

This talk aims to clarify different understandings of hierarchy and introduce you to other ways of thinking and organizing.

In general we'll dive into the nature and evolution of and away from hierarchy. You'll learn which properties exactly make that a structure is hierarchical, and that these properties lead to a power imbalance between a top and a bottom - thus why a hierarchical structure and authority are related. I'll further explore the functional difference between a hierarchical and non-hierarchical focus, both in thinking and organizing. The difference between aiming for agreement from everyone and a "grant theory", versus seeking local synergies and ideas that link and strengthen each other. The latter local coherence gives a better connected structure.

I'll then argue that in a lot of theories from systems theory that claim the need for hierarchy, this actually doesn't follow from the assumptions. They give arguments for a local directionality (one system influencing the goals or methods of another system), and simply assume that can only be structured in a bigger hierarchical structure. This is the case in for example a perceptual control hierarchy and the law of requisite hierarchy, which I will first introduce. We'll end with investigating the evolution of systems: how they can become rigid, and how they can change.

While part of the talk will be a classical lecture, there will be made space and time for discussion, interaction and experiencing.

If you come to this talk, you'll get some tools to recognize certain dynamics in your own thinking and day to day life, in the organizations you're in and in the bigger social and political world.