

# Orgunity as a New Form of Cooperation: Case Studies of Two Environmental NGOs

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## INTRODUCTION

When analysing processes within an organisation – be it commercial or non-profit, private or public – we try to understand and visualise the relationships between people in a structured way. Organigraphs, i.e. graphic representations of organisational structures, which commonly look like pyramids depicting the person in charge on the top and the less responsible work fellows beneath, are of great help in portraying relationships in companies, associations, NGOs and other forms of organisation (see Mintzberg 1979; cf. Mintzberg and Van der Heyden 1999, where alternative versions of organigraphs are presented). However, relationships within organisations are, in fact, anything but clear-cut.

The multifariousness and ambiguity of organisations were suggested already in the “Hawthorne study” conducted in Chicago

between 1927 and 1933 (see Schwartzman 1993). This study included experts from different fields – sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists – coordinated by Australian-born psychologist and sociologist Elton Mayo. The researchers looked into the working processes of a branch of the Western Electric Company. Among other things, they found that besides the formal organisation where interactions were straightforward, well defined and regulated, a more hidden and informal organisation that is established by the employees themselves and ignores the company's management exists simultaneously. What they also noticed was that the transparent and systematised organigrams, which were supposed to represent the relations within the organisation, were ideal type images (cf. Schütz 1976) rather than accurate representations of social reality in organisational settings. The organisational reality was thus found to be complex and looked more like a fuzzy network of interwoven relationships than a sharp and clearly defined “pyramid” (cf. Molina 2006). What makes the situation even more entangled is that this informal structure is normally amoeboid, dynamic and often inseparably interlaced with the organisation's wider context.

This paper aims to connect theory with practice in presenting two complex and dynamic organisational structures. First, we present the *Bird watching and Bird Study Association of Slovenia* (DOPPS), a Slovenian nature conservation and bird watching non-governmental organisation (NGO). The ethnographic study of DOPPS, carried out in 2006 and 2007, concentrated on both formal and informal structures within the organisation and illuminated its rather unusual structure, which can hardly be depicted with a simple two-dimensional organigram. The same appears to be true in the case of another Slovenian NGO, *Ecologists Without Borders* (EWB), to which we devoted less time (October–December 2015), yet because of its size and effectiveness nonetheless considered it to be a welcome case that complemented and occasionally contrasted the birdwatchers.

Both organisations are as follows composited out of two different models. On the one hand, we noticed they are to some extent hierarchical organisations with a clearly defined pyramidal structure, but, on the other hand, they are also horizontal organisations where the relationships are fuzzier and defined constantly anew. As the paper shows, such a hybrid organisational structure can be understood and depicted as a sum of organisation and community, which Martin Parker (1998) refers to as “orgunity”. The latter might represent a relevant and fresh model enabling us to understand as well as establish organisations adapted to the dynamics of the

modern world. Our contribution here is not so much theoretical, as it is an attempt to ethnographically discuss Parker's concept and its potential applicability.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we seek to firstly illuminate and afterwards intertwine three different terms proliferating in public discourse: *organisation*, *community* and *network*. It is through these that we attempt to explain how a hybrid organisational structure that is simultaneously fuzzy and clearly defined, flexible and dynamic appears. We draw from anthropological and sociological definitions and complement them with findings from organisational theory. The term *organisation*, the core of this paper, according to the *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, signifies "a group of people who work together in an organised way for a shared purpose." In other words, it can mean a deliberate arrangement of components that form a system, which can be identified as a unit. Moreover, an organisation is also a sequential or a spatial entity within which knowledge, information, people or other elements are intentionally arranged, so it can be a group of people who systematically pursue the same goal. Organisation scientists similarly claim that the term organisation stands for a group of people with a common goal, mission or a programme (Ford, Armandi and Heaton 1988; Katz and Kahn 1983; Robbins 1996).

After examining our fieldwork data that shed light on the common goals and missions of the two aforementioned Slovenian NGOs, the above brought up definition of organisations turned out not to be entirely valid. We realised that "shared purpose" is more or less an ideal goal that is hardly ever achieved, so we started to lean in the direction of Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges' (1992) definition, which understands organisations as networks of collective activities that help us shape and understand the world we live in. She explains that such networks generally do not have any clear boundaries and in the case when they do, the boundaries are constantly re-established as places of conjunctions between the organisation and its surroundings, i.e. other people, institutions, the broader environment and so on. Tomoko Hamada (1994) similarly explains that the life of organisations characterises fluidity and not linearity, because people's actions and decisions are constantly hitting the walls of the ever-changing labyrinths of meanings, statuses, situations

and obstacles. According to Hamada, it is not important only what occurs within the organisations, but rather how these ongoing activities are interpreted. Due to different cognitive schemes, the happenings can be interpreted in various ways, which leads to contradictions and conflicts that are not necessarily destructive, but can help to co-create a complex organisational reality. Martin Parker (2000), an organisational anthropologist adhering to the postmodern paradigm (Podjed 2010a) distances himself from the emphasis on unity and consensus, which are supposedly typical of organisations. He suggests that an organisation and its culture represent and perform constantly contested processes that establish and confirm the differences in and among the organisation's internal groups. Although such differences may at first glance seem destructive, they are at the same time sources of creativity that permit organisational renewal and growth (Gorup and Podjed 2017). In other words, what we encounter when studying organisations is a disorder visible as clashes among the subcultures, fractions, and divisions and other.

Another relevant term we ought to refer to is *community*. Anthony P. Cohen (1985) stresses that this is one of those terms that we manipulate and comprehend on a daily basis, yet is at the same time quite troublesome, at least when it comes to academic discourse. Additional problems are caused by the definitions of community established by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1957 [1887]). He understood it as a counterpoint to "society" (*Gesellschaft*), which according to him signified a cooperating group of people focusing on common goals. On the other hand, *community* (*Gemeinschaft*) is, following Tönnies, an entity joining people who are convinced they belong together. A similar distinction has been nurtured by other crucial thinkers, among them Émile Durkheim (1997 [1893]), who distinguished between mechanical and organic solidarity, and Max Weber (1978 [1921]), who treated *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as types of social relations. What we aim to do in the present text is to overcome and soften such dichotomies and portray the shades between the two extremes.

The third fundamental term we aim to unravel is *network*. Many sociologists and anthropologists have debated about the reasonableness of its usage when talking about social groups (see, for example, Boissevain and Mitchell 1973; Granovetter 1973; Mitchell 1969, 1974; Wolfe 1978), among them also Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1940), who already in the first half of the 20th century accentuated human connectedness in a complex network of social relations. For us, a network is recognised as a dynamic and open social

structure (Castells 2003: 470–471), which to an extent matches the meaning of community, mainly because both terms contrast the supposedly well-defined organisations. We instead accept that community and network are not the same, as a community is bounded – even though only in our mind’s eye (cf. Anderson 1983) – and connects people with similar points of departure and curiosities, while a network is open and flexible, has unclear boundaries and does not form around common objectives (cf. Green, Harvey and Knox 2005). Nevertheless, we believe that both types of cooperations are founded on the same basic assumptions, essentially on equality and horizontal relations.

The obvious question is then what happens when these forms of cooperation intermesh. Orgunity, according to Parker (1998), is structured, organised and at the same time established on rudimentary allegiances and solidarity among its members. In orgunities, no fine line between work and leisure exists; there is similarly no spatial or temporal boundary between the private and public. The latter, hence, exists wherever and whenever the members think it does. In orgunities hierarchic relationships are reduced and members rewarded equally, in addition, they are contributing the same share in the process of collective production. It is also typical for orgunity to recruit like-minded individuals, which prevents the members from quarrelling about common interests and unclear delimitations of “Us” versus “Them”.

Parker puts forth three possibilities for the realisation – or failure – of his conceptual experiment. Firstly, orgunity might only be a utopic idea lacking a rational foundation and for that reason never really present in the actual world. Secondly, it might be that these ideas are just a continuation of communism or socialism, which in practice often let people down.<sup>1</sup> But thirdly, orgunity may actually represent a new aspiring organisational model connecting people and structuring social relations. What the present paper argues for is the latter. In other words, we are looking to identify the characteristics of orgunities by examining the cases of DOPPS and EWB. In doing so, we attempt to critically examine advantages and disadvantages of Parker’s and others’ previously mentioned concepts by applying them to the two chosen empirical cases. We, therefore, start with the following question: what does our ethnographic material have to add to Parker’s theoretical framework on orgunity?

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**1** The organisation of work processes in the self-management socialist doctrine of the former socialist Yugoslavia might resemble the idea of orgunity even more than Communism, but was in practice also full of drawbacks (see Podjed 2006).

In December 1979, the constitutional assembly of DOPPS, attended by 76 people, was held in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, which was at that time a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The establishing of the association was primarily aimed at the integration of hitherto scattered individuals who were engaged in the observation and monitoring of birds. One of the key initiators of the association was a charismatic poet and essayist Iztok Geister, who already before the inauguration of DOPPS tried to integrate Slovenian volunteers and professional ornithologists possessing sufficient knowledge and skills to collect data on birds, and who could prepare the first Slovenian ornithological atlas (Podjed 2010b).

Shortly after the founding, DOPPS attempted to spread its activities beyond the Slovenian borders by establishing an ornithological union, integrating bird-watchers from all corners of the former Yugoslav state. Three years later, in 1983, they organised the first conference of Yugoslav ornithologists, which was then held every year until 1988. In 1987, the Yugoslav Association of Ornithological Societies (YAOS) was officially formed, which a year later became a member of the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), later renamed BirdLife International.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously by linking with the rest of the world, an internal fragmentation of DOPPS began. The division was partially due to the rapid growth of the organisation – in only four years, its membership tripled. To improve decision-making and encourage local initiatives, DOPPS' Executive Board (EB) strove towards regionalisation and passed resolutions every year from 1984 to 1987 trying to begin preparations for the establishment of ornithological societies throughout Slovenia, which were to be joined under the umbrella association (DOPPS EB 1984: 69; 1986: 24; 1987: 28). Regionalisation was later carried out in accordance with the original plans of the DOPPS EB; regional branches of the original association began to spring up. In 1989 the Styrian branch opened, in 1995 the Notranjska branch, in 1997 the Ljubljana branch, in 2006 the Northern Primorska Branch, in 2009 the Pomurje Branch, and in 2014 the Dolenjska Branch. In addition to the six regional sections, DOPPS initiated also a Youth Section in 2006, which aims to connect younger members.

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<sup>2</sup> This international organisation has almost 3 million members, 11 million support members and more than 7,000 employees (BirdLife 2016).

In 1991, when socialist Yugoslavia dissolved, the ties between the associations of the former Yugoslav republics were broken or at least significantly weakened. In this landmark year, DOPPS broke relations with YAOS and began to look for new alliances abroad and for recognition at an international level. They sought assistance from organisations that were members of the ICBP, for example the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). In 1993, DOPPS obtained Representative Partner status in BirdLife International and three years later also an Affiliate Trainee Partner status. In 1998, they made a symbolic link with that international association, when the name of the Slovene association was formally changed to DOPPS – BirdLife Slovenia. Finally, in 2001 DOPPS acquired the status of BirdLife’s Full Partner.

In the 1990s, DOPPS visibly saw a significant change in its ideology, most evidently in the transition from bird watching to nature conservation (Podjed 2013), but also in the professionalisation of several activities with the support of sponsors – mainly the Slovenian telecommunications company Mobitel (Kimovec and Golob 2009). After 2000, the number of members stagnated or even slightly declined, but the professional part, i.e. the DOPPS Office, which employed over 20 people in 2016, simultaneously quickly grew. In addition to Mobitel’s sponsorship, the growth of the professional team was enabled by obtaining funds from EU projects, including the LIFE Nature programme. Two grants from this EU programme enabled DOPPS to carry out renaturation of the Škocjan Inlet in Koper and the protection of the corncrake in Slovenia.

At the time of writing these lines, several activities of DOPPS are still connected not only to nature conservation, but also to the original ideas and plans from the 1970s, i.e. to carry out observations and studies of birds. In addition to these, many other activities are carried out by DOPPS; from trainings to lectures, which are too numerous to be registered in this short overview. All in all, the named activities shape the culture and the structure of this NGO, wherein volunteering is intertwined with professionalism (for details see Podjed and Muršič 2008).

#### VOLUNTEERS MAKING SLOVENIA CLEANER

Almost ten years have passed since two environmentally aware geographers graduated and decided to spend eight months in an Indian village where they “experienced sustainability in practice”. Now mar-



ried, Petra and Janez Matos claim this international experience transformed them and subsequently inspired them to establish their own association upon returning to Slovenia. The initial ideas of the newly established Ecologists Without Borders (EWB) were to promote sustainable villages abroad and enable environmental enthusiasts to visit them, but this in the end never happened.

In 2008, in another part of Europe, in Estonia, the grassroots project “Let’s Do It!” took shape. Its initial purpose was a (mere) country-wide clean-up, which soon turned out to be the largest campaign activating Estonian civic society since the Singing Revolution in 1988 and managed spread to most countries around the globe. When a Slovenian Nara Petrovič heard about this successful civic movement, he felt strongly motivated to bring this project to Slovenia and started to quite randomly contact people. His email invitation started circulating and eventually attracted several individuals, who did not know each other, but were willing to carry out such a project – the already mentioned Petra and Janez were among them. Their first meetings in 2009 were, according to the interviewed members, rather chaotic, as the heterogeneous prime movers only joined over one collective idea, i.e. to organise a major cleaning campaign in Slovenia, but did not have much else in common.

However, in order for this very successful clean-up to happen in 2010 and involve as much as 12 percent (when it was repeated in 2012 even 14 percent) of the 2 million Slovenian population, the originally flexible and unstructured group of organisers needed to formalise. As they explained, not even waste sacks could be acquired without forming an official organisation. Petra and Janez’s “dormant” association, EWB, represented a convenient solution, so the group adopted it. Nevertheless, that was only one of the steps EWB needed to take to effectively carry out such a gargantuan task and the projects that followed. The campaign was an amazing success, to that the media contributed majorly. But ignorant of the collective achievements, the media reports consistently emphasised only the hard work of Petra Matos, who was officially the head of EWB, and not the group as a whole, which would have been fairer, as Petra herself and other collocutors said.

The project “Let’s Clean Up Slovenia in a Day” exhausted the group, a fact which all of our collocutors strongly emphasised. Indeed, it even caused one of the organisers to end up in hospital, while another laughingly added it was then that his hair started to turn grey. Although such fatigue caused many volunteers to distance themselves from the movement, others grabbed the chance to do something they believed in and get funded for it as well. They started thinking about



possible future projects and applied for various governmental and other financial backings. In the months following the 2010 event, carrying out smaller projects kept the remaining members busy, yet in 2012 they managed to gather their strength anew and repeated the cleaning action. This time as a part of the World Cleanup<sup>3</sup> campaign and even more Slovenian volunteers participated, more precisely an additional two percent of the population or altogether approximately 280,000 volunteers. An immense amount of skills and hard work was the backbone of this achievement, which has afterwards never been surpassed, mainly because EWB's new motto is "Let's Clean Up Slovenia Forever", which goes hand-in-hand with their mission to improve "the state of our environment, focusing on efficient resource use and active citizenship."<sup>4</sup> The NGO has only been regularly active since 2009 and now works on waste prevention rather than on actual cleaning. The latter would at this point – because of the size of the remaining waste and its difficult location – have to be in fact carried out by cleaning professionals and not merely by volunteers anymore.

After the first clean-up campaign, some of the former volunteers managed to become fully employed through the funding the NGO started receiving to carry out various projects; however, it was still not really about the money, as Janez Matos put it, "there is no money that would make me work as hard as I am willing to work for free" (Tasi 2011). Most of those that currently work in the NGO as professionals are former volunteers with specialized skills, but they work as equals. Jaka, one of the employed members, told us that their NGO could be compared to a meritocracy, but that they still needed to professionalise to get the wanted financial support for their projects and office in Ljubljana. The current activities of EWB are carried out by five employees and plenty of volunteers (in 2015 totalling 48), who are not necessarily official members. This NGO's primary target is not for new members to enrol, but for volunteers to gather, help and make a difference. Unlike DOPPS, they do not strive to expand in the form of regional branches, but keep operating from Ljubljana, even though they most often act on a national level.

This NGO is no longer so media-present and now centred on waste management. It remains influential, but in a subtler and a more

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3 On this occasion millions of volunteers in 96 countries around the world were brought together. The next one is supposed to happen in 2018 and join as many as 380 million volunteers. In 2012, among all the participant countries, Slovenia had the highest percentage of the population participating (<http://test.letsdoitworld.org/statistics>, 9.6.2016).

4 <http://ebm.si/en/>, 9.6.2016

professionalised way. For example, the Zero Waste strategy they actively promote was at least partially a reason that made Ljubljana the first zero waste capital of Europe. Unfortunately, they have lately been facing a fairly severe financial crisis that forces them to try and earn money by selling environmentally friendly products in their online shop and seek out other ways of earning income. Carrying out various environmental projects continues to bring bread to this NGO's table, but it is not always sufficient, which creates difficulties, at least for the employed members.

#### TRANSFORMATION: FROM FAMILY TO ORGUNITY

As we have seen, DOPPS needed more than 20 years for its transformation from a voluntary association to an organisation that is no longer dealing only with the observation of birds, but also – or even primarily – with the protection of nature. During this time, the relationships within the organisation kept changing. In the initial period, i.e. in the years following its establishment in 1979, DOPPS can be understood as an unstructured community, one whose members were more or less equal, while hierarchical relationships were flexible and vague. Both organisations were in their early stage somewhat akin to Victor Turner's "*communitas*" (1969), a rudimentary structured and undifferentiated model in which social topography disappears. Such an amorphous state was well summarised by one of DOPPS' founding members, who said that once "there were fewer commands; everything was more consensual: how to get more members, how to enrich the magazine..." Such decision-making was present in the initial period of both organisations, but not absolute, as those at the helm were still the founding members of DOPPS, but this is actually not at odds with Turner's definition of *communitas* as a community of equals who submit to a universal authority of the ritual elders. The "spirit" was demarcated by solidarity, motivation to participate, and informal communication between the association's members. This initial period, in the case of DOPPS, lasted for almost two decades. During that time, DOPPS recorded an unprecedented growth in the number of members: in the mid-1980s there were only about 250 and at the turn of the century almost a thousand (though since the growth has somewhat stalled).

At the end of 1980s and 1990s, due to the increased number of members, the organisational structure of DOPPS was already more

formalised. This was also the time when within the association two factions with conflicting opinions about the fundamental activities of the organisation appeared. Tensions were escalating until 1999, when a sudden turn occurred. The organisational theoretician Edgar Schein (1992: 310) described just such a transformation, explaining that confrontations between “conservatives”, who wish to keep the original culture, and “liberals” or “radicals”, who want to change the original organisational culture, partly because they would like to boost the own positions of power, commonly occur in such organisations. An active voluntary member of the association, who meanwhile established his professional biological career in an academic research institute, described the turn in the association as a “revolution”. “Since then, it’s been quite another DOPPS,” he told us in an interview.

The trigger for the sudden change in DOPPS was a seemingly trivial dispute over the association’s funding for the association’s journal *Acrocephalus*. In a meeting, the DOPPS Executive Board dismissed the “father of the association” from his post as chief editor of the journal. After that, the main initiator of DOPPS lost his formal and informal positions of power in the association and subsequently left. His departure and the sudden change were not entirely unexpected though, as many previous events had suggested that the organisation was willing to break with old values and management practices. Cooperation with BirdLife International, the sponsorship from Mobitel and other adjustments indicated a trend “from observation to conservation of nature” (Podjed 2013), i.e. towards nature conservation and more professional work, which was also the main reason for the paradigmatic shift. One faction was advocating for the professionalisation of the association’s activities and emphasised the protection of birds and habitats, while the other insisted that the focus should remain on the work of volunteers, which they thought should continue to deal primarily with the chronicling, recording and study of birds.

Ecologists Without Borders in comparison to DOPPS not only appeared much later (in 2009), but also experienced a significantly shorter period of unstructured relations (*communitas*), which only lasted for a few months. As already stated above, EWB’s objective is not to attract new members, but rather active volunteers, another element which distinguishes them from DOPPS. The number of core members is thus much lower than DOPPS’s and quite stable, though they can on occasion gather up to 280,000 volunteers. It was precisely because of this extensiveness that the unstructured beginnings needed to formalise rapidly. According to our interlocutors, the first

meetings were relaxed, but somewhat peculiar. The meetings were directed more towards community-building than working. One of the interviewees described them as “a merry go round”. Not all of the participants were keen on such an “intimate” approach, which, in addition to the necessity to practically organise the huge cleaning campaigns, transformed this loosely knit community into a more formalised and structured organisation.

When the first cleaning campaign started to look achievable, the tasks were divided and more serious work began. As mentioned above, the community needed a formal frame to be able to organise “Let’s Clean Up Slovenia in a Day”, so they adopted Matos’ latent association “Ecologists Without Borders” and started working within the organisation’s framework. Their goals were set high from the very beginning (though they were later to be surpassed) and required active volunteers with expertise in a number of fields. One of the most crucial and demanding tasks was to draw up a register of illegal waste tips, the first such countrywide, there was also a need to establish contacts with Slovene municipalities, form a national volunteer network, and get the attention of the media. In most of these activities, professionals were needed (Matoses, for example, graduated specialising in waste management). Such a fast, but obligatory shift was therefore in the case of EWB not completely unexpected because some sort of orderliness as well as knowledge, were and remain a must when trying to make a change, regardless of the lingering volunteer component. Shortly after the first cleaning campaign, EWB decided to carry out additional projects and so they became “a real NGO”, as they told us. They, however, still exist also as a community, one where equality is of primary importance.

There were several potential scenarios for the future development of both associations. In the first version, DOPPS could return to its starting point and continue dealing with bird monitoring and EWB could remain a small group of environmental enthusiasts focused more on their own community than the potential results of its efforts. Another possible path could lead to the splitting of the organisations into voluntary and professional parts, which was, as the interviewees from DOPPS told us, an option which was seriously considered. The third option, which was in the end realised in both, was the coexistence of volunteer and professional activities within a single framework, which meant that a hybrid model had to be established, based on somewhat utopian ideas that professional and volunteer, expert and amateur activities can coexist in one institution.

Which features of orgunities, following Parker's theory (1998), can then be identified within DOPPS and EWB. The members, especially the most active ones, are certain about a collective allegiance to the association that stands for their own personal values, be it bird protection, waste management or simply nature conservation. Furthermore, the frontier between work and leisure is in fact unseen because the employed members regularly attend the leisure activities, while their work was (and indeed still is) primarily a hobby, albeit one which is taken seriously. They enjoy working and see their employment as more than merely a nine-to-five job. In addition to the time component, the spatial dimension is also telling. DOPPS or EWB can hardly be spatially located. Both have a central office in Ljubljana, but the only people spending time there are those employed in the NGOs (and not even all of them). EWB do not, for instance, even have a big enough office to accommodate all five employees, or for that matter sufficient heating to keep them warm in the winter. To test another of Parker's (*ibid.*) arguments, the hierarchical structure of both NGOs is not completely flat, as the presidents, vice-presidents and boards have plenty of prerogatives and can possibly modify their NGOs' tendencies. However, in both organisations the Members' Assembly represents the most important institutional body, which can accept or reject the initiatives of the board of members and regularly elect the few decision-taking members. The democratic rewarding, which is another one of the features of orgunity that Parker (*ibid.*) mentions, causes further issues: the volunteers do not receive any payment for their work, while those employed clearly do, a state of affairs that can cause frictions. The sixth feature of orgunity, according to Parker (*ibid.*), is connecting like-minded individuals, which can be seen in both of the organisations studied. However, the choosing of suitable members is not made by those in charge of the organisation, as Parker suggests; rather the recruitment is automatic and initiated by candidates: those joining feel close to nature conservation, environmental protection, bird watching and so on.

Thus, three of the six characteristics of orgunity that Parker put forth can be confirmed in the case of both of the NGOs examined, while the other three at least partially. This lends weight to the idea that the approximation to orgunity, as a social entity bridging the gap between community and organisation, in fact exists.

Our ethnographic studies reveal that the absence of a fine borderline between work and leisure is one of the elementary conditions

for the establishment of orgunity as a combination of a more formally defined organisation and an informal and unstructured community. The Canadian sociologist Robert A. Stebbins described this in terms of “serious leisure” (2006), defining it as a systematic pursuit of a leisure activity by amateurs and volunteers that perceive it as sound and interesting. Such an activity is then often changed from being purely a leisure activity into a professional career (Stebbins 1992: 3). Ethnographic cases further reveal that only a step separates such serious leisure enthusiasts from becoming “devotee workers”. In his monograph *Between Work and Leisure*, Stebbins (2004) explains that such work aficionados completely surrender themselves to work that motivates them. They see work in a very positive light; it fulfils them and gives them the satisfaction of being successful at something. Their activities at work appear to be so attractive that they manage to erase the boundary between work and leisure. In such cases, the boundary between community and organisation seems to be melting, which as a result produces a unified, dynamic orgunity.

#### ORGANISATION, COMMUNITY OR NETWORK?

On the one hand, the two NGOs presented above can be perceived as groups of volunteers joined by the same value – nature conservation. On the other hand, DOPPS and EWB can also be understood as formal organisations with transparent and well-defined hierarchical structures. They can thus be viewed either from the perspective of “classical” organisation theories that discuss the order present in the organisations or from the viewpoint of community and network theories that recognise the relationships in an egalitarian group as complex, fluid, and hardly depicted by simple and clear models. Nonetheless, our case-studies seem to suggest that these two configurations

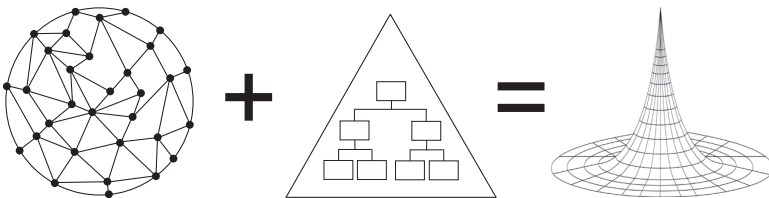


Figure 1: Orgunity as the sum of community (network) and organisation.

can coexist. Both DOPPS, which transformed into a blend of organisation and community in the late 1990s, and EWB, which experienced a similar change ten years later, demonstrate the challenges of portraying group structure with traditional two-dimensional organigraphs. If anything, such organisations are better depicted using a three-dimensional model that somehow looks like a pancake with a bulge.

The “pancake” here stands for a volunteer network or community of more or less equal interconnected (“networked”) individuals. The “bulge” rising above the network can be described with a classic organigraph that shows a clearly structured hierarchy of relationships between individuals (vertical), amalgamated with the egalitarian (horizontal) network or community.

The image of orgunity fuses organisation, network and community. It is at the same time both neat and messy, both stable and flexible, both limited and open. Parker’s orgunity is, in a word, “chaordic”, as Dee Hock (1999) described a system of organisation that blends characteristics of chaos and order, with neither chaotic nor ordered behaviour dominating. This perspective assists our understanding of internal conflicts, oppositions, sectioning, divisions and their constructive importance. At the same time, we are able to lucidly see that the “organisational life is more indeterminate, more differentiated, more chaotic than it is simple, systematic, monological and hierarchical” (Boje 1995: 1001). In addition, we can without difficulty confront the fact that organisations maintain the appearance of order, while in truth confronting confusion, chaos and disorder that the members know how to disguise and collectively enact symbiosis.

## CONCLUSION

This paper presents DOPPS and Ecologists Without Borders as unities consisting of two parts, i.e. of idealised organisations (*formal organisations*) and of actual complex networks that link individuals to a community (*informal organisations*). In closely examining the two organisations, two images seem to keep alternating: fleetingly organisation, then network or community, then again to organisation and so on. Organisation, community and network hence coexist; they symbiotically complement each other and form an entity that can be considered as orgunity.



The fundamental condition of orgunity is that it is a platform or, in other words, a way of cooperating amid two different concepts or even ideologies. A self-organised group of people is in many ways different from the organisations where structure usually has a lot to do with hierarchy and domination (Morgan 1986). Communities and networks conversely lack a clearly defined structure and hierarchy is so fluid that it can hardly be outlined. However, dynamics and variability are constant when it comes to orgunities, which can – precisely because of their organised nucleus – function successfully, although that seems fairly possible in the complexity of the dissimilar opinions, ideas and aims that members of such organisations have. Goals of an organisation can be individually interpreted by each of its members. Nevertheless, the organisation functions as a whole and reaches joint flexible and loose aspirations that are rooted in altruism, cooperation and volunteering.

In the case of DOPPS, the original goals were to observe and study birds, which later morphed into protection of birds and their habitats. Alternatively, in the case of EWB there was a shift from “mere” cleaning to a general decrease in the amount of waste production and an aim to improve waste management as a whole. Such general orientations were additionally implemented by the professional members and a partial formalisation, but the two orgunities nonetheless preserved a dynamic structure that is neither ideal nor utopian but represents a participatory model whose specifics can be traced and applied to other NGOs or even to the profit sector, especially so when we move beyond Parker’s romantic, idealistic and utopian representations, and focus merely on setting up a balance between a participatory community and an orderly organisation.

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