David Seidl

Organisational Identity and Self-Transformation: An Autopoietic Perspective
Aldershot: Ashgate, November 2005

About the book:

David Seidl brings together two important issues in organization and management studies in this volume: the concept and related theory of organizational identity, and autopoietic organization theory (as originally developed by Niklas Luhmann). The contribution of the book is twofold: it provides an introduction to autopoietic organization theory and it provides a new perspective on organizational identity and self-transformation. Thus the book is relevant to both organization theorists interested in new approaches to organization and to researchers of organizational identity. The themes are reflected in the structure of the book. Chapters one and two provide an introduction to Niklas Luhmann’s organization theory. Based on this, chapter three develops a new concept of organizational identity. In chapters four and five a theory of organizational self-transformation (i.e. change of identity) is developed.

Endorsements:

Prof. Dirk Baecker, University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany
“There are two sides to any organisational identity, a determinate one and an indeterminate one. David Seidl succeeds in showing that any entrepreneurial function necessarily assumes that both are working together. That alone is turning classical organisation theory into a postclassical one, introduces evolutionary sensitivity and undecidability where it belongs, and puts an end to the idea of seeking identity in definite purpose.”

Prof. John Mingers, Director of Research, Kent Business School, University of Kent
“Niklas Luhmann was one of the foremost social thinkers of the twentieth century, as significant, at least in Germany, as his long time antagonist Jürgen Habermas. His work is in many ways unique: rooted in Parsons social systems theory he nevertheless embraces the insights of postmodernity as well as those of modern second-order cybernetics. That he is not so well known in the rest of the world due in part to the difficulty and abstractness of his ideas and in part to the paucity of translations and high quality commentary. This is why David Seidl’s book is to be so welcomed.
“Luhmann’ work covered many areas including law, media, trust and risk, ecology and the nature of organisations. It is organisations that he analysed in one of his last major works Organisation und Entscheidung (2000) which unfortunately remains untranslated. David Seidl takes organisations as his focus and explores in great detail how Luhmann conceptualises them as autopoietic systems.
“Seidl's book provides an excellent resource for those interested in new perspectives on organisation theory and also for those interested more widely in Luhmann’s social theory”

Professor Robert Cooper, Keele University, UK
“David Seidl’s book can be read as a systematic and meticulous analysis of the work of human systems in the continuous work of saving the structures and appearances of the human world. He places autopoiesis in its social context through the work of Niklas Luhmann. Luhmann’s comprehensive and probing analysis invites us to re-interpret contemporary views of organisation by opening up radically new vistas for re-thinking organisation as a profound and existential theme.”

Content:

General Introduction; Autopoiesis, Luhmann, Spencer Brown; Organisation as autopoietic system; Organisational identity; The logic of self-transformation; An evolutionary model of self-transformation; General conclusion: The distinctions of the study; Bibliography; Index.