

# Criticism of Henry Mintzberg's Theses on Management

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October 31, 2021

## Abstract

This paper was written in the context of the seminar Complex Systems and Co-Operative Action and serves as a critical comparison of arguments in relation to Henry Mintzberg's theses about management and the social processes in the form of organizations.

"I argue for a return to balance, for intuition to be allowed alongside analysis and recognized as a necessary process in organizations." - Henry Mintzberg [Min91]

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# 1 Introduction

For the consideration of a system-theoretical comparison of management theories an analysis from different points of view is to be made, which makes it possible to point out, apart from socially available, individual knowledge of management, a structured, practical procedure, which makes an institutionalized application comprehensible. Furthermore, the tactical, momentary behavior at the management level is abstracted so that it can be conceptualized a conceptual generalization regarding the structures of an organization and its management and further meet a scientific reflection that summarizes the methodology of management and generates tools of analysis.

In this paper, Henry Mintzberg's theses on management and organizations will be critically examined with the help of concepts from management theory and technical systems. The aim is to question Mintzberg's analogies and concepts from a real-world implementation and to compare his view with concepts of systems theory. Special focus is put on the development of strategies in relation to management processes and how they are applied in an organization according to Mintzberg. The characteristics of different forms of organizations are compared with the concepts of a socio-technical system and put into context. Mintzberg's theses on social structural change through organization will finally be subjected to a critical examination.

Henry Mintzberg (\*02.09.1939), a professor of economics and management at McGill University in Canada, refers in his book "Mintzberg on Management" to prevailing explanations of how an organization can successfully achieve its goals through appropriate management by analyzing the subject of the organizational process, the manager, in its form of execution and highlighting society as an organizational pattern. The goal of his consideration is to formally categorize the activities that constitute managers in order to anticipate assumptions about successful management and, finally, to define strategy development as a craft process. An emergent approach by focusing on the characteristics of managers is postulated by him to infer the success of the overall organization from the capabilities of the manager. This approach is discussed in more detail below.

## 2 Manager

To study the characteristics of the manager, Mintzberg looks at the everyday actions of people in management positions in different industries. He compares various assumptions and relates them to his observations. He begins by stating the belief that managers must be conscious, systematic planners in order to run organizations successfully. The extent to which conscious and systematic activity is designed is not further defined, nor is it explained why these assumptions should hold. Through his observations, Mintzberg concludes that a manager's actions are brief, varied, and discontinuous, and beyond that, there are no planning activities that are manifested through an external action. These assumptions are substantiated by Mintzberg's research in "The Nature of Managerial Work", Robert H.

Guest "Of Time and the Foreman", [Que56] and Rosemary Stewart "Managers and their Jobs." [Ste51] This is immediately followed by the criticism of the "classical literature" that "managing does not produce reflective planners" [Min91, p.25]. Mintzberg does not give any examples or details of what "classical literature" is supposed to be, let alone what exactly it says. According to Mintzberg, planning or goal setting cannot be actions separate from the work process. "Managers seem to meet planning needs implicitly in the context of daily actions, not some kind of abstract process [...]" [Min91, p.25]. Following this, he negates the statement that managers do not have regular duties to perform by highlighting research in [Min73] and Robert T. Davis "Performance and Development of Field Sales Managers" [Dav57], which purports to prove that managers perform a number of regular duties such as ritual, ceremony, and negotiation, as well as processing soft information in their daily work. No mention is made of how often managers must perform these "duties," what planning processes might be set in motion by the "duties," or the extent to which they measurably contribute to the success of the organization. Next, the assumption that "managers in top positions [...] need aggregated information [that] is best provided by a management information system" is questioned, in which Mintzberg refers to the researches Stewart "Managers and Their Jobs" [Bur54b] and Tom Bums, "The Directions of Activity and Communication in a Departmental Executive Group" [Bur54a], in which, according to Mintzberg, it was found that "managers [...] very much prefer the linguistic medium - i.e. telephoning and face-to-face meetings" [Min91, p. 26]. The research mentions that "managers [spend] an average of 66 to 80 percent of their time on oral communication. The reason for this is given in the "early warning function" of so-called "soft information". "Today's gossip can be tomorrow's reality." [Min91, p. 27] It is important to note that the external sources used are all from the 1950s. This comment is later picked up by Ansoff [Ans91]. Neither is this statement supported by facts, nor are figures given as to how far "gossip" actually occurs in reality. Thus, Mintzberg further claims that "managers [apparently do not] document [...] what they hear. Therefore, the strategic database of the organization lies less in the computers than in the heads of its managers." [Min91, p. 27] Why Mintzberg infers low documentation of planning processes from increased oral communication is not apparent. The connection between implicit planning by the subject and lack of explicit presentation of decision patterns is not explained by any evidence. Already here it becomes apparent that Mintzberg, starting from the manager's form of description, concludes to a prescription for successful management, which is not carried out argumentatively, but elevated to a law by assumptions alone. Later, this logical impurity will be described more clearly. Last, the assumption that "management [...] [is] a science and a profession, or [...] [can] quickly develop into one" [Min91, p.28] shall be refuted, since "managers' programs [...] [remain] hidden deep in their minds." [Min91, p. 28] It is more closely indicated what Mintzberg means by "deep in the mind" by introducing the terms "judgment" and "intuition" but not explaining them in any way. Only the argument of "oral communication" again finds a way into the description: "The manager is overloaded with obligations: but he cannot simply delegate his task. Therefore he has to overwork himself and is forced to do a lot of things superficially. Brevity, fragmentation, and oral communication characterize his work." [Min91, p. 28] Neither evidence of commitment

overload nor the compulsion to overwork and subsequent superficiality is presented. At no time is it apparent why Mintzberg makes these statements.

## 2.1 Roles of the Manager

He defines the manager's characteristics in terms of several roles a manager [Min91] assumes, conditioned by his formal authority and status over the organization. He has responsibility over decisions as well as over employees and subgroups. Information is gathered and shared by the manager. The roles are divided into three areas, which he calls interpersonal, informational and decision-making roles, which are elaborated below.

The interpersonal roles are subdivided into representative figure, managerial figure, and contact figure. As a representative figure, the manager must attend ceremonies and conduct routine affairs. There is hardly any communication that influences important decisions of the organization. Presence in public is the decisive task here. As a leader, the manager carries formal leadership over the organization and hires and trains employees. The potential power enables him to make important decisions and to instruct and motivate employees for the tasks. As a contact person, important information is gained, which is secured and expanded by building an external information system with influential contacts. Communication here is mostly informal, private and verbal.

Information roles are defined as monitor, distributor, and spokesperson. As monitor, the manager scans the environment for information and obtains it through the network of contacts he has built. Gossip, rumors, and speculation are part of the information-gathering process, which usually occurs in verbal form. As a distributor, the information gained is passed on to employees who otherwise would not have access to it or would find it difficult to access. Going further, as a spokesperson, the manager has the task of making speeches to external people and advocating for the needs of the organization. He must inform and satisfy influential people who control the organizational unit. Directors or shareholders thus receive information about the financial condition of the organization.

Mintzberg highlights the decision-oriented roles in the four roles of entrepreneur, crisis manager, resource allocator, and negotiator. As entrepreneur, the manager initiates new development projects and controls and delegates them. The department belonging to him should improve and adapt to the changing environmental conditions. As a crisis manager, he responds to external constraints that affect the organization. Constraints include circumstances such as strikes, bankruptcies, or delivery problems. As a resource allocator, the manager decides who gets what in the organization and to what extent. Decisions are coordinated so that there are no discontinuities. Last, as a negotiator, the manager negotiates access to resources and important information with influential people.

The listed roles of the manager form a gestalt that, according to Mintzberg, cannot be divided or considered separately. Every manager must pay equal attention to all roles in order to create the necessary conditions for successful management. It is the integration of all components that makes a person a manager. The roles are hierarchized starting from

the formal authority, to the interpersonal, information roles and finally decision-oriented roles in this order, thus placing the existence condition on the respective previous roles. This gradation is not explained, nor is evidence presented for this assumption. In the following explanations these roles are also not mentioned again at any time or put into relation with the assertions to the strategy development, organization or society. What function the presentation of the roles fulfills or why Mintzberg introduces them does not find any logical justification in his description, nor any practical application. The form of representation is limited solely to the subjective view of the manager and is not related to a collective management process. This fact is later related to the definition of strategy development.

### 3 Mintzberg's Model of Strategy Formation

#### 3.1 The emergent strategy

According to Mintzberg, a strategy is "plans for the future and patterns from the past" [Min91, p. 41]. The pursuit of this strategy reflects the practice of a "realized strategy" [Min91, p. 41]. The development of a strategy is described as an emergent process that relies solely on involvement and a sense of familiarity. Mintzberg compares strategy development to an artistic process of creation based solely on long experience and involvement. His assumption is therefore that organizations must pursue emergent strategy development based solely on successful experience and experimentation. Similar to the artist, the manager surrenders to "calculated chaos" [Min91, p. 40]. Strategy development, according to Mintzberg, generates a logical plan through past patterns of experience. In this process, strategies are not meant to be made explicit, but to dwell in the "minds of managers." Moreover, he asserts that strategies should not be formulated in both unpredictable and predictable environmental conditions. Managers should not make assumptions about strategy apart from their experience. Two exceptions are: The organization is newly initiated and must make initial conceptualizations, or it is coming out of a period of transition into a stable situation. Mintzberg exacerbates this assumption by saying that "the long-held image of planning in the literature distorts these processes [of strategy development] and [...] thus misleads those organizations that rely unreservedly on planning." [Min91, p. 42] Developing a strategy is a process that, apart from conscious planning, refers to stability, discovering discontinuities, knowing the industry, pattern recognition, and the interplay between change and continuity. Using the term "strategic learning," Mintzberg points out that "a purely planned strategy [...] precludes [learning] once the strategy is formulated. The "emergent strategy described earlier reinforces it" [Min91, p. 45]. In doing so, he excludes the absolute forms: "None of the approaches is very useful if pursued in the extreme. Learning must be coupled to control." [Min91, p. 45] Further, Mintzberg refers to the different strategy approaches in the analogy of the left and right hemispheres of the brain to represent the opposite forms of rational, logical and intuitive, artistic strategy development. Accordingly, the left brain functions in linear patterns and is fixated on

logical conclusions. On the other hand, in the right hemisphere, influences are generally processed simultaneously and subconsciously. Especially the perception and processing of images and sensual influences is attributed to the right side. Mintzberg states in this comparison that managing should be carried out to a high degree starting from the right brain hemisphere. For example, the recognition of facial features of other persons, the correct interpretation of voice tones or gestures or the processing of "soft information" is crucial for the management process. Preferably, then, there is a relational, simultaneous aggregation of information that takes place by the manager in the subject. According to Mintzberg, "hearsay," gossip, hallway conversations, or the like are a decisive factor for management success. He speaks of an increased synthesis process in which rational analysis plays a minor role. As a result, Mintzberg says, "I therefore hypothesize that the important processes of managing organizations depend in large part on right-brain skills." [Min91, p. 63] Planning, as mentioned above, should take place only under stable conditions and, complementarily, only when innovative strategy pursuit is not necessary. Communication of results to top management should always be verbal. In summary, Mintzberg gives the work instruction: "Plan with the left, manage with the right" [Min91, p. 57]. What is clear in his reflection is that he is particularly critical of the teaching of practices of management which, according to him, "basically [have] led modern management schools to worship the left hemisphere." [Min91, p. 68] Mintzberg does not provide any further evidence here outside of his aforementioned observations showing the failure of the "right hemisphere" to emerge, nor what he means by stable environmental conditions and innovative strategy measures.

"Some of the best-known management schools have basically become closed systems in which professors with little interest in organizational reality teach inexperienced students mathematical, economic, and psychological theories as ends in themselves. In these management schools, management is given only a small place. Our schools need a new balance, namely the best possible balance between analysis and intuition." [Min91, p. 68]

Finally, Mintzberg refers to the "insights about consciousness" [Min91, p. 68] being suppressed by "artificial mystifying behavior". Neither the concept of "consciousness", nor the "proper balance between analysis and intuition" is elaborated by him. The implementation of his hypothesis in a practical context does not receive any shape and can be understood only as a criticism of the management schools, which is evident only in the comparison of the concepts of analysis and intuition.

## 3.2 Hemispheres of the brain

The comparison of left and right brain hemispheres and their functions has already been considered by Julian Jaynes in his theory of the bicameral mind [Jay]. Jaynes hypothesizes that the emergence of language is a necessity for consciousness. In his theory, human development in terms of perception is presented as the emergence of consciousness, which is not the foundation in human existence. Consciousness is a "learned process based on metaphorical language." Neurological studies in Jayne's presentation show activity of the

right temporal-parietal lobe during auditory hallucinations, which corresponds to the language area of the left hemisphere. Studies of patients whose cerebral hemispheres have been split show that they "function as two independent persons." Bicamerals, or modern schizophrenics, perceive hallucinations emanating from the right hemisphere as coming from outside themselves. The right hemisphere of the brain is said to have a language function, which people perceive as the "language of the gods." The excitation of the right temporal lobe is therefore associated with an increased religiosity or experience of God. The hallucinations here are often critical in nature, such that the right hemisphere tends to "look down on the left hemisphere." Through various assumptions, which will not be further explained here, Jaynes therefore postulates a developing self-awareness through an "external" influencing factor by the right hemisphere. Mintzberg similarly names this influencing factor in his way of looking at the nature of management by the right hemisphere, without explaining the development of consciousness. The intuitive, strategic learning model postulated by Mintzberg is given a framework by this way of looking at things, which is found in a kind of "image of God" through the organizational structure. Therefore, the objection in [Gra21b] that "in this process [...] strange structures [emerge] as described in "Mintzberg on Management," where "an orientation structure is [given] in linguistic form that the management novices [have] to follow and adopt, while these rules are not necessarily applied by the same management gurus who teach the novices." is understandable. The distinction already made above between practical management at Level 1, systematic application of management experience at Level 2, and its academic study at Level 3 is considered inconclusive by Jaynes' and Mintzberg's theses' consideration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain because it cannot have real-world application. Although Mintzberg highlights his previously defined roles of the manager and their actions in the day-to-day management process, no further reference is made to the external factors that allow the manager's "right brain" to develop in the first place. The reason for public relations in the form of rituals or ceremonies is not placed in any sociocultural context that explains certain manners or beliefs. These are taken as "given" and, according to Mintzberg's model, cannot change. If, in the management process, a process external to the subject determines the framework for action, how is this structured and what central force guides it? According to Mintzberg, is a manager's success not dependent on his or her ability, but on his or her external influence and ability to view social patterns as well as "divine images"? For what reason can these patterns not be passed on as conceptual designs to the next generation of managers? If the intuitive process is considered a basic prerequisite for successful managing, why not teach intuition?

### 3.3 Ansoffs Criticism on Mintzbergs Strategy

H. Igor Ansoff criticizes Mintzberg's definition of strategy by considering the previously explained distinction between "planned" and "emergent" strategy [Ans91]. When a planned strategy should be applied is not explained, nor under what conditions it should be carried out. Although Mintzberg describes that "planned" strategies can sometimes be applied



under stable environmental conditions, when environmental conditions are stable and when "sometimes" is not further explained. What kind of environmental conditions Mintzberg means (political, financial, logistical, personnel?) he does not elaborate. Ansoff further shows that organizations generally have to deal with different environmental conditions, constant or turbulent. In this context, turbulent influences are a central driving force for strategy development, whereas organizations under unchanging conditions succeed by incrementally developing their strategies. Moreover, a company is even at a disadvantage when it applies Mintzberg's emergent strategy under turbulent influences. Ansoff further criticizes the confusion of cause and effect of Mintzberg's theses, which, according to him, take the descriptive form of strategy development and the manager's observations as the rationale for formulating prescriptions for successful management. In making this assumption, Ansoff points to the fact that there is no evidence that a strategy can be successful only after a series of mistakes have been committed that first formed that strategy. Planned diversification of strategies is, according to Ansoff, financially more successful than trial and error of an "emergent" strategy. Mintzberg, in his view, gives no basis for a failure to formulate an explicit strategy when it is uncertain. Also, according to Ansoff, managers are not either "certain" or "uncertain" about their strategies, but in reality are always "between the extremes." Since Mintzberg already points out that strategies are patterns from the past, Ansoff posits that strategies must be present prior to events in order to positively influence them. In contrast to "strategic learning", a rational learning model can show time-saving alternatives and initiate the promising processes. Strategic mistakes can be deliberately excluded and costs reduced. Mintzberg unfoundedly rejects the rational learning model as a legitimate tool. Ansoff goes on to point out that the decoupling of strategy formulation from implementation that Mintzberg criticizes was already adapted to reality in the 1980s. Mintzberg focusses only on sources around the 1950s or his own observations. Neither the environmental conditions nor the throughput in which strategy development takes place is described by Mintzberg. Furthermore, he does not give any verification mechanisms to what extent his prescriptions about strategies can be validated. The basic assumption about the universal applicability of the strategic learning model with the interrelation of trial and error is not questioned or substantiated by Mintzberg at any time. According to Ansoff, emergent strategy development is a valid prescription for management only under "heightened environmental conditions", which he does not explain in further detail.

### 3.4 Management as a Technical System

If one regards the process of the management from the view of a technical system, Shpakovsky points out in [Shp] that this is defined by a use, which is given from the outside and is fulfilled by the system. The technical system is also distinguished in the description form, which represents the interpersonally communicated expectations, and the implementation form, which produces experienced results [Gra20]. Mintzberg does not emphasize this difference in his management theory. In this context, he neither specifies an exact

benefit to the system, nor how this should be fulfilled by the system. Based on the VDI standard 4521, which emphasizes the technical system as a man-made totality of several interacting elements that fulfill a purpose, Mintzberg, similar to the VDI, gives only the effect of the system of managers as a model, which correspond to his observations, but does not give an explanation of the implementation form in real-world form, which is made possible by the management process. Individual elements in technical systems and the totality of components are considered by Mintzberg in combination with organizations.

## 4 Organisations

### 4.1 Organisations as Configurations

Mintzberg highlights the definition of an organization as a combination of different configurations. The concepts of components and participants in organizations, the different organizational coordination mechanisms, the basic types of organizations, the fundamental forces in organizations, and the life cycle of organizations are mentioned in the context of these configurations.

The components and participants of an organization are divided into six different units. The strategic top is formed by full-time managers. These are responsible for the management and control of the entire organization. Below them is the middle line management with the managers for the operators and the managers for the strategic top. Supporting units such as the cafeteria, mailroom, legal department and public relations regulate external communications and ensure internal process flows. The Operators, the operational core, do the main work in terms of production and services and represent the main part of the organization. The technostructure is staffed by analysts who perform various administrative tasks such as formal planning and control processes. They also pass on certain standardizations to the operators. Lastly, there is an ideology in the form of tradition or beliefs to differentiate from other companies or to project charisma to the outside world. The components are illustrated in Figure 1.

### 4.2 Coordination Mechanisms

Coordination mechanisms amount to six different types (illustrated in Figure 2 in Appendix). Mutual agreement is an informal agreement between employees - the operators. Direct control is carried out by the strategic top and passed on to the operators. Standardization of the work process is passed on to the operators by the technostructure in the form of agreements in order to achieve consistency in the work processes. In contrast, the standardization of the results is the consistency in the presentation of the work results. Then standardization of skills establishes coordination in the form of training of operators. Workers are thus aligned with each other. Last, alignment of beliefs of the organization occurs through standardization of norms.

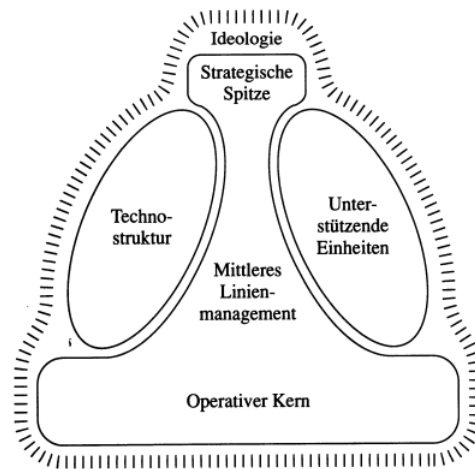


Figure 1: Basic types of organizations: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.110

### 4.3 Basic Types of Organisations

The basic types of organizations are divided by Mintzberg into seven different units (listed in Table 1). The entrepreneurial organization is characterized by a simple, informal and flexible structure, usually consisting of a simple strategic top and the operators. The other components are not yet developed in this configuration. The organizations usually start in this structure and are surrounded by a simple but dynamic environment with a lot of competition. Certain leadership qualities such as authority and charisma are prerequisites for leaders in this configuration. Even under crisis and change, this configuration can occur, needing a visionary view and a rough roadmap that keeps the organization alive. The company has a specific mission, which also makes it vulnerable and carries risk. Most companies fail in this configuration because the mission does not always match reality. The machine organization is characterized by permanence in its configuration. Bureaucracy is its characteristic. The technostructure is crucial because it is where the work processes for the entire organization are established. The mode of operation is clocked and planned through. The environment is stable and the configuration is usually found in larger, established companies. Strict rules give the configuration its stability even in changing conditions. Efficiency and reliability characterize the image of the organization, but the fixation on control can cause the organization to fail in upheavals. The diversified organization is characterized by different divisions and tends more towards the aforementioned machine organization. An autonomous management envelops the different divisions with their strategy. This form is mostly found in different market segments and has already reached a kind of maturity. It is increasingly found in governments or public sectors. As a result, they tend to focus on economic rather than social goals. Divisions can retain their individuality by pursuing their own strategies as long as they fit the overall strategy. The organization can distribute risk through its form and include or omit different strands of

the business. The disadvantages are that innovations can only be implemented very slowly and they can also act in a socially irresponsible manner. The organization of the professionals is bureaucratic but decentralized in the form of various institutes, with control resting with the professionals. The context of the organization is complex but stable. Strategies are mostly heterogeneous. Decisions are made based on the judgment of the professionals or collective decisions. The advantages of the democratic decision-making process often also lead to coordination problems. Innovations cannot be implemented quickly because the professionals rely on their knowledge and cannot reorient themselves. In contrast, the innovative organization is very dynamic and organic and is built by experts in multidisciplinary teams. Coordination is usually through direct arrangements and the strategic top and the operators are not clearly separated. These organizations are mostly young and focus on the learning and growth process. The main goal is innovation, which comes at the expense of efficiency. The goal is more important than economic profitability. An external operational core may be brought in. The missionary organization is defined by its ideology. Differentiation from other organizations is its unique selling point and is usually accompanied by charismatic leadership. The configuration may overlap with others, especially in entrepreneurial, innovative, or even machine organizations or organizations of professionals. The political configuration is characterized by conflict and can overlap other configurations, but is capable of holding its own. Coordination is usually present in the form of a power play, which leads to confrontation and uncertainty. Change is necessary and comes to light through political action.

Configuration	Primary coordination mechanism	Key part of the organization	Type of decentralization
Entrepreneurial	Direct control	Strategic top	Vertical and horizontal centralization
The machine organization	Standardization of work processes	Technostructure	Limited horizontal decentralization
Professionals	Standardization of skills	Operational core	Horizontal decentralization
Diversified	Standardization of outputs	Middle line management	Limited vertical decentralization
Innovative organization	Mutual coordination	Supporting units	Selective decentralization
Missionary organization	Standardization of standards	Ideology	Decentralization
Political organization	None	None	Various

Table 1: Basic types: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.120

## 4.4 Fundamental Forces in Organisations

According to Mintzberg, the configurations should be seen as an integrated framework of fundamental forces (see Figure 3 in Appendix). Each force must be connected to a counterforce to keep the organization alive. Entrepreneurial organizations tend to have a direct force initiated by the leader. The machine organization is usually characterized by efficiency. Professionals want to expand their skill set and break free from control. Diversified organizations tend to concentrate power. Innovative organizations want to bring about change and adaptation through the learning process. An organization's self-destruction is avoidable only by applying the principles of cooperation and competition, with policies and ideological beliefs in opposition.

## 4.5 Life Cycle Model of Organisations

Mintzberg contextualizes the above configurations with their associated forces in terms of a life cycle model (see Figure 4 in Appendix). Configurations are divided into formation stage, development stage, maturity stage, and decline stage. Transitions between configurations are initiated by political confrontations or tend to revitalization, a renewal of the configuration. As mentioned above, organization mostly start in the form of entrepreneurial organization in the formation stage. These organizations are characterized by a mission and are maintained as long as the leader is in charge. The demise of the organization due to the above reasons is symbolized by a tombstone in each case. Self-correction is not present in this configuration. The missionary organization is most likely as the following configuration, because there the charisma of the leader is installed as beliefs. Further following there are two possibilities for an advancement of the entrepreneurial configuration, if it is based on expert knowledge: Either it tends to the innovative configuration, when its mission shapes its progress through creativity, or to the professional organization, where a standardization of skills is preferred. On the other hand, the entrepreneurial configuration can become a machine configuration, divided into instrumental and closed machine. The instrumental machine is created by the takeover of an external influencer or a power takeover from outside the organization. When internal management is strong enough to assert itself, the entrepreneurial organization transforms directly into a closed machine organization. The transition from missionary configuration to closed machine occurs through the ideologized inefficiency of the organization. From instrumental to closed machine organization, the transition is characterized by an adjustment of internal stability. Starting from the closed machine organization, it then tends to diversify as it expands in size and influence. Bureaucratic status is placed at a new level and revitalization resembles a proliferation of individual divisions. With little external control, the closed machine organizations and the professional organization tend to become politicized, which can lead to moral decay. In the innovative configuration, political processes are seen as a temporary difficulty which can lead to a turnaround or revitalization. Lastly, the political configuration usually leads to the demise of these if it lasts too long, as organizations cannot sustain

long periods of conflict.

## 4.6 Control Mechanisms of Organisations

In the context of the life cycle model, Mintzberg already highlights the hypothesis that organizations are kept alive for too long, which could be replaced by other organizations and would allow a more sensible, productive use of free resources. He critiques this form of control through mechanisms (see Figure 5 in Appendix) realized by government and economic policies. "We create organizations so that they serve us. But somehow they also force us to serve them." [Min91, p. 307] Mintzberg distinguishes between eight different control mechanisms: nationalization here means government interference when a task is recognized as important but not covered by the private sector. In addition, nationalization is considered when an organization's tasks are so closely related to state activities that it can be run as a "direct arm of the state." Democratizing is understood as facilitating the expansion of corporate governance, with power being constitutionally decentralized. Regulating organizations occurs through obligations from regulators and courts to the organization to perform certain activities. Limits can also be imposed on them, leaving internal control with managers. Exerting pressure is meant as encouraging organizations to adjust their behavioral fundamentals. For example, activist campaigns aim to make organizations act in a socially responsible way. Trust means that business leaders are trusted to observe social goals on their own - simply because it is a "good thing" to do. The difference with ignoring is that a strong economy is seen as a prerequisite for achieving social goals. Economic goals cover social goals as well. Incentives can be donated, mostly in the form of subsidies for organizations. These receive rewards through constraints. Restoring is equating freedom through entrepreneurship, with economic profit as an indicator of good behavior. Mintzberg notes that financial incentives do not belong where a company has caused a problem, but has the ability to solve a problem caused by others. One should not reward a company for acting "badly."

## 4.7 Comparison of System Development

Alexander Solodkin in his publication "Discovery of key problem causes in Organizations" already presents distortions and noise as the main problems in organizations. According to Solodkin, problems are the gap between the current and the desired system state [Sol]. Therefore, both states should be described as accurately as possible. This difference has already been clarified in [Gra21a] in the evolution of systems over time. Here, an additional distinction is made between the states and the transformations. Starting from the present system, the system as demanded is achieved by a desired transformation. The true transformation, which takes place in the implementation, leads to the system, which actually arises. A contradiction arises between the ideal line of development and the real line of development. In the TRIZ concept of the Ideal Final Result (IFR), according to Solodkin, the desired system state can be described. In Mintzberg's expositions of the

configurations of organization, the aspired system states and the actual system states are not distinguished. The transitions between configurations are presented by Mintzberg as laws that are passed through purely political processes. Since we are dealing with socioeconomic and cultural systems, respectively, according to Solodkin, the processes are subject to various biases and noises that Mintzberg ignores in his description of configurations and the life cycle model of organizations. While Mintzberg cites various forces that influence the organization, these all arise from within the organization itself. External influences such as the capital market, ecological influences, or material do not find sufficient description in Mintzberg's model. The implementation form of an organization, which brings it to the next configuration to expand or overcome obstacles, is not specified. The stages of the organization seem to exist as givens by Mintzberg and are not given a developmental dimension outside of political confrontations. The difference between development of the system, development of the components of the system (here: actors, managers, technos-structure, etc.) and relationships within the system is not put into context. Throughput, deliberate processes of change, or activities by management are not included in the life cycle model. Mintzberg's two main assumptions, first, that organizations exist as stable and persistent forms, "but their status changes regularly" [Min91, p. 287] and second, that forms are always in different "stages of life," i.e., the organization is in the stages of birth, growth, maturity, and decline or death, describes the changes solely in the power constellation of organizations. In contrast, structural change, which is consciously or unconsciously shaped by management, is only present in descriptive form and, according to Mintzberg, seems to be more or less subject to chance. The problem analysis, which would make the transformations predictable, contradicts Mintzberg's emergent strategy development and does not find application in the life cycle model.

## 5 Conclusion

For a sufficient description of management structures and the associated application scenarios in different organizational structures, Mintzberg's theses are insufficient in an academic setting. A system theoretical approach, which brings forth the context of an organization in description and implementation level, can only be seen from the perspective of a subjective transformation to "better management" through Mintzberg's presentation of emergent strategy development. The analogies presented are not so much presented as a scientific analysis of processes of management, but are intended to highlight an individual view of the social organization itself. Mintzberg aims to take a socially critical stance through an experiential description of processes in everyday work that relies less on actual academic inquiry and instead views the concentration of power through organizational structures in society through the "eyes of the manager." In his models, he does not so much expose a framework for action that looks at system processes at their core, but ultimately criticizes the politicized basis for successful management that he believes has "made society uncontrollable" [Min91, p. 331]. His accounts are therefore not to be seen as sociotechnical investigations and are therefore unsuitable for the institutionalized use and associated

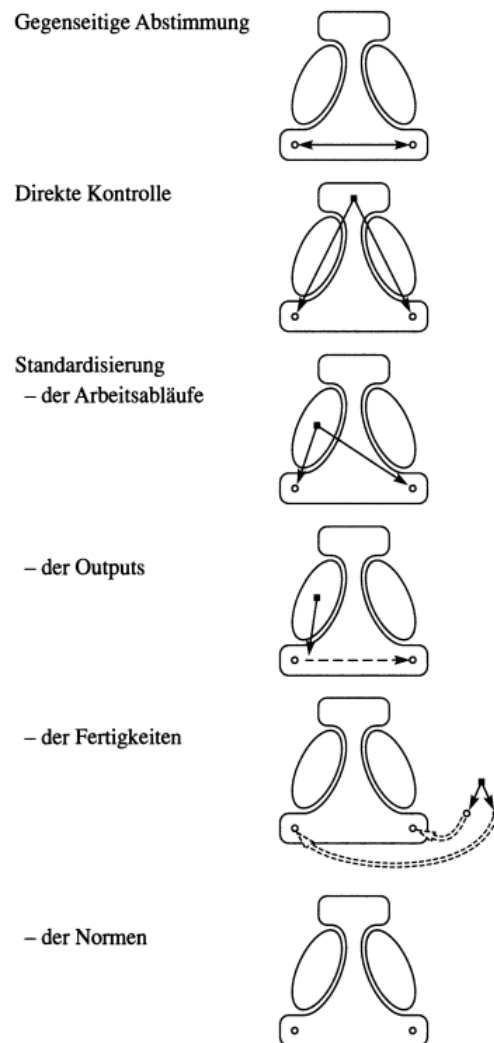
scholarly reflection mentioned at the outset. On a tactical, subjective level, Mintzberg's view may nevertheless be helpful, or as he describes it in the preface to his book, "This book is written for those who spend their public lives with organizations and recover from them in their private lives."



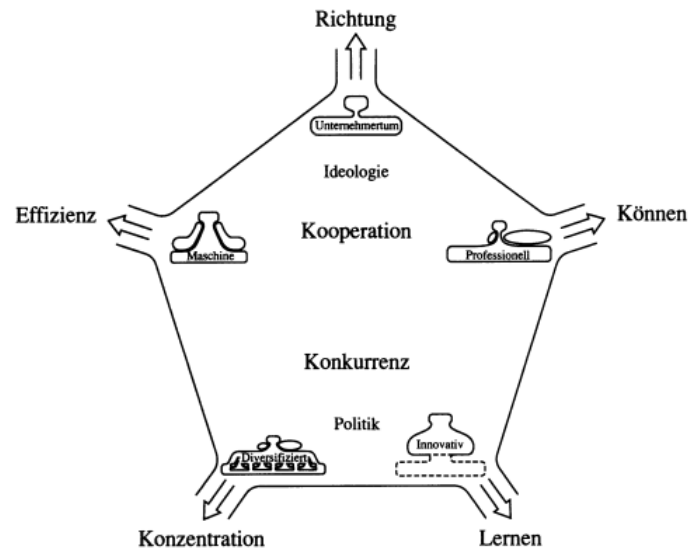
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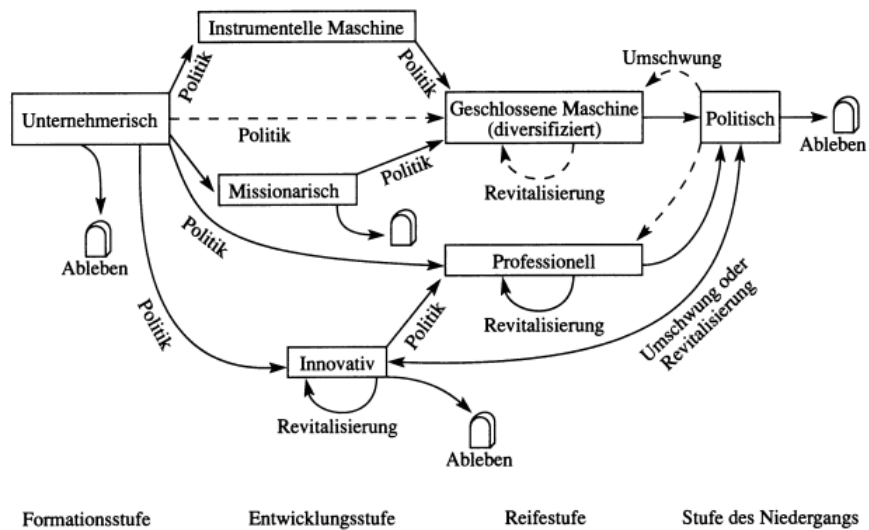
## 6 Appendix



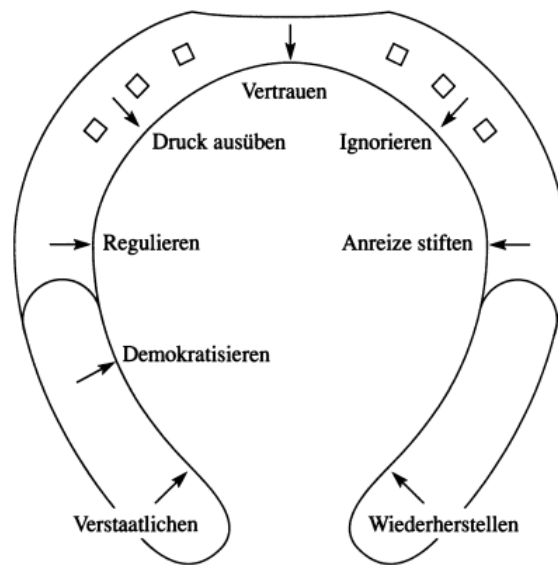
Coordination mechanisms: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.113



Coordination mechanisms: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.264



Life cycle model: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.288



The conceptual horseshoe: Mintzberg on Management, Henry Mintzberg: 1991 p.312