RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Previous Volumes:

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PREFACE

Volume 30 of Research in Organizational Change and Development is unique in several ways, not the least of which is that we are celebrating the 30th volume and ushering the enlargement of our editorial team. Danielle P. Zandee from Nyenrode Business University has joined us as we are moving into the fourth decade of ROCD. Danielle's addition to the editorial team represents a commitment to maintaining the high quality of work that many of you have come to expect from this publication platform.

As this Preface is written, humanity is confronting the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating war in Europe, and social and environmental sustainability challenges. Coupled together, we are experiencing forceful waves (that some view as tsunami waves) that are challenging the sustainable future of the globe and humanity. Framing and reframing the state of the field of organization development and change (OD&C) within the continuously evolving world context has been a key tenet of the field and the ROCD series.

As proposals for possible contributions to this volume arrived at our desks a year ago, we picked up some common themes of reflections and insights. As developmental editors and staying true to our mission of nurturing meaningful and rigorous research, we noticed that many of the contributions were driven by either personal or conceptual reflections on the state of the field, the evolving knowledge creation paradigm, and the role that engaged scholarship can play in expanding the field's impact. How to move forward with the OD&C field during this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) period? Precisely now while many people around the world are focusing on their mere survival, we urgently need to ask the question how to "create a better world together?" This timely, well-chosen theme for the upcoming Academy of Management Annual Conference (Seattle, 2022) raises the bar for the OD&C field which is so firmly grounded on humanistic, democratic, emancipatory, and participatory values.

Creating a better world together raises the bar for the ROCD series as well. The authors of this volume heeded this call of our time in writing their thoughtful, collaborative, reflective, and future-forming chapters. Taken together they address some key questions for our field: Who do we need to be as OD&C to help create a better world and under what relational conditions can we do such work? What research and theorizing do we have available, and what thought-action repertoires need further development? What robust OD&C methods do we have, and which new methods are needed to be truly helpful in the creation of a better world together? The chapters for this volume are written by senior scholars in the field of OD&C who share their insights from a long-lived, continuous engagement with both theory and practice. This shows in their

expansive time horizon when reflecting on the field and how they personally navigated through it. Their seniority also shows in their commitment to help bring the field forward while trusting that others may appreciate and continue their legacy. Most of all, and especially endearing in current times, the authors show the joy and strength of collaboration with kindred spirits in inquiry, learning, and writing.

Before introducing each chapter, we note that throughout this volume, authors refer to organization development (OD), organization development change (ODC), and organization development and change (OD&C). While the choice of referent is in the purview of authorship, as editors we view these terms as falling within the domain of organization change and development, the high-level focus of the series and hence, the title.

Our first chapter by *Sue Mohrman and Jean Bartunek* combines two different perspectives, experience of four decades, and expertise to identify questions that must be and are starting to be addressed by the field of ODC. They consider some of the tensions and key issues for ODC and ask the pivotal question how to build a sustainable future for both the world at large and our field. They argue that ODC needs to recontextualize its frameworks and methodologies to be helpful in handling the urgent challenges that humanity is facing. What, for instance, does sustainable development mean in the contextual complexity of such challenges with conflicting interests and aspirations?

Phil Mirvis reflects on the knowledge creation process in the field, based on his four decades of work, as an integral part of the philosophy of science and addresses foundational questions such as: Is it better to use methods that focus on phenomena that are empirically manifest or to get inside phenomena to grasp their existential meaning? Am I researching a determined or indeterminate world? Should my own impressions, interpretations, insights, and reflections be considered "data"? And is practitioner knowledge and language relevant to the scientific study of organizations and change?

David Coghlan and Rami Shani, while focusing on their collaboration during two decades, argue that collaborative partnership is a capability that develops over time. Its quality is an outcome of the collaborative context, the alignment of purpose, the development of work and learning processes, and the development of shared language and success stories. The authors engage in a metalogue where their shared reflection on the formation and development of their collaborative scholarship in the field of organization development and change is itself an instance of a process of shared scholarship. By adopting the format of a metalogue, they intertwine the voices of their individual thinking and their reflective conversation in order to offer an expression of the process of theorizing to scholars who wish to embark upon or study shared scholarship.

Tom Cummings and Chris Worley bring to the forefront the role and insights from the field of management and organization theory to the study of change. The authors argue that understanding organization change is a stable subject in management and organization scholarship, and the singular focus of change management and organization development practice. The authors explore how management and organization theory informs organization change practice

and suggest ways in which theory can be more helpful to practice and how practice can better inform theory.

Mike Beer, based on five decades of working at the boundaries between practice and theory, presents a grounded and actionable theory of a sustainable (adaptive) organizational system of organizing, managing, and leading which managers and consultants can use to plan and carry out organization development and change. Focusing on the top leaders' role of change, he argues that successful leaders are the ones that lead honest, collective, and public conversations about the system's efficacy in achieving its direction and then, based on what they learn, lead systemic change. These leaders have the courage and the skills to advocate a new direction and to inquire in order to learn the whole truth about their organization's current system.

Cliff Oswick and Yuan Li explore how discourse, as a process concerned with the production and consumption of talk and text, has been embraced within the field of organizational change and development (OCD). The authors present six ways of thinking about the role of discourse in OCD, namely as component, process, analysis, method, mindset, and style. Although the advent of dialogic OD has raised awareness of discourse, the authors demonstrate that it remains a marginal and underutilized area of interest. A more expansive role for discursive modes of analysis and engagement within OCD are advanced.

This volume concludes with a contribution by *David Coghlan and Paul Coughlan*. Reflecting on 25 years of collaborating in action learning research initiatives in interorganizational settings, the authors share three key theoretical contributions: (1) the development of a formula for action learning in networks, (2) the notion of action learning research, and (3) the application of action learning research in networks. The authors provide insights into the process of theorizing by showing how these insights emerged through inquiry into experience and how they were consolidated through collaborative action as practice-based research, research as practice, and practice as research toward designed-in impact.

All authors of this volume show how, in their own ways, they embrace the value of engagement and collaboration. Indeed, unlike other academic disciplines, engagement and collaboration have been key tenants of the field's identity, discovery process, and action from its origin until today. Taking the liberty to slightly modify the classic statement by March (2003, p. 206), we capture the current state of the OD&C field as: "a place where learning, collaboration, action and scholarship are revered, not only for what they contribute to personal or social wellbeing but also for the vision of humanity that they symbolize, sustain, and pass on."

In their editorial statement to the first ROCD volume published in 1987, Bill Pasmore and Dick Woodman stated that the purpose of the series was to help produce a shift in thinking about the field in service of expanding the scope of the then current approaches to organization development (Pasmore & Woodman, 1987). Thirty-five years later, this volume is true to the initial vision of the series. Collectively, the chapters are a call to arms to stem multiple, simultaneous global crises. Authors look back and think forward to ensure that current approaches to

organization development leverage foundational knowledge while also leading change to address grand global challenges.

Our role as academics, researchers, practitioners, insider researchers, and engaged scholars offer hope for making a difference in creating a better world together. The reflections captured in many of the chapters about the state of the field, the knowledge that it generated during the past five decades about change, about changing, about development, about developing, and about impact suggest that the field can serve as a leader and a major asset in enhancing a more sustainable future. From our editorial perspective, it is our hope that as you read through this celebratory, timely, and stimulating volume you will consider your own thoughts and practice and possible contribution to the field and the community, and you will contact us to suggest topics or themes for future volumes.

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