

Coordinating: Doing end-to-end management in practice

Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman



From Coordination to Coordinating

- ▶ Coordination mechanisms
 - ▶ Central component of organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967)
 - ▶ *“The multiple definitions ... embody evident commonalities: (1) people work collectively; (2) the work is interdependent; and (3) a goal, task, or piece of work is achieved”* (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009: 469).
- ▶ Coordinating
 - ▶ Allow actors to re/produce the configuration of relationships, roles and activities that comprise organization (e.g. Feldman, 2000, 2003)
 - ▶ Coordination as reified things connected to each other. Coordinating as the ongoing becoming of interconnections and interdependencies
 - ▶ How coordinating is accomplished and re-accomplished on an ongoing basis
 - ▶ Flux, emerge, become, moves – in which the ‘thing’ known as ‘coordination’ inheres



Theoretical background

- ▶ Organisational restructuring
 - ▶ Existing ways of organizing are disrupted and must be reorganized to accomplish organizational activity in new ways (e.g. Orlikowski 1996)
 - ▶ Coordination helps reconfigure the relationships through which the organization delivers its products and service
 - ▶ “*Managers are attempting to change not only the form and design of the organization, but also the tacit patterns of thought, action, and interaction*” (Bates et al, 2000: 208)
- ▶ Organizational routines as generative systems (Feldman/Pentland, 2003)
 - ▶ Performative – specific actions in routine as effortful accomplishment
 - ▶ Ostensive – abstract pattern of routine and task it accomplishes
 - ▶ Iterative relationship between ostensive and performative
 - ▶ Dynamic due to recursiveness between actions and structure





Research Questions

▶ During organizational restructuring

- 1) *How do actors iterate between the abstract concepts of new coordination mechanisms that are introduced during restructuring and their performance of those mechanisms in practice?*
- 2) *What are the implications of those iterations for the way that coordinating is realized in new relationships and activities that accomplish the restructuring?*





Case Context

Servico

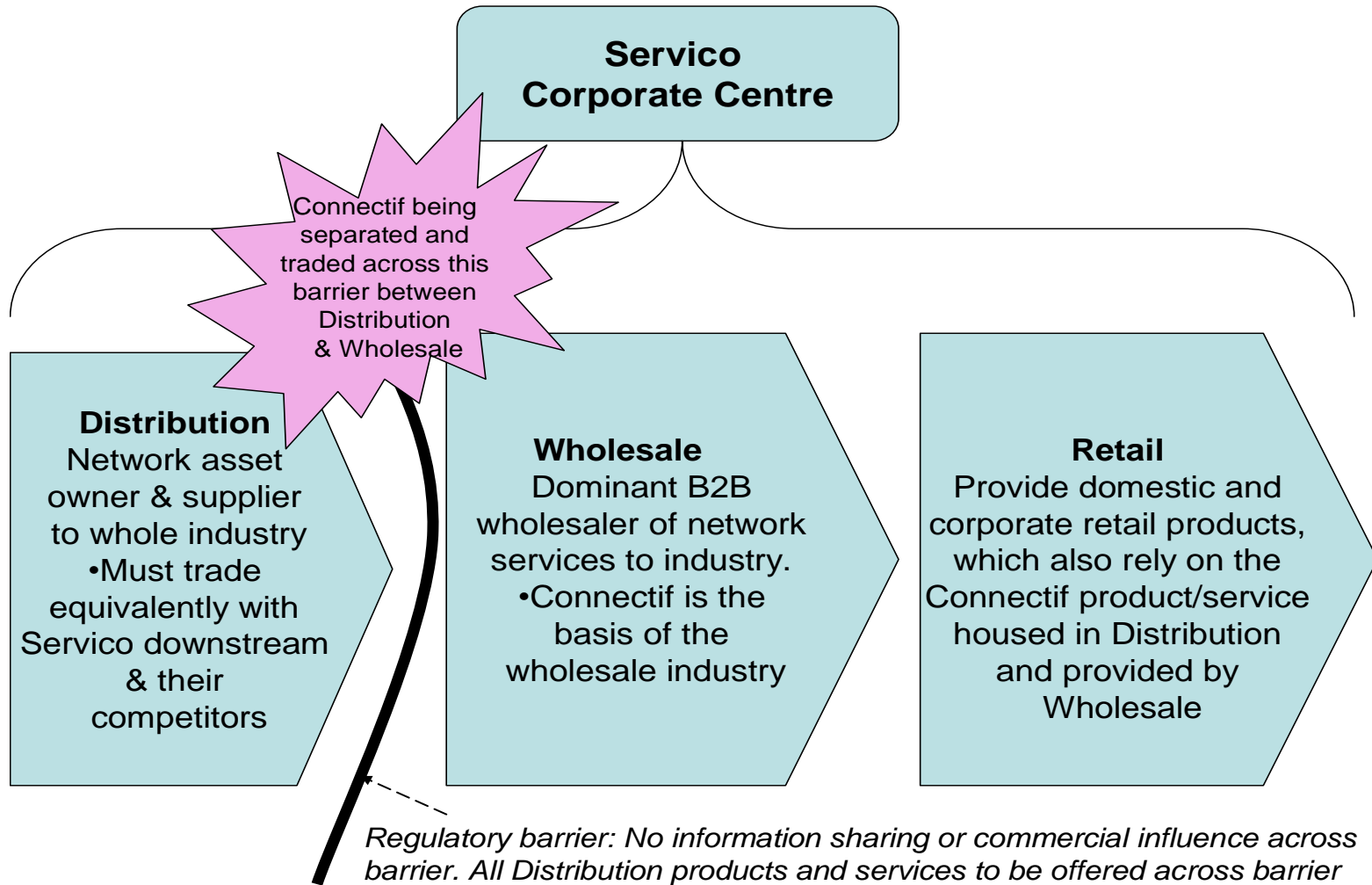
- ▶ Undergoing major organizational restructuring
- ▶ Implementing new Regulatory Framework
 - ▶ New arms length division
 - ▶ Equivalence & transparency
 - ▶ Chinese wall: access codes, info systems, buildings
 - ▶ Separate all current products/services

Connectif

- ▶ A major task that was representative of Servico restructuring
- ▶ Core wholesale market product
 - ▶ Complex technology, service, process bundle
- ▶ Deadlines: (1) Use Connectif; (2) service entire customer base

24 months: 84 interviews, 137 meetings







Connectif Delivery

- ▶ A major restructuring task that was representative of the coordinating taking place within Servico as a whole
- ▶ Connectif is the basis of the wholesale market in this industry; has to be provided equivalently to all industry players
- ▶ Legal/regulatory deadlines: (1) Start using Connectif [Month 6] and (2) service entire customer base using the equivalent product [Month 12]
- ▶ Failing deadlines would result in fines & legal action against the company
- ▶ Difficult coordinating process
 - ▶ Connectif is a complex technology, service and process bundle, which had grown historically with Servico, so that no one was quite sure how it worked and how to separate it
 - ▶ Systems development work: Necessitated Distribution and industry players, including Wholesale, to coordinate their design efforts; serial releases for technological platform (TP) to broaden product features
- ▶ E2E management procedure used, included implementation teams





Definition of End-to-End (E2E) Management

- ▶ The management of *all aspects between end points*
- ▶ How a company manages data, systems and processes within and beyond its boundaries (Cohen & Roussel, 2004)
- ▶ Four elements need to be managed and coordinated
 - ▶ Integration of processes and support systems
 - ▶ Optimisation of supply chain resources
 - ▶ Distribution of standard metrics
 - ▶ Distribution of performance management tools
- ▶ Derives meaning in context; E2E is an abstract concept that must be performed in order to accomplish tasks arising from coordinating





Iterative Analysis

- ▶ Step 1: Wrote a thick description of restructuring Connectif; verified by organisational actors
- ▶ Step 2: Searched the meeting data for all references actors made to E2E; chronological story fleshed out with other data.
- ▶ Step 3: Iteratively devised & applied coding scheme based on our interpretation of how people were using E2E > focus, tools, outcomes and definition
- ▶ Step 4: Used 'ostensive' & 'performative' to analyze relationship between codes to understand how the abstract concept of E2E developed as actors performed it > 5 ostensive-performative cycles
- ▶ Step 5: Contextualised analysis to identify implications for accomplishing organizational restructuring. Arranged cycles into three phases of restructuring based on critical underlying themes.





Aston Business School

Five Ostensive-Performative Cycles

- ▶ Enacting the disruption
- ▶ Recognising absence
- ▶ Creating elements
- ▶ Creating patterns
- ▶ Embedding patterns





Cycle 1: Enacting the Disruption

- ▶ Catalyst: Regulatory Framework agreed; walls created
- ▶ Actors enacted the Regulatory Framework (Chinese Wall)
- ▶ Resulted in severed processes and relationships
- ▶ Actors no longer knew how to interact
- ▶ Avoidance of most interactions
- ▶ No real awareness of the implications of that practice on the reorganizing of Connectif (coordinating was disrupted)
- ▶ **DISRUPTION IS PERFORMED**





Illustration

- ▶ *“There was something in [the Framework] where we’re not supposed to speak to Wholesale about certain things but the way it was written basically prevented us from talking to them about almost anything. And you find that in some ways, the line has been drawn between Distribution and the rest of the business in a pretty hard place to administer ... If that’s the line and this is Wholesale and that’s Distribution, you end up in a few situations where... to deliver a product, you’re sort of bouncing backwards and forwards between yourselves several times before you actually deliver something, which is pretty inefficient.”*

Distribution Regulatory Lead, Interview



Cycle 2: Recognizing Absence

- ▶ Catalyst: Actors recognized inability to progress Connectif
- ▶ Began to engage & realized that old performances and patterns...
 - ▶ were no longer permitted under the new Framework
 - ▶ no longer coordinated activity in the expected way
 - ▶ but alternative performances had not emerged
- ▶ Recognised an absence in E2E coordinating
- ▶ Performances delineated absence
 - ▶ an inability to deliver old aspects of Connectif in new ways
 - ▶ an inability to deliver the new elements of Connectif brought about by the change
- ▶ E2E as a desirable organizing mechanism that would have beneficial effects





Cycle 3: Creating Elements

- ▶ Catalyst: Recognising *what* was missing from the E2E process and *how* to perform them
- ▶ Enacting ways of coordinating over the wall to
 - ▶ Deliver old things in new ways
 - ▶ Deliver new things
- ▶ Iterative process of action and interaction
 - ▶ Built the abstract concept of E2E by enacting a specific set of performances
 - ▶ These performances helped to define new elements of E2E (technology, external players, service and processes) that needed to be connected to reorganize the delivery of Connectif
 - ▶ As these elements of E2E were enacted through specific performances, new ostensive patterns of E2E emerged.





Illustration

- ▶ *“We have actually started to say the processes now have to be different. The system access has got to be different, the way we pass information or how we interact with appointment books, etc, it’s the process things that are really significantly different... I think it’s a major change, particularly on the systems fronts”*

Distribution Manager, Interview





Cycle 4: Creating Patterns

- ▶ Catalyst: Start using Connectif product
- ▶ E2E became a recognizable pattern of actions with meanings and effects for coordinating aspects of Connectif
- ▶ Processes and procedures for solving coordinating problems were not always successful
- ▶ Refined E2E by adding project management **tools**
 - ▶ integrate elements of E2E
 - ▶ strengthen the emerging relationships between divisions
 - ▶ enable interdependent task delivery
- ▶ Tools made the patterns of connection more visible (track progress)
- ▶ Visibility helped people refine the actions that create patterns (create accountability and direct attention toward issue)





Illustration

- ▶ *We were in a 2-hour meeting with [the Servico CEO] yesterday about E2E management of Connectif delivery...we have been tearing apart the complaints that are landing in her inbox. It is the best E2E thing I have been involved in but it's pretty bloody too.*

Wholesale Manager, Distribution-Wholesale Meeting





Aston Business School

Process 5: Embedding Patterns

- ▶ Catalyst: 2nd deadline (customers moved; Connectif complete)
- ▶ Predictability: Procedures, trading arrangements, modes of interaction, project tools and metrics (E2E was codified)
- ▶ Could anticipate the elements involved in performing Connectif E2E, the activities likely to occur, their relative interdependence, and the link to wider organizational processes
- ▶ Connectif delivery tied to the formalized governance structures of the reorganized Servico
- ▶ Embedding signaled reorganizing as complete; Performing E2E activities consolidated as everyday organizing
- ▶ Stabilizes patterns of coordinating E2E





Aston Business School

Contributions

- ▶ Unpack elements of coordinating & show how they are constructed
- ▶ Activities & relationships that comprise coordinating assume an abstracted pattern even to actors performing them (unconscious until a change is necessary)
- ▶ Illuminate the period 'between' organising and reorganising: enacting disruption and experiencing absence comes before reorganising
- ▶ Methodological: Apply and Extend the use of performative-ostensive to coordinating activities more generally (not just routines)
- ▶ Stabilising and changing under endogenous and exogenous motivation





'Take home' thoughts

- ▶ Coordinating as a process of connecting elements and emerging and stabilizing pattern
- ▶ Look for the flow of the interstices
- ▶ Coordinating exists in the present as a moving set of stabilisings
- ▶ Recursive: Arrows need to be curly!





Aston Business School



**Thank you
Your views?**