problems and choices (Cohen et al. 1976: 36). Also, those who have used the garbage can model

might have overstated the lack of rules and organized practices in so-called organized anarchies. 'The truncation of theorizing about the origin and coherence of elements of decision streams has led researchers to overemphasize the random nature of decisions' (Heimer and Stinchcombe 1999: 27).

This second model derives from an organization theory approach by assuming a direct and intimate relationship between formal organization, decision-making processes, and organizational results (Egeberg 2012). Behavioural change is the product of will-full redesign of organizational forms and the product of organizational capacity-building at the centre (Skowronek 1982). This represents a reform-optimistic perspective assuming that organisational change is the direct product of wilful political-administrative leaders who have comprehensive insights into and power over administrative reform processes (Christensen and Lægreid 2002: 24). Comprehensive or first-order reforms are crafted by powerful executive institutions with relevant means-end knowledge and considerable political and administrative resources (March and Olsen 1989).

This idea departs from the assumption that formal organizational structures mobilize systematic biases in the behaviour of organizational members because formal rules and routines provide cognitive and normative shortcuts and categories that simplify and guide decision-makers' behaviour and role enactment (Schattschneider 1975; Simon 1957). Organizations offer cognitive maps that simplify and categorise complex information, offer procedures for reducing transaction costs, give regulative norms that add cues for appropriate behaviour as well as physical boundaries and temporal rhythms that guide decision-makers' perceptions of relevance with respect to public policy (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; March and Olsen 1998). University staff resembles

the 'administrative man' faced with computational limitations with respect to the potential mass of problems, solutions and consequences present (Simon 1957). Owing to the bounded rationality of decision-makers, the horizontal specialisation of organisations – such as universities - systematically reduces the attention of organisational members – such as academic staff - into a limited number of relevant considerations (Gulick 1937). Moreover, by carving the organization into vertical hierarchies of rank and command the behaviour evoked by organizational members is assumed guided by the political-administrative hierarchy through disciplination and control (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: 31). For example, the internationalization of academic staff may be expected to be the result of hierarchical imposition and horizontal departmentalization of university structures where mutually exclusive groups of participants, problems, alternatives and solutions reside (Olsen 2003).

An organizational approach basically argues that organizational change is contingent and profoundly affected by pre-existing organizational structures, and thus highly patterned. Formal organizations do not emerge as organizational solutions to functional needs, as a reaction to external events or as local translations of institutional standards and ideas. Organizational capacity does not emerge automatically as a response to functional needs but tend to be extorted from already-established institutional structures, in particular from the constituent states.

An organization theory approach as applied here ascribes an autonomous role for organizational structures in explaining organizational behaviour and change. Organizations create elements of robustness, and concepts such as 'historical inefficiency' and 'path dependence' suggest that the match between environments and

new organizational structures is not automatic and precise (Olsen 2007). New governing arrangements do not arise automatically in response to new problems. Instead, they must be extorted from and mediated by pre-established organizational frameworks that empowers and constrains organizational designers (Skowronek 1982). Organizational structures also often exist within larger organizational orders, and organizational change includes processes at the interface of different organizational orders and the often complex interactions that may occur between them (Orren and Skowronek 2004). In sum, the compound organizational terrain of university organization may serve as an important source of both resilience and opportunity in the genesis of new institutions and in the change of old ones (Pierson 2004: 47).

Applying an organizational theory approach may be useful in at least two respects. First, it may add new *knowledge* on how different organizational architectures shape change processes and the prospects for wilful design of university organization. Secondly, it may also add *practical value* for organizational change. *If* organizational variables are shown to affect decision-making processes in particular ways, these variables may subsequently be 'manipulated' and changed to achieve desired goals (Egeberg 2012). In this way, theoretically informed empirical research may serve as instrumental devices for organizational design and redesign. In public administration, administrative policy encompasses attempts at wilful design and redesign of the government infrastructure – that is, the deliberate change of organizational structures, organizational demography, and organizational locus.

Organization theory may be instrumental in our *understanding* behaviour and change in university organizations in two regards. First, organization theory might be used as an

analytical device for studying *effects* of organisational structures. Organizational variables in thus applied as *independent variables* that may explain variation in university life. Secondly, organization theory may be utilised to shed light on how organizational structures at universities emerge, change and disappear. In this regard, organization theory is applied to explain organizational continuity and change and to explain how university organizations tend to emerge, and how. Organizational structure thus serves as *dependent variable*. An organizational-theory approach may explain both how organizational structures emerge and on how such structures may ultimately shape university life. Empirically oriented studies have been primarily interested in organization as dependent variable (e.g. Pierre and Ingraham 2010). Four empirical predictions can be derived from an organizational approach:

Administrative capacities and staff mobility: The assumption that the research activity of academic staff at universities can be designed and steered has been a key assumption behind recent European university reforms advocating “strong university leadership, the formulation of clear, consistent and stable goals, and the development of long-term-strategies for managing change” (Olsen 2007: 45). During recent decades European universities have faced demands for urgent and radical institutional change (Olsen and Maasen 2007: 20; Paradeise and Thoenig 2013). In contrast to the classical *laissez-faire* model of *free movers* of internationally active research professors (see above), organized international contact and collaboration among scholars is likely to increase *if* systematic political and administrative attention that is devoted to it (Van der Wende 1997). Whereas the classical internationalization model conceived contact as a basically individually driven activity (see above), the model of organised mobility considers individual discretion as considerably patterned by organizational rules and

routines. For example, research funding from international and supranational organizations often accompanies expectations and obligations of international research visits, conferences, study visits, etc. (Gornitzka et al. 2003). The rules embedded in funding and programme schemes seem to affect the behaviour of academic staff. Funding and programmes on national and supranational levels seem to be successful in terms of stimulating research collaboration in Europe. Research collaboration is the most demanding type of contact between researchers by presupposing attractiveness, international visibility and often involving significant involvement by the researcher (Smeby and Trondal 2005). Recent research also shows that the vision of 'internationalization by design' is largely guiding government policy and university strategies in most OECD countries (Paradeise et al. 2009). For example, during the late 1990s and the early 2000 the 'Europeanization' of Norwegian research and higher education policies have moved from being largely occasional, non-routinized, and non-institutionalized processes towards becoming increasingly routinized, rule-driven, and institutionalized (Trondal 2005). Subsequently, research policy and research behaviour among academic staff sometimes coincide. One empirical prediction would thus be significant variation in international activities between different university faculties reflecting varying faculty strategies for research-internationalization.

The internationalization of university staff is increasingly pictured as forged by the university leadership. University organizations having expanded their administrative support staff, routines, and economic resources to steer the research behaviour of its faculty members (Gornitzka and Langfeldt 2008). Universities are also increasingly seen as instruments for maximising instrumental and often exogenous goals imposed by governments, university leadership, and external accreditation schemes (Marginson and

Considine 2000: 4). Internationalization of research is not merely motivated by “voluntary” decisions among individual university staff. Rather, the internationalization of universities has emerged as an independent policy area supported by a formal administrative apparatus and under pressure from global standards and international standardising organisations (Paradeise and Thoenig 2013; Teichler 2004: 2).

Whereas the first European universities had strong links to the global Catholic Church, present day universities have increasingly become government agencies in the pursuit of domestic policies for research training and the production of excellent candidates. European universities are increasingly bureaucratized, particularly by an increased proportion of top administration staff with administrative capacities for reform (Gornitzka et al. 2009; Paradeise et al. 2009). One may assume that the sheer size of organizations, measured by the number of staff, may condition the likelihood for collaboratory strategies to emerge between faculty and university leadership. Rules are often created when organizations grow and become more heterogeneous (March et al. 2000: 2). The likelihood of face-to-face encounters among incumbents is generally greater in small organizations than in large organisations. One example is the Graduate School of Administration (GSIA) of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh in the period 1955 to 1965. This Institute contained a fairly small number of staff and was characterised by “cooperative interdependence of community of scholars” (March 2008: 380). Also the history of Stanford University shows how organizational growth in size accompanies increased formalization of rules, increased decentralization, and less likelihood of face-to-face contacts between university heads and faculty (March et al. 2000). Face-to-face encounters in small research institutions may be one prerequisite for the development of both structural connectedness inside universities as well as the

development of informal networks between university leadership and faculty (March 1999: 135). Both types of networks might facilitate trust building and the every-day socialization of ideas among the university leadership and faculty members.

Steering and scientific excellence: The formalised or honorific excellence of faculty members and research groups might increase the potential for collaboration with university leadership. Academic recognition may contribute to attract collaborative partners inside as well as outside universities (March 1999: 141). Research groups that are perceived as ‘winning teams’ within the university organization might more easily gain positive attention from the university leadership and build mutual trust and networks than research groups without this aura of excellence. The GSIA case mentioned above is one eminent example. Formalized Centres of Excellence within university organizations might have stronger potential for collaboration with the university leadership than faculty members without such formalized centres of excellence (Paradeise and Thoenig 2013: 195). However, perhaps most easily and without much resistance, opportunistic behaviour might appear particularly among young aspiring universities or research groups in order to gain short-term academic recognition. ‘Wannabes allocate top attention to excellence by harnessing a type of instrumental organization whose leitmotiv, utilitarianism, aims to align their components along this conception of quality’ (Paradeise and Thoenig 2013: 204).

In sum, the conception of ‘internationalization by hierarchy and design’ suggests that the internationalization of academic staff is crafted by university rules, standards and administrative capacities. Internationalization becomes an embedded bureaucratic routine forged by the university organization. Most European universities have

developed explicit strategies to internationalize research and higher education in the 1990s (Frolich 2008; Teichler 1998; van der Wende 1997). The idea of organizational change by hierarchy and design assumes that university strategies and administrative capacities for internationalization may contribute to an internationalization of members of faculty (Paradeise et al. 2009). The university apparatus is thus not a neutral tool available to the university leadership in office, and there is not a neat separation between political and administrative levels inside universities. The internationalization of academic staff is likely to be crafted by the executive leadership inside university organizations – at different levels - through political will and administrative command, and convened within horizontally specialised faculties and departments.

Administrative capacities and university life: The research behaviour of university scholars may be expected to be affected by organizational structures even outside the university organizations. For example, the internationalization of their research activity may be affected systematically by domestic governments, international organizations, and even international non-governmental organizations (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000; Kohler-Koch 2003; Gornitzka and Langfeldt 2008; Olsen 2003). Since World War II the level of international co-operation in the field of research and higher education has increased substantially. One of the main international institutions has become the European Commission – both due to increased legal competences in the field of research and due to increased administrative capacity inside relevant Commission Directorates-General (DGs) and its ‘parallel administration’ of domestic and European Union agencies. The Commission’s administrative capacity has been directly extended by the new European Research Council, and by how the Commission DGs may steer national research councils and perhaps individual universities as well (Egeberg and Trondal

2009; Gornitzka 2011; Trondal 2010a) . Hence, the action capacity of the European Commission has become noticeable (Gornitzka and Langfeldt 2008; Maasen and Olsen 2007).

The rationale for academic life: Finally, the *justification* for organizational change is not solely endogenous to university organizations but increasingly imported. The overall *rationale for academic life* differs between the two conceptual patterns envisaged in this chapter. The Humboldt tradition has put primary emphasis on the importance of academic independence, university autonomy, and the scholarly rationales of university existence. By contrast, the dogma and doctrine for reforming public sector organizations during the last couple of decades have emphasised the instrumental value of such institutions in producing public goods (Christensen and Lægreid 2002; Frederickson 2005). According to the model of organizational change by hierarchy and design, justifications for university life and reform are likely to be external to scholarly disciplines, instrumental in focus, and short-term (Olsen 2007; Stensaker et al. 2008: 2). Economic rationales have always played an important role in research. Particularly, however, for young universities, instrumental arguments might be emphasised vigorously as a strategy safeguarding organizational legitimacy and survival by adapting to what might be perceived as international models of ‘good university governance’. Universities may thus instrumentally adapt by ‘learning across space’ as to how universities perform in other countries (Rose 1993), and organizational change may be superimposed by university leadership in an effort to instrumental growth.

B) Organizational structures, ambiguities and the jazz orchestra

This second section centres attention to an empirical laboratory less attended to in social sciences: The jazz orchestra. According to our first model, the jazz orchestra is pictured as a loosely coupled organization that merely changes due to the semi-autonomous behaviour pursued by individual musicians. According to our second theoretical approach jazz orchestras are to be conceived of as organized communities where individual behaviour is largely biased by routines and institutionalized 'ways of doing things'. During the last 30 years or so, an embryonic organizational and management literature has developed that partly uses Jazz metaphorically (e.g. Hatch 1999; Knudsen 2001) and partly as empirical laboratories for understanding organizational behaviour and change (e.g. Weick 1998). Departing from the latter approach, this section offers some empirical illustrations from the jazz orchestra: In short, jazz combines loosely coupled processes with rule-driven behaviour. The choices made by actors during rehearsals and concerts are built on striking delicate balances between structure and improvisation.

Jazz as a loosely coupled activity

Jazz is spontaneous and loosely coupled activity. One essential aspect much attended to in organization theory to jazz is improvisation. Improvisation 'deals with the unforeseen, it works without a prior stipulation, it works with the unexpected' (Weick 1998: 544). Improvisation also involves the 'on the spot' transformation of already available items – such as composed written music – or 'flexible treatment of pre-planned material' (Berliner 1994: 400, in Weick 1998: 544). Improvisation involves real-time composing (Weick 1998: 546). However, in organization theory it has been largely treated as a dysfunction, and unintended outcome of processes (Lewin 1998: 539).

'Garbage can processes were perceived as pathological and irrational. ... The temporal nature of garbage can processes with their perceived disorder and chaos could be reduced or eliminated by reforming organizations in order to make them conform better to the normative ideas of a culture giving primacy to human agency and purpose' (Cohen et al. 2012: 25). According to a garbage can approach, however, key characteristics of organizational processes come close to a general understanding of improvisation: the absence of consistent and shared goals, trial-and-error learning, shifting attention, and fluid participation (Lomi and Harrison 2012: 10). In jazz, improvisation serves partly to define the music genre as such. However, '[a] central notion of the original paper was not that the world was inexplicably chaotic but that the appearance of chaos came from the application of an erroneous model to an orderly temporal reality' (Cohen et al. 2012: 28).

Improvisation serves as one key absorptive capacity for individual musicians when interacting with fellow musicians. Since the tonal environment of jazz musicians is continuously changing, seemingly unpredictably, musical flexibility of musicians is one strategy often used to adapt as well as to innovate. The behaviour of jazz performers reflects the explorations of possibilities known to the performer (March 2008). In jazz, however, the seemingly unordered sequencing of items is orchestrated by temporal timing of notes and harmonies that are mutually adjusted among the participants in the orchestra. Improvisation in jazz implies that musicians 'compose in the moment', and make sense of their performance post hoc (retrospective sense-making) (Barrett 1998: 615; Weick 1998: 543). In this sense the execution of musicians also tend to be loosely coupled to pre-planned intentions (Weick 1998: 547). The outcome of improvisation is, however, closely linked to the temporal couplings of streams of actors, problems and

alternatives during play. The garbage can model emphasized 'a temporal understanding of events, in contrast with an intentional or consequential one. The framing of decisions may be to a considerable extent determined by temporally unfolding processes of participation and attention' (Cohen et al. 2012: 26). The loosely coupled character of improvisations is also something cherished by jazz musicians. In order for them to keep being creative and not trapped by taken-for-granted routines, some session musicians such as Miles Davis, deliberately search for unplanned and non-rehearsed jazz concerts and recordings (Barrett 1998: 609f).

Jazz as organized activity

The spontaneity in improvisation in jazz, however, may be overstated. Improvisation may be profoundly biased by history and practice, as well as by the sheer instrument at hand. The degree of discretion available to performers may be sometimes moderate and patterned. Improvisations may be shaped by the available items at any time and the history of inter-action among musicians. The history of interaction among sets of actors may shape likely future patterns of improvisations among these. Thus, what may look like pure spontaneity for the audience, may in fact be improvisations with a strong path-dependency and resilience from history. We can therefore talk about degrees of improvisation in the sense that all spontaneous composition on the spot is not fully unpredictable or profoundly novel. Improvisation builds on pre-existing tunes. Thus, 'improvisation involves the embellishment of something' pre-existing (Weick 1998: 546). Improvisation is 'not just a matter of pulling notes out of thin air' (Barrett and Peplowski 1998: 558).

'Jazz is a rule-bound activity' (Barrett and Peplowski 1998: 559). Improvisations are organizationally embedded. First, the rules and rhythms of jazz 'lock in' the engaged musicians in a joint mutual encounter (Barrett 1998: 614). They are guided by pre-arranged coordination arrangements. In jazz these are often songs. 'Songs act as minimal structures that allow maximum flexibility' (Barrett and Peplowski 1998: 559). 'Songs impose order and create a continuous sense of cohesion and coordination' (Barrett 1998: 612). These arrangements constrain what musicians can do, but they also enable discretionary behavior within these arrangements, in concert with other musicians. Just as in chess, there are some rules that define songs, such as bars, phrases, and sections. Without some degree of pre-structuring of these items it might be difficult to subsume activities and sounds under the rubric of jazz or even music.

Size and ambiguities. Contingency theory suggests that as organizations grow, so do the degree of formalization (Pfeffer 1982: 149). Increased organizational size is assumed to increase the opportunity for organizational specialization, for example the development of organizational sub-units. Both developments might imply the growth of organizational capacities at different levels of organizations. The supply of organizational capacities has certain implications for how organizations and humans may act. An organizational approach assumes that organizational capacity-building supply government institutions with leverage to act independently and to integrate external institutions into its orbit. Thus, organizations with large capacities would be able to patterns random items in decision-streams more easily than organizations with less organizational capacities. Secondly, organizations may have powerful leaders but the role of these tends to increase with increased organizational size. Similar observations are made in jazz orchestras. Small bands increase the potential for non-planned encounters and the

ambiguity of conduct. In small bands the lack of organization, plans and procedures are compensated by the real-time activation of call-and-response between the artists. Large bands, by contrast, tend to upgrade the influence of the band leader in order to pursue coordinated activity among a larger group of actors and instruments. The development from small jazz bands in New Orleans to the growth of larger jazz bands in Chicago in the 1920s also accompanied a parallel increased role for the band leader. Succeeding world-war I, musicians went by riverboats upstream Mississippi, and the jazz style changed from old-style 'sweet' New Orleans jazz to what became known as Chicago style Dixieland. This was paralleled with growth in band-size, changes of instruments, and essentially, increased orchestrating and arrangements used for the bands. In effect, the loosely coupled New Orleans jazz-band was succeeded by the fairly organized, conductor-led, Chicago jazz-bands (Knudsen 2002).

History and ambiguities: With institutionalization comes patterning of previously random connections of items. Improvisation may be patterned by previous efforts and inter-subjective rules of conduct. A vast literature has revealed that the impact of pre-socialization on actors' roles and identities is modified by organizational re-socialisation (e.g. Checkel 2005; Meier and Nigro 1976). Actors entering organizations for the first time are subject to an organizational 'exposure effect' (Johnston 2005: 1039) that may contribute to re-socialization. Socialization is a dynamic process whereby individuals are induced into the norms and rules of a given community (Pratt 2001). Re-socialization processes are often uni-directional in the sense that the socializator educates, indoctrinates, teaches or diffuses his/her norms and ideas to the socializee. The role perceptions evoked by actors may change due to *enduring* exposure to institutions, accompanying new perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour

(Herrmann et al. 2004). According to social identity theory the self-perceptions developed by actors are motivated by a cognitive need to 'reduce subjective uncertainty...' (Hogg and Terry 2001: 6). This claim rests on socialization theory that emphasises a positive relationship between the intensity of participation within a collective group and the extent to which members of this group develop perceptions of group belongingness and an *esprit de corps*. Protracted and intensive actor-interaction is conducive to internalization of collective norms, rules and interests of the community (Checkel 2005). Similarly, well established jazz bands where members are mutually socialized are likely to experience patterned behaviour and less 'free' improvisations and embellishments, whereas newly established jazz bands or bands with ever changing membership are likely to be less subject to socialization of conduct and thus better equipped to improvise.

Tempo and ambiguities: Organizational behavior and change has also a temporal dimension to it, which has been attended to in the garbage can approach. One essential temporal variable is tempo, or speed, of conduct. Generally, with increased speed comes a tendency to repetition. Organizations may thus become tempted to repeat past successes, or what is perceived past successes. By repeating this way, organizations and musicians may be victims of trained incapacity to improvise. The robustness and absorptive capacities of organizations are often taken for granted during periods of stability. During turbulent times organizations tend to be subject to test, contestation and requests for major reform. Crises are marked by the lack of 'order, rationality, control and predictability' (Cohen et al. 2012: 7). Actors face choices that need to be made under high degree of uncertainty (Tamuz and Lewis 2008: 158) and often under high degree of speed. Crisis also serves as a laboratory for testing the extent to which

existing organizations remain institutionalized and sustainable. A crisis may serve as test-bed for conditions under which behavioural patterns are indeed 'normalized' and change-resistant. If jazz musicians play a very fast tune, repetition of patterns is sometimes necessary just 'to keep the performance going' (Weick 1998: 553). Slow moving jazz, by contrast, would enable musicians' larger leeway for embellishment of items – both as regards their choice of notes, harmonies and rhythmic patterns. Thus, up-speed decision-making may affect the likelihood of exploration or improvisation.

Conclusion: implications for theory

The embryonic literature on organization theory and jazz has used jazz mainly as metaphor for organizational phenomena. This chapter has primarily used the jazz orchestra as empirical laboratory for learning about organizational behaviour and change. Parallel observations are drawn from university organizations. One key lesson learned from these laboratories is that the degree of ambiguity in organizations is contingent and that the uncertainty and spontaneity observed in organizational behaviour and change may be more patterned than initially thought of. In this sense, organization theory may be a useful extension of the garbage can model, suggesting that streams in decision-making processes may be systematically pre-packed and patterned by access and attention structures (Cohen et al. 1976). A second lesson learned is that we need to do away with over-simplistic dichotomies when facing complex realities. Both the distinction between loose and tight coupled organizations and processes, as between improvisation and pre-planned activity, face the danger of shoehorning complex data into simple categories. 'Improvisation is the mixture of pre-composed and

the spontaneous' (Weick 1998: 551). Both universities and jazz orchestras exhibit patterns of loose and tight coupling and should be considered compound institutional ensembles that consist of apparently incompatible dynamics of behavior and change.

The natural research challenge is two-folded: First, to allow reality to be subsumed under several theoretical categories, and secondly to account for conditions under which different parts of reality observed fit each category. This chapter has suggested that organizational behaviour and change in seemingly loosely coupled organizations – such as university organizations and jazz orchestras – may be also sometimes categorized as driven by rules and routines. This chapter has also suggested some conditions under which these two organizational dynamics may unfold, and with what consequences for organizational behaviour and change. First, three conditions have been discussed: (i) size and organizational ambiguities, (ii) history and organizational ambiguities, and (iii) tempo and organizational ambiguities. These conditions have been primarily illustrated with examples from the jazz orchestras. Secondly, six implications of how formal organization may affect organizational behaviour and change have been discussed - primarily with illustrations from university organizations: (i) Organizational loose coupling and the role of staff demography, (ii) organizational loose coupling and the impact of various scientific disciplines, (iii) administrative capacities and staff mobility, (iv) administrative capacities and internationalisation of conduct, (v) steering and scientific excellence, and (vi) the sheer rationale of academic life. In sum, the embellishment and improvisation in organizational life - both in universities organizations and jazz orchestras - is indeed more patterned by such factors than sometimes assumed.

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Notes

ⁱ This chapter serves as part of the 'COMPOL' project ('The Rise of Common Political Order', basic research grant from the University of Agder).