

Name of Symposium: Design and self-organization in the emergence of effective organizations.

Chair: Raul Espejo

The purpose of this symposium is reflecting, among other aspects, upon policy-making, values, technologies, relationships, communications and interactions in the emergence of effective organizations.

Format: submission of theoretical and empirical papers, short presentations and debate focused on design and self-organization. This Symposium wants to achieve a good balance between theoretical and empirical approaches to these issues.

Explanation: Most organizations, whether commercial enterprises, third sector associations, public sector institutions, cities, multi-institutional set-ups and, in general, all kinds of organizational forms are the outcome, to different degrees, of design and self-organization. The focus of this symposium is clarifying the meaning of 'different degrees'. We can say that some organizations, such as government institutions, are likely to need a good deal of design, while community organizations, such as cities and NGOs, are likely to be dominated by self-organizing processes. However, beyond natural characteristics, both types of organization structures have advantages and disadvantages. The development of free for all, Wild West type of cities is likely to be painful and costly, at the same time, imposing formal, rigid, structures to their development is likely to make them unattractive and unresponsive; to a large degree they are the outcome of local problem-solving dependent on location, resources, politics and so forth. No doubt too strong planning and control are likely to make them unresponsive. But their unregulated development is likely to support corruption. In either case, the emergence of effective organizations requires designing top-down structural and processual innovation and enabling bottom-up high complexity self-organization processes. In between the extremes of cities and public institutions we may think that market oriented enterprises offer a good balance between design and self-organization. For instance, the current restructuring of institutions such as the National Health Service in England appears to be driven by the belief that stronger markets are likely to increase its performance. There is also the belief that the old designs, built on centralized structures, are the culprit of its current under-performance. The question is to what degree policy-makers recognize that free health services for all imply both organizational design and flexible markets. Increasing our understanding of how to deal with these two aspects is the purpose of this symposium. Theoretical and empirical contributions are welcome.