

STABILITY AND VARIABILITY OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to present the concept of providing organizational structure with necessary stability and variability.

Design/methodology/approach: The concept draws from the results of a case study on the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), an organization that dates back to the first half of the sixteenth century, whose leaders assure great adaptive capacity, as well as stability and identity at the same time.

Findings: The article sheds light on combining stability and variability during the structuring of organizations and presents a new approach, which builds on the principles of continuity and simplicity.

Originality/value: Unlike the well-known organization life cycle models, which consider the organizational structure as a relatively stable element, that is subject to significant transformations when progressing through the life cycle phases, the presented concept favors evolutionary development of structures based on dynamic focusing of continuity and simplicity. The simultaneous observance of both principles has not yet been presented in the literature.

Keywords: stability, variability, principle of simplicity, Society of Jesus, Jesuits, organizational structure.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

The management science considers the organizational structure as an obvious element of every organization, which determines the expectations on organizational behavior through a system of rules. Those rules indicate the ways, in which organization's participants are supposed to act in order to become more predictable and, according to H. Steinmann and G. Schreyögg (2001), the more rules are in place, the less autonomous and self-directed will the organizational behavior be. Organizational rules not only facilitate the achievement of

organization's goals, but they also channel emerging conflicts into appropriate governance forums, indicate the paths of generating new ideas and direct their implementation.

The organizational structure limits the freedom and behavioral unpredictability of the organization's participants. It shapes the normative order by specifying "(...) the patterns of organizational behavior, the repertoire of activities that are legitimate, justifying the differentiation of competences depending on the position and specifying the participants' action programs (roles). It is a construction that underpins the management process" (Mreła, 1983, p. 36).

The organizational structure and other elements of the organization and the environment (which constitute the so-called context) should fit each other. However, a total fit is not possible, e.g. because contextual elements may pose conflicting requirements to the structural characteristics. It is assumed, that the organization's participants, especially senior management, are interested in the greatest possible fit between the structure and its context, and initiate changes to sustain such fit. Structural changes may also be made to cause specific adjustments of the context (Hopej, 1994).

A change of the organizational structure, understood as the difference between its two states, can be compared to surgical intervention on a living organism without anesthesia. It always causes some disturbances in interpersonal relations, communication or management processes. As correctly pointed out by F. Malik (2015), people can adapt to change and cope progressively better with it, but they also require order and direction for the effective execution of activities.

Whilst a rich body of literature focuses on effective change management, it gives less attention to the dependency between stability, or relative stability, and variability of the structure, although it is not a new theme. Due to rapidly growing environmental uncertainty, this matter should be seen from a new perspective, since the tension between the mentioned structural aspects is systematically growing. In general, the point is that the organization's management should, simultaneously, attempt to ensure appropriate stability and variability of the organization's structure, and not, for example, follow the principle stating that no adjustment to the structure is better than a change.

The concept presented in this article, which is a manifestation of the above view, draws from the results of a case study on an organization, which dates back to the first half of the sixteenth century, i.e. the Society of Jesus, founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. This organization seems to be a model of a learning organization, with a clear goal, an ambitious vision of the future and non-selling values (Geiselhart, 1997). The Jesuits are also organized in a highly flexible way, while maintaining their identity.

The article is divided into three main parts. The first one reviews the available literature on the relationship between stability and variability of organizational structures. Second briefly describes the Society of Jesus, and the third contains guidelines for focusing on stability and variability of the structure.

2. The relationship between stability and variability of organizational structure

As already indicated, the topic of stability and variability of organizational structures is captured twofold in the available literature:

- by emphasizing the need to stay cautious when adjusting structural solutions;
- by presenting the evolution of an organizational structure as a sequence of periods of its relative stability, separated from each other by deep structural transformations.

T. Kotarbiński (1973, p. 237), the creator of praxeology, postulated far reaching caution in conducting organizational changes, including changes in the organizational structure, “First of all, reorganization costs, so it can be justified only if its benefits are greater than its costs, in other words – if it pays off. The reader understands that here we include the notion of costs as broadly as possible, not necessarily from the point of view of the assets subject to monetary measurement. Secondly, some knowledge is necessary for a team’s functioning, acquisition of which requires time. If the reorganization’s pace is too fast, one can lose the existing knowledge and not gain the new one. Thirdly, at last, we must remember that the reorganization’s period is a period of temporarily weakening the team’s performance and exposing it to failure in the event of a conflict. Chronic reorganization – people say – is a chronic disorganization”.

F. Malik (2015, p. 211) also recommends far-reaching prudence while deciding on organizational changes. In his opinion, it is a more difficult undertaking than a surgical procedure, because surgeons immobilize patients for the duration of a surgery by means of anesthesia. Meanwhile, a manager “(...) cannot do this. Their patient sees, feels and vigilantly observes what is coming and reacts accordingly. Good surgeons have learned that surgery should not be performed if it is not necessary. It is only when other means fail that they reach for the knife. Good managers are the same. They do not reorganize without a reason – if they have to do it, then only after the best preparation and thorough planning of the process and the application of all protective measures”.

T. Schumacher (2005) perceives reorganization even more radically. He believes that there is no such thing as a good organizational change, because, in principle, each change generates conflicts and creates antagonisms between people. Therefore, one should look for other ways to solve emerging problems, treating reorganization as a last resort. T. Schumacher emphasizes that stability and calmness are the norm, and a change an exception.

The recommendations of T. Kotarbiński (1973), F. Malik (2015) and T. Schumacher (2005) regarding the application of far-reaching caution in changing organizational structures seems to be confirmed by some empirical research results (referring particularly to changes of a large scope, depth and range). The results of the analysis conducted by McKinsey indicate that 80% of all reorganizations are unsuccessful, 10% of them cause real damage to the organization,

and the stress and uncertainty experienced by the employees during their implementation contributes in 60% of cases to a significant reduction in productivity (Heidari-Robinson, and Heywood, 2016). In their article, presenting a well-structured approach to reorganization, S. Heidari-Robinson and S. Heywood (2016) indicate many reasons for failed reorganizations. They are mainly related to: (1) difficulties in the adaptation of the social system (active resistance of leaders and other organizational participants against changes and their distraction from ongoing tasks, resulting in a decrease in productivity), (2) inability to identify and adjust all elements in the right sequence (e.g. processes, IT systems, job descriptions, coordination mechanisms) that need to be adapted to the new organization and (3) difficulties with the correct execution of the reorganization itself and, in particular, good change management.

Another view on the topic of stability and variability of organizational structures emerges from the concept of the organization's life cycle, proposed by R.L. Daft, who distinguished three stages of organizational development described in Table 1. It shows that each phase favors a different structure, but does not indicate what causes the transition from one phase to the other, and thus what stimulates changes of the organizational structure (Gościński, 1989, p. 38; Hopej, 1994).

Table 1.

Organizational life cycle stages and related structures according to R.L. Daft

Phase	Birth	Youth	Maturity
Organizational structure	Informal "one actor theater"	Formal procedures. Division of work, new specialties	Group work, internal bureaucracy

Source: adapted from: (Daft, 1983).

According to H. Steinmann and G. Schreyögg (2001), one can speak of four phases of an organization's life cycle: birth, growth, consolidation and possible – though not necessarily certain – fall. In this concept, the organizational structure in each phase appears as a relatively stable element of an organization and is subject to significant transformations when progressing to the next phase (Table 2). As suggested by Steinmann and Schreyögg (2001), it is to a considerable extent caused by problems specific to the particular life cycle phase.

The analysis of Greiner's (1972) concept leads to similar conclusions. The subsequent phases end up in an upheaval, which is a reaction to emerging crises, the overcoming of which results in entering into new phases of development. Each stage has a different type of relatively stable organizational structure (Table 3).

Table 2.

Organizational life cycle stages and related structures according to H. Steinmann and G. Schreyögg

Phase	Birth	Growth	Consolidation (Maturity)	Fall and rise
Organizational structure	Ensures high degree of autonomy. General rules are less effective and most often discarded	Management officially introduces organizational rules. The degree of formalization increases	Increasing structural differentiation and formalization. Creation of relatively autonomous units. Increasing significance of lateral coordination	The renewal most often combines with significant transformations. The new structure should be “relaxed”, so that renewal is possible at all

Source: adapted from: (Steinmann, and Schreyögg, 2001).

Table 3.

Organizational life cycle stages and related structures according to L.E. Greiner

Phase	Growth through creativity	Growth through direction	Growth through delegation	Growth through coordination	Growth through collaboration
Organizational structure	Informal	Centralized and functional	Decentralized and geographical	Line-staff and product groups (divisional)	Matrix of teams

Source: adapted from: (Greiner, 1972).

S.J.G. Girod and S. Karim (2017) suggest the necessity of balancing between relative stability and revolutionary structural changes. Here, reorganization is understood as two processes – restructuring and reconfiguration. The first one involves a change of the structural archetype, a kind of DNA of the organizational structure, defining the forms of organizational differentiation and organizational integration, an example of which might be the replacement of an existing functional structure with a divisional or a matrix one. Reconfiguration is less radical and comprises of minor adjustments of the existing structural solution, without disturbing its DNA, for example by removing one layer in the most hierarchically developed function, or the creation of a new division.

The choice between restructuring and reconfiguration is contingent, according to S.J. Girod and S. Karim (2017), on the industry dynamics and the urgency for strategic reorientation. Reconfigurations, consisting of quick adjustments of limited scope, work well in changing markets that are open for new players. However, when facing a significant breakthrough in the industry, minor reconfigurations are insufficient and a thorough restructuring is necessary.

Due to the tensions and uncertainties accompanying any restructuring, it is advisable that it should be carried out once every few years. S.J. Girod and S. Karim claim that subsequent restructurings should be separated from each other by at least 5 years, also because a restructuring of the company requires a new organizational culture, processes and management systems. The right reconfiguration rhythm is also essential. Reconfigurations conducted too rarely increase the risk of contextual misfit and underdevelopment of skills

required to plan and execute structural changes. On the other hand, too frequent reconfigurations can cause a change overflow and, above all, a reduction in efficiency due to insufficient time to reveal potential positive effects of the changes. In addition, there is the danger that numerous reconfigurations may cumulate and end up in an unintended snowball effect, resulting in an unintentional restructuring.

The goal of both approaches is to increase the organization's innovativeness and, consequently, improve financial results. "Companies need to periodically shake up their structures to reduce 'organizational cholesterol' – that is, the inertia, sticky routines and fiefdoms that progressively undermine growth – or to change strategic direction in the face of major industry transformation. And in an era of transitory competitive advantage, they must also continually adapt to market changes with smaller-scale reconfigurations. Executives should not choose between evolution and revolution. They should do both – in the right way, at the right time" (Girod, and Karim, 2017, p. 78).

The above review of literature reports is not exhaustive. The selection of views and concepts is rather coincidental and, obviously, not representative for researchers dealing with the design and changes of organizational structures. However, it allows to formulate the following observations:

- many scholars and managers write about changes of organizational structures. Structural stability is given less attention and the view of T. Schumacher seems to be an exception rather than a common understanding;
- in order to fit the constantly changing – especially external – context, structural changes are necessary. However, they threaten social integration. In an organization, stability and variability of a structural solution should not be seen as separate, but closely related structural aspects;
- one cannot resist the impression that, although the contextual fit can be achieved in two ways, i.e. by adapting a structure to its context or the context to a structure, the available literature focuses more on structural adjustments, emphasizing that they are a difficult task;
- the management of stability and variability of an organizational structure is a key management task. The case of the Society of Jesus demonstrates that it may be accomplished in a different way than presented in Greiner's, as well as Girod and Karim's concepts.

3. Stability and variability in the Society of Jesus

The Jesuits were founded almost five hundred years ago (in 1540) as *Compania de Jesus* (the Society of Jesus), which, after a few years of functioning, became one of the most powerful organizations in the world. The Jesuits quickly launched a network of dozens of universities, which, two hundred years later, extended, including high schools, to nearly seven hundred, scattered around the world. They worked as mathematicians and astronomers advising the emperor of China. They conducted research on natural history and geography of Asia, Africa and the Americas, the results of which were written down in about a thousand works and became the basis for education at the European universities. Many Europeans, not only Catholics, were treated with quinine from the so-called Jesuits' cork, or Jesuits' drops (based on benzo resin), soothing skin irritations (Lowney, 2011).

The Jesuits continued their activities, bringing people closer to the way of life that their founder, Ignatius of Loyola, described as *Ad majorem Dei gloriam* (for the higher glory of God). Currently, it is the largest male order in the world, operating in over 100 countries on all continents. Jesuits (there are about seventeen thousands of them) run secondary schools, colleges, universities and hospitals. They also have their own media. One of the members is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. According to C. Lowney (2011), the very period of nearly five hundred years since its founding is a powerful proof of the Order's success. It is based predominantly on:

- self-awareness, because the Jesuits understand their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their values,
- innovation, manifested in the introduction of changes that are a reaction to what is happening in the environment,
- an attitude of love towards others,
- mutual support by awakening heroic ambitions.

Jesuits' self-awareness is developed through the so-called spiritual exercises, that were devised by Ignatius of Loyola and based on his journey towards full and individual awareness. Those are the first stage in the development of every Jesuit, who exercises them for 30 days.

In general, the exercises are a kind of meditation with two important aspects:

- the exerciser is put in a situation of uncertainty, because all the issues raised are open-ended (they resemble sentences without ending). Uncertainty, emptiness and lack of ending that the exerciser feels aim to shape a space, in which something new can be created.
- the questions require a binary answer (yes or no). The choice to be made depends on individual assessment of what is good or bad from the God's point of view. This way, a system consisting of adversities is created, which the exerciser faces (Geiselhart, 1997).

Meditations, regardless of their intensity and subtleness, cannot strengthen a person everlastingly. The founder was well-aware of this and institutionalized the exercises as a complementary tool, conducive to the continuous focus on core values. Every day, after waking up, Jesuit needs to recall key personal goals, events of the day and own reactions to them. The so-called *examens* help to determine whether the choices made have brought the member of the order closer to achieving long-term goals and constitute an endless feedback loop (Lowney, 2011).

Through the exercises, a Jesuit should:

- have an integrated view of the world and value system;
- develop methods for solving emerging problems;
- show respect for people and “all creation”;
- be able to free himself from all kinds of distractions, to be able to analyze own weaknesses, manifesting in habits and inclinations (Lowney, 2011).

Once a Jesuit actually developed such skills, then he becomes a self-aware individual, capable of highly committed and energetic action. P.F. Drucker (1999, p. 70) mentions two leaders, J. Kalwin and I. Loyola, who “(...) have incorporated constant self-evaluation in their students’ practices. Indeed, the careful focus on action and results that such habit creates, explains why the institutions founded by these two people – the Calvinist Church and the Society of Jesus – have dominated Europe in 30 years”.

Self-awareness is the foundation of the other pillars of the Jesuits’ success, including innovation. Ignatius of Loyola envisioned that a regular practice of the spiritual exercises should facilitate and strengthen Jesuits’ creativity and innovativeness, constituted by two factors:

- indifference, entailing freedom from prejudices and habits, thus allowing for independent acting;
- an optimistic view of the world.

Thanks to this, the priority for the Jesuits is a highly committed field service, focused on seizing opportunities for “helping souls”. If there were any problems with it, a novice took a specific test. “He was sent on the so-called ‘Christian’s monthly pilgrimage against the elements’. Each novice departed on a journey with empty hands, begging for food and accommodation. The challenge was symbolic, but clear: be resourceful, mobile, creative, free from attachments, capable of acting independently” (Lowney, 2011, p. 157).

Although Jesuits are always ready to seize occasional opportunities for “helping souls” in an innovative way, the creativity and innovative behaviors have also a different side. Jesuits vow to obey God, represented by their superiors and the Pope. They commit to behave as if they were “(...) a corpse that can be carried everywhere and handled in any way, or as a stick of an old man, who serves in every place and in all the will of the one who is holding him in the hand” (Lowney, 2011, p. 173).

It is interesting, that Jesuits' obedience does not hinder creativity and innovativeness. Many members behaved in an innovative way by following the instructions of their superiors. For example, Francis Xavier, called the greatest missionary of the world, led a wide missionary action on the order of the Jesuits' headquarters. However, when he appeared in Asia, very quickly, without any interaction with his superiors, he developed and efficiently implemented the missionary strategy of the entire continent. This was not only possible due to the trust he was given, but also because of the significant discretion that matched his capabilities. Ignatius of Loyola emphasized, when placing orders, that the one in place knows best what to do and how (Lowney, 2011).

The next Jesuits' success factor is love, because the founder of the order saw the necessity of its development in the conditions of "greater love than fear". For this reason:

- every talented person is recognized and admitted to the Society, also those, who are not noticed by others, due to e.g. origin or skin color;
- love guides the service of both the members of the Order and their superiors, who try to develop their potential, avoiding competition;
- the members are not forced to work, they experience willingness. They support each other and appreciate the benefits of collaboration, which is an undeniable strength of the Society.

Generally speaking, love binds the Jesuits in a loyalty-filled community (Lowney, 2011).

The last pillar of Jesuits' success is heroism. It inspires the Jesuits to "awaken great desires" through dreams of heroic goals. I. Loyola repeatedly inspired various Jesuit communities "to (...) develop great intentions and create great desires" (Lowney, 2011, p. 305). He also emphasized that partial achievements are worthless compared to excellence. "His assistant, Nadal, toured the Europe and encouraged novices, repeating that regardless of their occupation, they should not be complacent with anything half-way. Astronomer Clavius, (...) at the College of Rome, predicted that the Society would come out with wonderful and prominent people, who (...) will be scattered among various nations, kingdoms as glittering jewels" (Lowney, 2011).

The Society of Jesus was built on the belief that it is necessary to aim high, and that above-average results are achievable. The Jesuits not only lived this conviction, but also encouraged others, including every novice, to consider *magis*¹ and make commitments to it that require out-of-the-box thinking. The order's tradition was initiated by the rejection of the Benedictine and Dominican religious life models and the development and implementation of a completely new type of religious corporation (Geiselhart, 1997; Lowney, 2011).

¹ The word in Latin means "more".

How do the Jesuits' success factors relate to each other? Twofold:

- self-awareness facilitates creativity and innovation, which – in turn – increase self-awareness,
- self-awareness generates love and heroism that stimulate creativity and innovation (Lowney, 2011).

This means that the success factors constitute different facets of a timeless philosophy, which bonds the order into a consolidated organization that is subject to changes. This philosophy helps Jesuits distinguish good from bad and what is worth achieving.

C. Lowney (2011) emphasizes that the Order, or more precisely its Roman headquarters, did not always stick to its philosophy. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the order's headquarters lacked boldness and creativity in dealing with emerging problems, which were the characteristic of Order's founders.

Consequently, Pope Clement XIV dissolved the order in 1773, under pressure from the kings of France, Spain and Portugal. However, thanks to the determination of the Society's members, encouraged by the same message ("nothing to lose"), which fueled I. Loyola or Francis Xavier, Pope Pius VII restored the Order's activities all over the world in 1814. It can, therefore, be assumed, that the Order's philosophy, labeled by J.C. Collins (2003) as a principal ideology, which steers daily members' activities, is a prerequisite for the functioning and development of the Society. It both shapes the identity of the order and underpins its flexibility. It contributes to a particular perception of stability and variability of the organization, i.e. treating them as two sides of the same coin. Although the Society of Jesus was – and still is – subject to numerous changes, it continues to follow the intended direction, thanks to which it is not simply one of many orders, but a religious order with a clear and distinct identity. Consequently, it implies that both, variability requires the Order's stability and its stability needs variability.

This applies not only to the entire Order, but also to its elements, including the organizational structure, whose basic frame is not changeable. It is divided into highly autonomous provinces, the activity of which is aligned by quite effortful and costly consensus process at the level of the so-called General Congregation of the Order (36 Congregations have been convened so far). It is a kind of the Order's parliament. It deals with current issues and defines the directions for future action (Geiselhart, 1997).

The guidelines set by the General Congregation must be respected by all order's participants, including, of course, their general, who is in office for life. He has a very large authority, limited only by the constitutions of I. Loyola and the decisions of the Congregation. On the other hand, the strong authority of the Roman headquarters is accompanied by a great discretion that passes down the hierarchy to anyone who can quickly make the right decision. Thanks to this, the Jesuits focus on achieving their goals, following the principle of accepting a command today and setting the path for implementation tomorrow. If there are problems,

the next rule is: ask yourself what your supervisor would do and identify a way forward, for which you would be apt to accept accountability (Geiselhart, 1977).

The rules outlined above could last for several hundred years, among others, because they were regularly enriched with solutions aiming to adapt to the changing situation. This also applies, perhaps even primarily, to the number and the area of the provinces' (the basic organizational units of the Order) activity. For example, on the eve of the Order's dismissal, there were 50 provinces, i.e. about half as much as now, and the last change in the structure (July 2018) was the inclusion of the Jesuits operating in Ukraine to the Southern Province of Poland.

4. The principle of structural continuity and simplicity

The Jesuits' order differs from business organizations, but there are also some similarities (Table 4). It is interesting that the studies conducted by C. Stadler and P. Wältermann (2012) on the so-called hundred-year-old champions, i.e. organizations successful in such a long period, have revealed another similarity with the order.

Table 4.

Some differences and similarities between the Jesuits' order and business organizations

Differences	Similarities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Employees in business organizations work to preserve their families and meet their own needs. The monks give up their personal property to be completely free in the execution of tasks assigned to them. – Employees of business organizations are usually married and seek intimate contacts. – Business organizations are profit-oriented, the Order is not. – Unlike many business organizations, the Jesuits' order is a learning organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Order and the business organizations strive for survival and development. – The Order and business organizations are socio-technical systems. – The Order and business organizations are living systems aiming at survival. They are equifinal, self-renew and self-organize themselves. – The Order and business organizations participated and still participate in great breakthroughs. The Order survived its dissolution, while business organizations are constantly confronted with the emergence of new economic powers or technological revolutions.

Source: adapted from: (Geiselhart, 1997).

Their management, like the Roman headquarters of the Order, simultaneously undertakes actions to maintain both stability and variability of the organization, through conducting limited-scale, mainly conservative changes and above-average care for the preservation of organizational identity.

Considering the implications of the above findings for the structuring of organizations, one could formulate a hypothesis about two principles of shaping structures. First is the principle of structural continuity, which refers to the similarity of subsequent states of a structure. The point is, that the evolution of organizational structures, like the evolution of living

organisms, is characterized by a certain inert continuity (Hopej, 1994). The state of the structure at the moment t_i , is always more or less similar to its state at the moment t_{i-1} , and the structure that was at the moment t_{i-1} was similar to one at the moment t_{i-2} etc. The similarity between subsequent states of the structure can be measured by identifying differences between individual dimensions of the structure in their subsequent states. The smaller they are, the greater the similarity. Conversely, the larger the differences, the smaller the similarity, and thus the smaller the structural continuity. In the case of the Jesuits' order, structural continuity is undoubtedly high, if only because throughout the entire period of its activity the same type of (divisional) structure is in force. In turn, for example, structural solutions corresponding to individual phases of Greiner's (1972) organization's life cycle model result from revolutionary changes and are clearly less similar to each other.

Both large and small structural continuity has advantages and disadvantages. Large continuity is conducive to strengthening organizational identity and normative order. At the same time, it may, especially in turbulent environments, result in low contextual fit. On the contrary, small continuity increases or, more precisely, should increase the goodness of the contextual fit resulting from rational structural changes. However, relatively frequent structural adjustments challenge the normative order and organizational identity. These findings allow to draw the following conclusion: at every organization, the **structural continuity should be maintained at an optimal level, i.e. be as large as the contextual conditions allow.**

The second principle, i.e. simplicity, challenges the well-known Ashby's² (1956) law and acknowledges that **the structure of an organization should be the least mechanistic one from the set of structural solutions that ensure contextual fit.** In other words, it should be characterized by the least developed hierarchy and the smallest possible degree of centralization, specialization, formalization and standardization (Hopej-Kamińska et al., 2015) which also means rejecting the classic bureaucratic order and equipping all highly skilled organizational participants with considerable discretion. As emphasized many years ago by M. Crozier (1993, p. 47), complex structural solutions are not the right answer to the complexity and uncertainty of the environment. "They lead to stiffness and complication. Only people are capable of absorbing complexity, because only they can find solutions by thinking forward, redefining problems, investing in knowledge, formulating policies".

So understood simplicity, which is something different from boorishness that is sometimes associated with it, seems to be an important, perhaps the most important feature of an organizational structure, as if it was a common denominator of other features. Adhering to it "leads to the creation of a rational structural solution, [...] reduction of costs and making the organization management more flexible, as well as making people live better with the simplicity of the structure" (Hopej-Kamińska et. al. 2015, p. 272). It is not difficult to notice that the principle of structural continuity emphasizes the need for organizational structure's stability

² Stating that only „variety can destroy variety”.

and the principle of simplicity emphasizes structural flexibility. They can be seen as opposites, but also, as in the Jesuits' order, as interdependent structural aspects. In this case, it is not about finding the right balance between them, but rather about focusing them in a dynamic way (Linke et al., 2018). When structuring an organization, one should therefore (1) consciously aim for a structure that, through its high flexibility, supports the continuity of its DNA or (2) transform the structure in an evolutionary manner (consistent with the strategy and identity of the organization) to minimize the risk of social disintegration. Such an approach to the structuring of organizations is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The above findings allow formulating some assumptions for an approach to the structuring of organizations, which builds on the focusing of stability and variability:

- **No dependence on organizing, understood as continuous execution of organizational changes, making “everything being constantly in motion”.** Let us once again cite F. Malik (2015, p. 210): “I do not understand this attitude and I think it is wrong. It has nothing to do with reasonable organizing, but instead with illness and nearly addiction. That’s what happens to people who think they need to be dynamic at any price, or those who want to show up in media.
- **Connecting the past, present and future during the execution of organizational changes.** The more one cultivates the identity of the organization, the more effective this process is, and constitutes an extremely important factor for the success of an organization (Linke et al. 2018).
- **Striving for the longest possible duration of the DNA (the archetype) of a particular structure.** In other words, it is necessary to limit the restructuring changes (changes in the archetype) to the necessary minimum. The observance of the principle of simplicity facilitates such approach to organizing. There are obviously circumstances in an organization’s lifecycle, where there is no alternative for changes, however structural adjustments should not be the first choice, but the last (the functioning of the organization over a long period of time with only one archetype of structure – as in the Jesuits’ order – is not an ordinary phenomenon).
- **Referencing an overarching philosophy (superior ideology) in the organizing process.** It is hard to challenge the finding of Collins and Porras (2003, p. 234) stating that such ideology defines the permanent nature of the organization. “It does not change over time and goes beyond the lifecycles of products and markets, technological breakthroughs, management theories and individual leaders”.

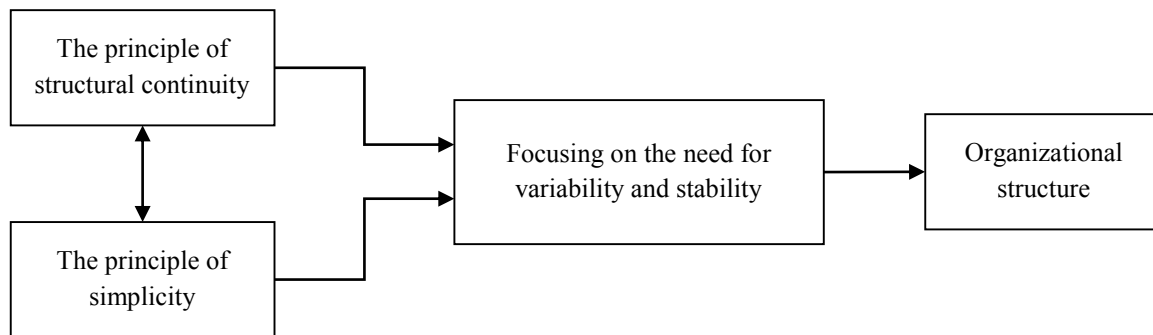


Figure 1. The structuring of organizations based on the principles of continuity and simplicity. Source: own study.

The focusing of variability and stability, build on the specified assumptions, requires – above all – high skills of organizational participants. In the Jesuits’ Order, they manifest in creativity, mutual support (underpinned by love) and obedience to superiors. This allows for a bottom-up organization of individual and group activities that forms the basis for a smooth functioning of self-organization at the operational level. The accumulation of structural ballast, i.e. inertia or cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, threatens it only to a small degree. The Jesuits do not need a detail procedural framework. They know what they need to achieve, what they need to look out for and what they should avoid. They work according to the recommendations of M. Crosier, which underline the fundamental role of organizational participants in ensuring flexibility. Some effective managers share similar views. Amongst them, J. Welch is probably the most prominent advocate of autonomy. He says “You will not unleash the potential inherent in human beings if you think for them (...), let them free and do not sit by their necks, eliminate bureaucrats and remove the barriers that arise from hierarchy” (Krames, 2005, p. 13).

5. Conclusions

This article has shed light on combining stability and variability during the structuring of organizations. The presented concept draws from the results of a case study on the Jesuits’ order, whose leaders put effort to assure their organization great adaptive capacity, stability and identity. Consequently, during the structuring of work organization, two principles are followed: structural stability and simplicity, which should not be seen as opposites, but as mutually dependent aspects of the regulation of organizational behavior.

The topics elaborated on in this paper allow to draw some conclusions that are relevant to management practice:

- The occasionally articulated call for constant restructuring or reorganization is misleading. As F. Malik (2015) rightly emphasizes, who restructures or reorganizes an organization to trigger change as a purpose on its own, not only causes resistance, but also risks a significant deterioration of an organization's results.
- Although a change is not worse than its lack, people need a certain stability to achieve expected results. Consequently, the irrationalities of an existing structural solution should be addressed rather conservatively. Revolutionary changes should not result from a hasty choice.
- The resistance that accompanies each change is not only something normal, but also desirable. It favors structural continuity, which, in turn, can be treated as a factor strengthening organizational identity.
- Each state of a structure results from a compromise related to the observance of both principles, so one should assume that structures without any problems do not exist: there are no "good structures, only more or less bad" ones (Malik, 2015).

The presented concept may be the starting point of empirical research aimed at verifying its most important elements, i.e. the principles of simplicity, structural stability and focusing activities. The object of analysis should be business organizations that are successful in the long term and the subject of analysis of the development of their structural solutions.

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