Media, Culture and Technology: Technologies and Organizational Communication
**Exercise: Reflection on Technology Use**

Think of a communication technology you used for the first time within the last three years.

- Why did you decide to use it?
- What have been effects of the technology on your...
  - … daily routines?
  - … attitudes?
  - … social behaviour?
- Did you expect these effects? Or is there anything that came as a surprise?
An Organization is a Social Entity that...

- ...has an address.
- ...has a goal.
- ...takes decisions.
- ...lacks self-awareness.
The Structure of Organizations

Hierarchical Differentiation:
Easy decision-making process

Functional Differentiation:
More sustainable decisions

Claim
Balancing both modes of differentiation
The Effect of New Technologies

- Reinforcing strata or planing hierarchies?
- Promoting functional differentiation or aiding organizational integration?
A Reciprocal Model

Organization

launch

New Technology

effect

use

Organization

Feedback loop

Selection of technology?

Type of use?

- Intended use according to declared purpose
- Intended use not according to declared purpose
- Unintended use

Cumulative usage patterns
What is Special about New Media Technologies?

- Digital storing of huge amounts of information
- Easy access to information
- Integration of multiple communication modes (text, graphic, sound, video)
- Associative structure may complement sequential structure of information (hypertext).
- Simultaneousness of storing of information and communicating
- Supports both Push- and Pull-Strategies in communication management
- High connectivity due to universal "language" (TCP/IP)
- Overcoming of time and space constraints (same or different time/place)
- Applicable to both interpersonal and mass communication (1:1, 1:n, n:1, n:n)
- Allows flexible switching between sender and recipient roles
- And finally:
  If new media ought to be successful, they must not be new.
The Transformation Hypothesis

„By using the Internet as a fundamental medium of communication and information-processing, business adopts the network as its organizational form.“ (Castells 2001: 66)
Characteristics of Networks

- Autonomous elements
- Loosely connected
- Not enduring
- Flexible scalability
- Functional relations
- Flat hierarchies
- Self-organizing
- Coordinating management
- Representing "modernism"
- **Diminishing organizational boundaries**
The Constitutive Character of Structure
Thus, the network enterprise is neither a network of enterprises nor an intra-firm, networked organization. Rather, it is a lean agency of economic activity, built around specific business projects (...): *the network is the enterprise*“

(Castells 2001: 67)
Challenges for Network Enterprises

☐ **Economies of Scale**
  Network structures allow for a customization of products and services. They comply less with the need for standardization which is necessary to reduce production costs.

☐ **Branding**
  The autonomy of its elements impedes the chances of network enterprises to develop an inimitable identity and a clear brand.

☐ **Accountability**
  If self-organizing network structures fail to operate properly, it will become difficult to identify the source of the problem and the social position which can be held to account.
### Potential Effects of Communication Technologies on Hierarchies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Bottom Up</strong></th>
<th><strong>Top Down</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Open access</td>
<td>Restricted access to relevant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information storage</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Information overload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Inhouse trainings on new technologies</td>
<td>Digital divide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialisation</td>
<td>Reduction of formal hierarchies</td>
<td>Emergence of informal hierarchies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permeability</td>
<td>Overleaping of hierarchy levels</td>
<td>Communication triage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Monitoring</td>
<td>Traceable collaborative work</td>
<td>Surveillance</td>
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<tr>
<td>External Monitoring</td>
<td>Countercheck management positions</td>
<td>Violating privacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outgoing information</td>
<td>„Polyglot“ external communication</td>
<td>Public relations monopoly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope for development</td>
<td>Use of creativity enabling software</td>
<td>High regulation by use of digital templates</td>
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Media, Culture and Technology
New Communication Technologies as a Social Tool

New communication technologies have no inbuilt social bias:
- neither towards the strengthening of hierarchies
- nor towards more democracy at the workplace.

It is up to the people who use technologies as a tool.
From a normative point of view, organizations are successful, if new communication technologies help them to find an appropriate balance between...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottom-Up-Participation</th>
<th>Top-Down-Leadership</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging power structures</td>
<td>Legitimizing power structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual freedom</td>
<td>Organizational coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging creativity</td>
<td>Reliable standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling innovation</td>
<td>Reliance on experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>