Coordination, communication, business processes, business rules, information architectures, Information Systems (IS), and Information Technology (IT) are fundamental organizational realms subject to intense organizational inquiry. A typical passage from the vast body of organizational literature is the following:

*A business process is a sequence of activities aimed at producing something of value to the business [...] business processes display a similar set of features [...] have at least one start point and at least one end point [...] can be broken down into a set of tasks or subactivities [...] a process has an objective [...] requires resources such as people and technology [...] spans several organizational units, each of which delivers some value to the process [...] there's a natural ordering of activities in a process because of internal dependencies [...] a process handles one or more things which could be physical objects or pieces of information [...]. (Morgan, 2002, pp. 35-36)*

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This excerpt demonstrates several problematic positions:

- The definitions of basic realms in organizational inquiry are imprecise. A business process is “sequence of activities”; yet it seems to be inextricably associated with objective, people, technology, organizational units, and “things”.
- There is a “natural ordering” of activities because of “internal dependencies”. The problematic concepts here are of course “natural” and “internal”. What do these concepts stand for? What does “natural” mean and what is “internal” the interior of?
- The concept of “business process” has an integrating character; although defined as a “sequence of activities” it is distorted into an entity that has precedence over objects, resources, people, technology, information, and so on.

From an ADT point of view, these positions demonstrate several things. First, there is a need for some integrating construct, but it is unclear what this construct is. Second, in the absence of such a construct the most near at hand, the business process, is assigned the role of the integrating construct. This has the effect that the original meaning of the concept “process” as a sequence of activities becomes overloaded with connotations that obscure its essence: signifying a temporal order. Third, the conceptual confusion creates insecurity about how basic organizational realms are interrelated. In general, different organizational units are responsible for business processes, information architectures, business rules and IS/IT. Moreover, it is not unusual today to outsource the IS/IT responsibility since this is not considered “core business”. The result is a focus on separate organizational realms and less attention on how they mutually affect each other. Neglecting these interdependencies may cause severe misalignment in organizational development programs.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze prevalent conceptions of basic organizational realms such as coordination, communication, business processes, etc., using ADT as a guiding framework. Based on this analysis, I will suggest the activity domain as the fundamental integrating construct in organizational inquiry, and discuss the implications of this proposal. I argue that the persistent confusion about the definitions of organizational realms is due to the lack of an integrating perspective. Taking any of these realms as a basic perspective for inquiry implies that a multi-dimensional problem is “compressed” into a one-dimensional one where other dimensions are concealed or unfocused. A consequence of this superficial way of approaching a multi-dimensional problem is that interdependencies are veiled. Without an integrative perspective that lays bare these interdependencies, and thus makes them accessible to operationalization, it is likely that the inherent difficulties in managing organizational change programs will be even more aggravated. This calls for a “decompression” approach where relevant dimensions are recognized per se, however dialectically related to each other:

*When analyzing processes it is important to recognize that such analysis must be based [...] on a, necessarily, “multi-perspective” representation [...]. As regards the problem of intervention, [...] it is clear that the problem of redesigning [business processes] is [...] no different from the more general problem of organisational change, which latter consists of the complex search for mutual adaptations between tasks, structure (communications, authority, and workflow systems), people and technology. Thus it is also clear that (re)designing a process poses a socio-technical problem. (Biazzo, 1998, pp. 1012-1013)*
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