

Book review

Organizations Evolving, Howard E. Aldrich and Martin Ruef, Thousand Oaks, London, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2006, 2nd edition, £75.00 hardback and £25.00 paperback, 330 pp.

How organizations come into being, flourish and die is a fascinating topic. It is certainly something which will be of interest to readers of this journal and might help them in their teaching and research. It is rare that one can recommend a book with little hesitation and with only a few caveats.

Two leading writers on organisations, Howard E. Aldrich and Martin Ruef, have produced a new edition of a highly praised study entitled '*Organizations Evolving*'. One of the authors is Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the other at Princeton University. This award-winning classic expounds an evolutionary view of organizational paradigms. The perspective is highly sophisticated and should appeal to those interested in a wide range of disciplines. The original first edition has been expanded and brought up to date. It now also covers organizational forms, community evolution, and methods for studying organizations at multiple levels.

The authors achieve this task in eleven solid chapters, with over 325 pages, clearly expressed and well written. The chapters cover themes such as *the evolutionary approach to organizations, how this relates to other approaches, entrepreneurs and the emergence of the organizations, organizational boundaries* and so on. The first version of this book had only one author but since the field had grown so much in the ensuing years, the senior author took on a collaborator to help him complete his task of updating the material on the subject. This profound work is highly authoritative with around 1000 references. It covers a great deal of organizational theory in general and evolution-

ary analysis in particular. There are questions and exercises at the end of each chapter and there is an appendix on research and design.

There is much in this work which is highly original as well as intellectually challenging. If the reader wants to be up to date in this area, it would be hard to find a competing tome. A great deal of the book is unambiguously at the 'cutting-edge' and it is worth the effort to read its discussion and evaluation of new material very carefully indeed.

There are, however, some *lacunae* in the book and one would have hoped for instance that more would have been included on Darwinism and neo-Darwinism. Also that the range of countries covered might have been more extended and that the cross-national coverage might have been wider. While there appears to be relatively comprehensive coverage of advanced economies, there is less on developing ones and emerging markets. There is also not a great deal on the Internet and virtual organizations. It is also a pity that there is no overall summary at the end of the book, since the reader is left somewhat hanging. But if you really want to know the 'upshot' of the study, you are more likely to find it in the introduction than at its end. In the third edition, the authors may well find it useful to add such a final chapter.

Scholars working in the field of organisational theory will no doubt receive this book with some enthusiasm but those working in other areas of human systems management may find it both engaging and useful.

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