

# **Organizations as Organisms - Chapter 3**

Images of Organization by Gareth Morgan

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# Organizations as Organisms

- **organizations are living systems, depending on their wider environment to meet their needs.**
- This metaphor moved away from the 1st metaphor from a mechanistic view to a more biological view.
- Just as the body needs its organs to function, an organization needs its workers (organisms) to function in a cohesive manner.

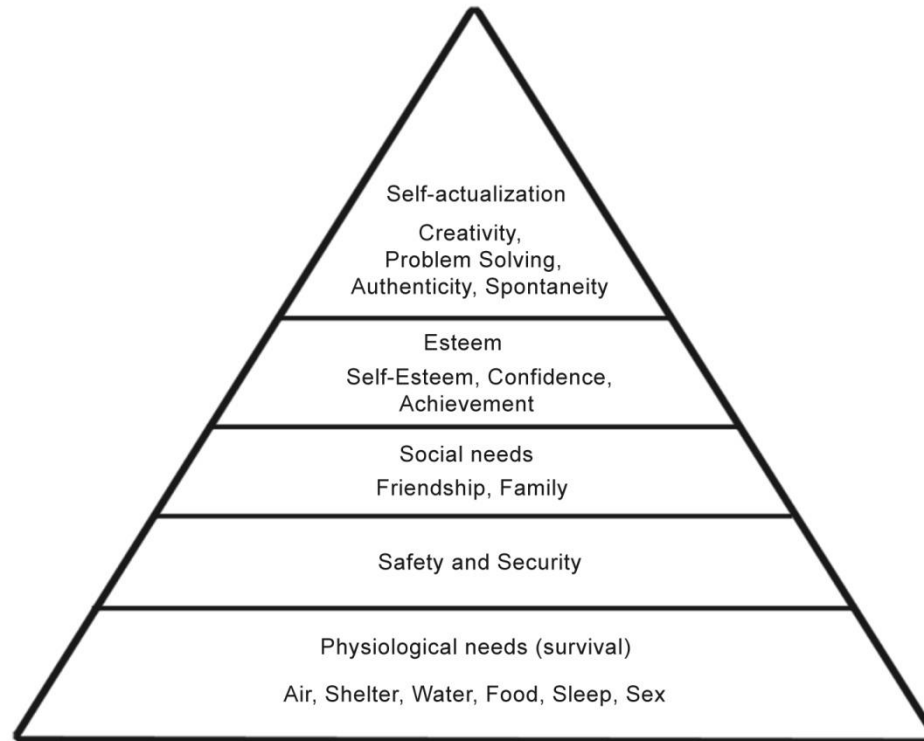
# Organizations as Organisms

- The Hawthorne studies (conducted at the Hawthorne Plant of Western Electric Co. in Chicago) conducted in 1920's and 1930's investigated the relation between the conditions of work and the incidence of fatigue and boredom of employees.
- Researches understood the workers' social needs and motivation. The idea is that the organization can grow, change, and survive like an organism with the impact of internal and external forces.

# Organizations as Organisms

- **Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of Needs**
- **(Physiological, security, social, ego, and self-actualizing) is compared to a workers needs in an organization in Human Resource Management**
- **Physiological Need – safe working environment & salary, Security Need – Job tenure, Social Need – interactions of colleagues, Ego Need – recognition for good performance, and Self-actualizing Need – contribution to society to make an impact).**

# Organizations as Organisms



# Organizations as Organisms

- Organizations are “Open Systems” and must adapt to grow and survive.
- If they do not adapt they will weaken and may die.
- The importance of completing tasks in groups rather than alone and organization’s environment is emphasized.
- Organizations are made up of interrelated sub-systems, like organisms are made of interrelated parts and organs.

# Organizations as Organisms

Gareth Morgan mentions Mintzberg's five configurations of organization as expressing "Variety of Species". An effective organization depends on a cohesive set of relations between structural design, the organization's age, size, technology, and the conditions of its industry.

- i & ii **The Machine Bureaucracy** and **The Divisionalized Form** - effective only when tasks and environment are simple and stable.
- iii. **The Professional Bureaucracy** – effective when autonomy to staff is allowed.
- iv. **The Simple Structure** – effective in unstable environments with an entrepreneur or group of operators who do the basic work.
- v. **The Adhocracy** – effective in unstable environmental conditions. i.e. Project types of work where people come together to achieve a goal and disappear – research project, network, computer programming

# Organizations as Organisms

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuF5edzSiZs  
&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuF5edzSiZs&feature=youtu.be)



# Organizations as Organisms

## Strengths:

- Emphasis placed on organization's relationship with its environment (internal and external)
- Survival of the organization can be improved through the "needs" of its employees.
- By identifying a "variety of species", there is a range of options
- Innovation with the need internal balance as well as in relation to its exterior environment.

# Organizations as Organisms

## Weaknesses:

- Most organizations are not as functionally organized as organisms.
- Can lead us to see other relevant views as wrong.
- Danger of metaphor becoming an ideology, as happened with machine theory. i.e. only the fittest will survive.

# Organizations as Organisms

Post Activity – Assessment

Any questions?

Thank you!

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## References

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of Organization. Sage Publications: Beverly Hills, CA.

Images : [www.dragoart.com](http://www.dragoart.com)

Video: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)