Can you provide a brief overview of your research background, including how you came to do research related to organisational design?

Since my early PhD years, I have always been fascinated by the unfolding of information flows within organisations. I started investigating these issues from a theoretical point of view and slowly moved to more empirical and applied work in recent years.

What are focusing your research efforts on at the present?

My research focuses on investigating the types and features of organisational design that are most effective. I am designing and evaluating organisational solutions for micro finance institutions, enforcement agencies, and higher education institutions.

What has been your major research achievement to date?

I designed and evaluated a new approach to micro finance to support poor farmers in India. We showed that agricultural incomes can be increased by more than 20%. The Deputy Governor the Reserve Bank of India and several prominent microfinance practitioners are considering adopting our scheme and helping us scale up the field experiment.

I also designed and evaluated a new approach to university online education --- based on gamification, community building, and crowdsourcing. The impacts on attrition rates, enrollment and educational outcomes were so pronounced that the project became quickly multi-institution, multi-course, and multi-faculty. I cofounded a spin-off company to further develop the approach. After only one year and a half, the company is already sustaining itself.

How do you think research on organisational design will develop over the next five to ten years?

The need for reliable data will bring researchers closer to real-world organisations and more emphasis will be placed on field-experiments to test various organisational designs and their impact on society. At the same time, we will continue to need theories to inform and guide the empirical analysis. Theory and empirics will become more and more integrated.
If you had the ear of an influential politician such as a Prime Minister in Asia, what would tell him or her about your research and what they should do based on it?

To the Indian Prime Minister, I would emphasize that micro finance can still achieve its poverty reduction lofty goals, even despite the recent criticisms. But we need to focus on agricultural projects and move away from group-based lending schemes.

To the Australian Prime Minister, I would emphasize that education is a key export market for Australia. To stay competitive, universities need to focus on online and blended approaches to increase their reach beyond their campuses. This is already happening but one fundamental problem has been overlooked: without true engagement every online initiative is destined to fail. Mixing gamification, community building, and crowdsourcing is the way to go.