Organization Development Network

Organization Development Review

JOURNAL OF THE ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

SPECIAL ISSUE *Guest Editors: David Cooperrider, Lindsey Godwin*

ONE GIANT LEAP
How OD Can Help Lead the Net-Positive Earthshot

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From the Editor

We are very pleased and honored to have a new type of Special Issue this month. Thanks to Dr. David Cooperrider for bringing his global work to our Journal. See the following pieces by Lisa Meyer and overview of this issue by Guest Editors, David Cooperrider and Lindsey Godwin.

We have been working for most of last year exploring various options in Submission and Review Management platforms. We should soon have a new way to submit articles, manage reviewing processes, archive our issues, index our articles, and even sell articles. When it becomes live there will be information on the OD Network website and we will include in future issues of the Journal. We have Anton Shufutinsky, one of our Associate Editors, to thank for the research and vetting.

We have also been working on developing a new *ODR* Awards process, types and criteria of awards, and a new standing committee for *ODR* Awards. This should be approved soon and used to select winners from 2021 year's published articles. These will also be shared on the ODN website and in future issues of the Journal.

Please consider submitting to *OD Review*. The rest of 2022 will have three open issues and we welcome your insights and learnings that can help advance the OD fields in these current times of high need.

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From the Associate Editor

ONE GIANT LEAP: How OD Can Help Lead the Net-Positive Earthshot

For over 50 years, *OD Review* has served to bring together scholarly and practitioner perspectives to foster greater understanding, improved practice, new research, and innovations for critical issues in organization development. To that end, this Special Issue of the *OD Review* edited by guest editors David Cooperrider and Lindsey Godwin, showcases authors who connect organization development with the pressing global challenges of our time and reimagine OD in the context of sustainable development goals, net positive organizations, tri-sector partnerships, and megacommunities.

A theme that runs throughout this collection of articles is how business is experiencing a fundamental economic and social reset, moving from a model that is focused on efficiency to a model that is centered around stakeholders and wellbeing. The drivers behind this economic and social reset certainly *include* the disruptions to work and society caused by the global pandemic and social justice movements. But it is interesting to observe how some of the strongest advocates for rethinking the relationship between business and society, and stakeholder approaches to strategic management, are coming not from external forces outside of business, but from within it. And rather than simply debating the role of business in society, people are taking action to harness the power of business to solve society's greatest challenges.

Of note in these examples is how traditional OD concepts like humanistic approaches to management, organization learning, and systems thinking are being recast into innovative leadership and management practices, and then presented as concepts for creating a culture of value creation and sustainability. This is a transformative shift in the vocabulary of business that portends greater alignment between business management principles and the principles and values of organization development. It also highlights the need for new learning, to grasp the nature of these unprecedented challenges and to guide new action-taking.

In an environment where business strategies are facing greater public scrutiny for their moral and ethical consequences, connecting organization development work to an organization's purpose becomes important for both managers and OD professionals, and greater emphasis is placed on mission-led innovation, business as a force for good, and a culture of collaboration and partnership.

The Fix Is Out

This Special Issue of *ODR* showcases topics like net positive organizations and sustainable development goals in the context of OD. The articles, written by and for people in OD, are to be appreciated in the spirit of questioning and upending constraining assumptions—our own and others—about how OD is expected to work and the type of practice problems for which OD and OD scholar practitioners are best suited. These are grand challenges that present extensive theorizing opportunities, calling for new concepts, relationships, and logics of organizing, and advancing social progress. They present problems that are complex and call for novel ideas and unconventional approaches for tackling their evolving mix of technical and social elements. They also require individuals who can work with multiple perspectives, across multiple

disciplines and in the messiness of real-world problems.

The goal for this special issue is to change the conversation about the relationship between management and organization development in workplaces, institutions, teaching curricula and research—to think and design in ways that transcend our respective areas of specialty and the constraints of conventional thinking. This is a lofty ambition for OD work—to ignite systemic change at a large enough scale and at a fast enough pace to be commensurate with the challenges rapidly expanding around us.

Being Self-Critical

If there is an uncomfortable observation to be made, it is that we're falling short, not just in our work but in our own potential in helping to reshape the language of business, to recenter values into strategies for growth, and to help to shift the focus from doing not just the things business wants to do, but also doing the things it needs to do. Without disciplined systems thinking, it is difficult to see the extent and the depth of a problem, or to see what is possible. OD must be at the table to be part of framing the problem, identifying the levers of change, bringing in multiple perspectives with a diversity of experiences, and representing those who get left out of the conversation—the most vulnerable, those with the most to lose, and the voices of future generations.

The topics being discussed in this Special Issue are not trends. They represent real change that is underway and irreversible. The pressure to think differently, to embrace a new set of rules, is coming from changes in society, and from changing expectations for leadership. Burnes and Cooke (2012) observed that OD is and always has been a continuously evolving body of theory and practice that has proven capable of incorporating and developing new ideas, perspectives, and approaches, and discarding old ones as circumstances change. And it is the only place in the canon of management knowledge that explicitly emphasizes the need to promote democratic values and participation in order to tackle social conflict.

The challenge for OD is to expand and embrace what falls within our responsibility. To re-imagine our approaches, to elevate the dialog, resist adherence to stale methodologies, replace tired terminology, and stay visionary.

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By David L. Cooperrider
and Lindsey N. Godwin
(Guest Editors)

One Giant Leap

How Organization Development and Change Can Help Organizations, Industries, World-Changing Megacommunities, and Transformation Systems Lead the Net-Positive Earthshot

"What we are witnessing is a shift that is all-embracing, rapid, irreversible, extending to the far corners of the planet and involving practically every aspect of business life. We are witnessing a world increasingly divided by companies that are seen as *part of the problem* and those *leading the solution revolution* in this, the era of massive mobilization. What we are witnessing is the birth of a comprehensive new enterprise logic, one that can not only create thicker value and truer wealth but can also be a platform for building the 21st century company, that will be loved by its customers, envied by its peers, and admired by all those who care about the next decisive decades of our planet."

> —*Paul Polman,*
> *Former CEO of Unilever*
> *Honorary Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce*
> *Vice Chair of the United Nations Global Compact*

Special Issue Introduction

Today must be the decisive moment when we make the business of building a better world **the** Organization Development (OD) impact story of our time. We have an incredible opportunity to elevate and activate OD as a field of theory and practice that propels and provides the change leadership and collaborative fully human change capacities required to create entirely sustainable and net positive organizations, tri-sector partnerships, and megacommunities for mobilizing cooperative change and planetary regeneration. As debate and dialogue continues to swirl about the future of OD, the answer to us is clear. We must now put nature, people, and the planet at the heart of OD's purpose.

The gap between humanity's *collaborative change capacity* and our once-in-a-civilization challenges and opportunities has never been wider. The world, especially in our interconnected fabric of organizations, is the ultimate context for OD's change capacity. And because of this, every part of OD's work is called upon to be of larger scope and greater purpose than it has been in the past. Every dimension of the field of OD—its priority research agenda, its values and intervention methods, its imaginative innovations, and its educational pillars—must speak more fully to the destiny of humanity and nature.

The idea for this special issue was inspired and informed by the recent **5th Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit** co-hosted by the Fowler Center at Case Western Reserve University and Berrett-Koehler Publishers and the simultaneous release of the edited volume called *The Business of Building a Better World: The Leadership Revolution That is Changing Everything* (see Cooperrider &

THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

Figure 1. The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals

Selian, 2022).[1] What became apparent in these twin pieces of work is that the massive change agenda facing humanity calls for an OD field that takes one giant leap for humankind and earth. The world needs an OD field that elevates not just a "theory of change" that can meet the moment, but one that will bring the kind of collaborative and process-attuned approaches that can restore our collective confidence in intentional change, renew our shaken and dangerously shattered faith that we are better together, and replenish our intergenerational commitment for handing off to our children a more beautiful and better future that our hearts know is possible.

This special issue is therefore part of the worldwide call of our time, especially a call for our OD field to:

1. *Commit* to supporting and rapidly accelerating the *world's deep transformation* to a sustainable planetary future and regenerative economy in the service of life. Viewed through the lenses of the world's 17 Sustainable Development Goals[2] (summarized in *Figure 1*), the Paris Agreement, and the science-based targets of helping all industry sectors to transform to get to net zero by 2050 and to cut the economy's emissions in half by 2030, we are witnessing an increasingly shared vision emerging everywhere. It's a mobilization to climate action, equality, and betterment for all that the economist and Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus (2017) declared is "a milestone in human history" and represents "the most important set of decisions ever made on the basis of global consensus with quantifiable goals." Today, many are saying that it's time for OD to aim

higher, and that our ultimate 'North Star' as a field is not just *eliminating* unsustainability but *enabling* the actualization of a future we call **full spectrum flourishing**, which we define as "a world where organizations and economies can excel, *all* people can thrive, and nature can flourish, now and across the generations."

We see the commitment of OD to the creation of net-positive **full spectrum flourishing** institutions as a critical leap forward and recognition that the global transition to sustainability must today go beyond its all-too-common meaning of doing less bad. What we aspire to matters. Many in the field don't merely aspire to a world that just survives, but rather to one that thrives. We want a world that flourishes, regenerates, heals, and lives within earth's planetary boundaries. We want human lives, everywhere inclusively and justly, to flourish in health, wellbeing, and actualization of our highest potentials. We want our waterways, our wildlife, our biosphere, our earth, and all of nature to flourish. *Full spectrum flourishing*, as we shall see in this special issue, involves

2. *https://sdgs.un.org/goals*

net-positive pursuit. This is a North Star, not a short-term plan.

2. *Acknowledge* that to build a regenerative and flourishing future we will need to re-design the entire material basis of our civilization. One key to all of this will be the transformative power and innovation capacity of the private sector, not alone, but in partnership with the civil society organizations, communities, networks, and public sector institutions. To say that we need to redesign the material basis of our civilization means we must disconnect growth

destiny and call for change-making beckons OD to seek a new beginning and elevate its overarching professional ideal, its ultimate task, its North Star.

3. *Aim higher and mobilize the momentous energy of this historic time.* All over the world, we are witnessing the dynamic potentials of what economists such as Marianna Mazzucato (2021) are calling "mission economics." Today's emerging mission or purpose economy is, by far, the world's largest change project— with moonshot-like targets guided by the compass of the Paris Agreement

global eradication of smallpox; dwarfing humankind's leap to the moon; and dwarfing the re-building of the world economy through the Marshall Plan. What does this mean for OD? It means evolving our theories of change to meet the moment. It means valuing how OD's strongest history has prepared it for these times, while simultaneously embracing the new, the possible, and the better yet to come. It means going big and being bold. It means being a player on the world stage. It means facilitating impact that can be historic and transformational. It means choosing to lead with planetary purpose and life-centric values. Could an earthshot step and *elevationary* leap in the *identity of OD* become a giant leap *for* humankind? Could it be that the OD field is the most important applied profession in this *world changing* moment? Ending the climate emergency and crossing the threshold to planetary-scale regeneration—and doing so within two decades—involves mobilizing change capacity at scales we have never seen. Moreover, and perhaps most important of all, failure is not an option.

Indeed, the 17 Global Goals, reimagined as the most epic macro-project ever, are not so much about technology or scarcity of resources as they are about unlocking our heretofore unrealized powers of unprecedented collaboration. This is not a science-technology problem. We know, for instance, that we as a human family already possess the capability to feed every person on earth, twice the nutritional requirements they need to thrive; and yet hundreds of millions still go hungry.[3] We know too—in relation to clean energy's super-abundance that the amount of renewable energy from the sun that strikes our Earth in *one* hour is more than the amount of energy that the entire world consumes in a year.[4] To

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> **This is an *earthshot moment for OD* and for everyone and every organization on the planet. It is emerging as the largest macro change-project in human history, dwarfing the collaborations to heal the ozone layer; dwarfing the global eradication of smallpox; dwarfing humankind's leap to the moon; and dwarfing the re-building of the world economy through the Marshall Plan. What does this mean for OD? It means evolving our theories of change to meet the moment.**

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from negative impact. Restorative design is one step and means reversing damage that's already been done. Next, aiming higher, regenerative growth involves creating even better conditions to support the life-enhancing qualities of ecosystems and all of human life. Net positive is when growth, overall, is a force for good.

What's the magnitude of this change opportunity for OD? Think every industry. Think a 90 trillion-dollar economy. Think 200 million and more businesses—many of them larger in economic power than nation-states. Think of the vast numbers of NGOs and public organizations aspiring to contribute to the world's mission, its great global transition from unsustainable development to net positive institutions and networks in every megacity, nation state, community, intergovernmental system, and non-profit organization in the world. As never before in history, a common

and 17 Global Goals. The best and latest science warns us that the impacts of climate change are greater and more far reaching than previously understood. Mobilizing the momentous energy of a mission-driven economy is no small task, yet it needs to be done. The window of opportunity to remain within the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C temperature goal is narrowing by the minute. We *are* in a critical decade. The guiding question before us is as clear as it is daunting: How might we achieve this tremendous global goal—halving global emissions by 2030, and then go on to win the goal of net-zero emissions no later than 2050—while leaving no one behind, advancing prosperity and well-being for all, and reversing nature loss?

This is an *earthshot moment for OD* and for everyone and every organization on the planet. It is emerging as the largest macro change-project in human history, dwarfing the collaborations to heal the ozone layer; dwarfing the

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3. See: *https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-2/en/*

4. See: *https://www.businessinsider.com/this-is-the-potential-of-solar-power-2015-9*

be sure, experts in the field know that clean energy is not a scarcity problem, but a *conversion* opportunity at a transformational and systemic scale. And that's precisely why there are now rigorously researched pathways together with economically solid plans to propel the transition to 100% renewable energy for 139 countries (Jacobson et al., 2017). Science shows we can achieve the dream of nearly 100% clean, renewable, ever abundant energy (and do it primarily with today's existing technologies) while reaping $22.8 trillion a year in health benefits and lowering pollution costs, including over 24.3 million net new jobs over a decade. This research, led by Stanford's Mark Jacobson and his economic and engineering team, is quickly becoming classic.

So, we asked Mark Jacobson in a recent interview, "What's missing in this energy earthshot?" His response was quick, and he declared, "It all boils down to species level cooperation... it's not about cost or technological capacity, but about the human capacity to come together and activate our cooperative potentials for planned change." In other words, it's not about climate catastrophe or collapse; it's about cooperation catastrophe and collapse. It's about the tools and theories for empowering collaborative change. Moreover, that's why the emergence of a worldwide-shared agenda like the SDG's, including our once-in-a-civilization type of transition away from a fossil fuel economy to clean and renewable energy economic system, is so significant and may be the pivotal event of our time in the field of OD. The systems transformations that we face are unprecedented in terms of scale and cooperative complexity, and the stakes require time-critical, organizational, whole industries, and world economic reset. In so many ways the ultimate power to change our world does not reside in technologies or money. The paramount power of systemic betterment is *human cooperation* and OD-type collective action and learning. Too often it feels as if the social

fragmentation and poisonous polarization invading our society is making it impossible to tackle our existential challenges. It's the human-relational and social-psychological dimensions of planned change—what the economist Jeffery Sachs (2015) calls "a fact of blinding simplicity" that our times are yearning for. And this is exactly the work OD was created for.

Recognize that all OD work, from the tiniest and most localized, to the macro and most globalized, involves the intimate integrity of all ecosystems, economies, and societal systems and thereby needs all to be treated as one common system. It's a worldview mistake to view the economy, society, organizations, and nature as separate. Every act involving OD is, at once, a simultaneity. Every OD gesture is part of one resonating whole which impacts nature, people, the planet, and our world's transition *successes—or setbacks*—to a regenerative future. The destinies of all organizations and the natural world are inseparably intertwined. "The first rule of ecology is that everything is connected" (Commoner, 2020). Even the tiniest OD team building or culture-change intervention, for example at an Apple, or an Exxon, or a small enterprise, can—and does—change the world's transition potential. Every action we take in organizations has a ripple impact either in the direction of further downward degeneration or upward regeneration. Every organization, and hence every OD process, is part of the web of life on the earth, and optimum health and well-being is only possible if they exist on all scales of the system, from individuals and groups, to organizations, and to what we call "the envelope of enterprise"—the biosphere, our societies, the earth, and all of nature.

4. *Appreciate* that the next two decades will be decisive and that the science-based targets for climate action, social equity and inclusion, establishing a net positive economy, and advancing health and well-being for all must be achieved if we are to make our needed

transformations before it is too late. In a recent article in the journal *BioScience* (Ripple et. al., 2021), fourteen thousand scientists said, "We are asking for a transformative change for humanity." And our planet and youth are asking us the same. To pledge ourselves and all of OD to our better future, we have no other choice but to make each day count. This is going to be a decisive decade in the history of humankind. The world is not on track to deliver the carbon reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C. Our concern is simple: most people in the field of OD have not been prepared to help organizations become regenerative, net positive forces for building a world of full-spectrum flourishing. This is not meant as criticism. It's offered with a huge sense of opportunity. We believe we are at a Lewinian-like watershed moment in OD and ready to step into the next great episode in OD history.

5. *Accelerate* change success, scale solutions and living proof stories of net positive impact, and leverage OD's commitment to share and accelerate new knowledge of consequence. One of OD's signature strengths is helping systems learn to learn, and this is precisely what we need on a global scale. We cannot reiterate enough that we are in a critical decade, maybe the most important one for humankind. Again, many are calling it an earthshot moment to underscore not just the probable dangers, but also the giant potentials, when we unite around higher purposes, unleash new waves of innovation, and take on things as John F. Kennedy once put it: *"not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win."*[5]

5. *John F. Kennedy Speech at Rice University, September 12, 1962:* https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/040/JFKPOF-040-001

An Introduction to Our Authors and Special Articles

These six actions taken collectively point to not only a North Star for OD, but also to specific pathways of impact. The articles gathered for this special issue begin to bring this portfolio of possibilities to life through powerful examples and stories from the field, new OD models, interdisciplinary evidence-based research, and prospective exploration of what it looks like for OD to rise to this moment.

In our opening article, **Phil Mirvis** shows us how organizations are on the cusp of a sea change and invites all of us in the field of OD "to buckle up" to this moment where the whole of society is changing its mind. He argues that we are at "the end of the beginning" of the sustainability wave, and that for OD to be of vital significance we need to help organizations grow beyond CSR and sustainable development. OD, as Mirvis argues, is in the midst of a great repurposing and our ambition must rapidly rise to the level of *and* beyond industry-leading stars such as Unilever, Salesforce, and Starbucks. He calls the field to put its collective aims to regenerate the planet, restore our fraying social bonds, and create a better world that not only survives but thrives.

The next article proposes that in order to achieve the moonshot moment before us in ways that lead to positive transformation, we must facilitate and consult to address the compound social and planetary crises and *traumas* of our times. Here, **Yabome Gilpin-Jackson** draws on recent human science research into posttraumatic growth and expands on this lens, coupled with Appreciative Inquiry's (AI) search for what gives life and meaning to human systems, even while in the midst of tragedy. "Resonant Transformation" is presented, then, to denote deep development and shifts required to take us into a positive future. We are collectively tired, stressed, and overwhelmed and the oscillating patterns of trauma seem never-ending. Recent research has left little doubt that this is happening. Much needed is *connection to resonant community* and the relational practices, questions, and models facilitating Resonant Transformation.

Next up, **David Cooperrider** and **Lindsey Godwin** echo the sentiment that "history has its eyes on us." They share their first-hand journey into net positive and full spectrum OD and how the world's earthshot mission has vitally elevated how we view the primary task and future agenda of OD. If you are looking for yet one more stale conversation on the withering away, even the end of OD, you will be disappointed. Starting with the story of their OD work with the UN Secretary General and Nobel Laureate Kofi Annan—where they designed and facilitated the largest world summit in UN history between hundreds of corporations and the United Nations—the authors present two new grounded frameworks or models for doing net positive OD "inside the enterprise" (they call it green micro-OD) and net positive OD "outside of the enterprise" (they call it blue macro-OD). From their experiences leading many net-positive design summits at companies such as Apple, National Grid, and Clarke Industries, the authors offer up a net positive OD playbook for (1) enabling business innovation and excellence in *shared value strategy* terms, and (2) enabling organizations to expand upward and outward as change platforms for world betterment, where the organization becomes the conduit or agent of OD "out there" while realizing the reciprocal power of *mirror flourishing* on the "in here" of the enterprise. The authors lift up a truth that could change the life of every person in the field of OD: "You are alive at just the right moment to help human systems at every level change everything."

Jean Bartunek and **Susan Mohrman** next ask what it will really take for OD to become an agent of ecosystem change transcending individual organizations and empowering tri-sectoral megacommunities focusing on fostering "our common home"? The scale and urgency of the problems faced by humanity require a fundamental expansion of the premises, foci, capabilities, and technologies of OD to foster dynamic collaborations between diverse sets of stakeholders over *extended time* periods. "It's necessary," state the authors, "that OD becomes concerned about ecological sustainability." Their case in point was a study they did of major sustainable food systems change, now spanning more than a decade, across all of northeast Ohio and the city of Cleveland. The implications for OD are many, for example the need for vastly expanded temporal perspectives that systemic change requires and the need to build dynamic infrastructures that support the emergence of spinoffs, new initiatives, and ever-changing configurations of stakeholders across the public, private, and nonprofit spheres.

Raj Sisodia and **David Cooperrider** next team up to propose that the principles forming the pillars of the Conscious Capitalism (CC) movement and OD's values and its new North Star represent an aligned and increasingly high-potential partnership for bringing about the next great episode in business history. The mutually elevating dynamism between OD's values, and each of the core tenets of CC—designing for *Higher Purpose, Stakeholder Orientation, Conscious Leadership, and Conscious Culture*—represent a magnificent marriage because *the more the means and ends of change are congruent,* the more successful any net-positive change effort will be. The world *is* crying out for the business of betterment at scales and speeds we've never imagined. It's also calling out for regeneration-as-healing. The idea of "the healing organization" is presented and illustrated through a contemporary case of a company in Costa Rica that's consistently rated as the Best Place to Work in the country, classified as a "sustainability champion" by the World Economic Forum, and whose CEO was recently recognized as the highest-rated corporate leader in Costa Rica. That's what a union of conscious capitalism and OD's collaborative change values can enable. Business *can* become a place of healing for employees and their families, a source of healing for customers, communities, and ecosystems, and a force for healing in society, helping alleviate cultural, economic, and political divides.

In the next article, **Giles Hutchins** continues this kind of interdisciplinary bridging and draws inspiration from pioneering thinking within biomimicry, circular

economy, adult developmental psychology, quantum physics, biophilia, sociology, complexity theory, and consciousness development. Realizing we are in the midst of a civilization-wide transformation of the scale never seen before, the author connects the dots between these fields through a powerful framework—"leading by nature." This framework enables leadership and OD work to become regenerative: learning to attune to nature's wisdom; building life-affirming organizations amid transformational times; and, perhaps most important, cultivating the combination of self-awareness and systemic-awareness within and outside ourselves.

The pressure is on, states **Katrin Muff** in the next article, for business to embrace sustainability and beyond. Mandatory ESG (environmental, social, and governance) reporting, regulatory changes, increased customer sensitivity, and pressure from within, leave current CEOs little choice. Based on a five-year research project studying Positive Impact Organizations (PIOs), Muff identifies five OD challenges, and the ways to intervene and overcome these challenges. For example, the organization needs *strategic clarity* regarding its aims. The guiding change question here is this: "does the organization seek to simply reduce its negative impact through reducing its CO_2 or other emissions; or is the organization seeking to increase its positive impact by focusing its product innovation on societal and environmental challenges such as the world's 17 SDGs including achieving gender equality; no poverty; zero hunger; affordable clean energy; quality education everywhere? In the end the two greatest predictors of OD success in this domain, according to the author's research, are not of strategic or operational business nature but of two mindsets, what she refers to as "the outside-in" change mindset and "the co-creative organization" change mindset.

The next article, by **Jib Ellison** and **David Cooperrider**, affirms that the global agenda for a regenerative economy in the service of life, as daunting as it seems, is an invitation and a call into OD's new and expansive frontier. In sharing what is likely the largest, longest running corporate compliance-*to*-sustainability-*to*-regeneration project in the history of OD, with an organization that has 2.3 million employees and annual revenue of nearly $560 billion, they offer seven insights for the kind of micro- to macro-OD that can help us explore the question: "How might we change organizations who will, in turn, go on to change our world?" The article describes one such OD effort that many in the field want to see more of, that is, a sharing of the scarcer longitudinal cases of OD that grows and endures, especially the kind of OD that multiplies in momentum (in this case over decades), serves to elevate ambitions over time, and where OD's collaborative values and capacities are institutionalized, increasingly embedded, and extended outward. Written in the spirit that Herb Shepard (1975) once did in his early article in the *OD Practitioner* called "Rules of Thumb for Change Agents"— aphorisms such as "Stay Alive" and "Start Where the System is At" or "Light Many Fires" and "Never Work Uphill"—this article provides seven insights for helping organizations cross today's great divide, it's a massive next leap, moving from *sustainability to regeneration*.

This article is followed by **Steve Waddell** and **Sandra Waddock**'s powerful union of theory and practice arising out of a multi-year action research program. It takes the domain of macro-OD to a whole new level of experimentation with core concepts of "transformations systems" (T-systems) and the institutional innovation of "transformation catalysts" (TCs) as pathways to system transformation. Take a T-system such as the entire universe of actors working toward an economic reset or a double-loop like transformation. T-systems comprise all those initiatives— *all* tools, *all* strategies, *all* initiatives—that aim to move the status quo in the direction of a new shared set of values. T-systems, therefore, transcend and include other large framings such as "movements" and "networks" and "transorganizational systems." TCs or transformation catalysts, on the other hand, organize T-systems or the set of change initiatives working towards similar goals by aggregating or connecting, cohering, and amplifying their work.

The goal is to bring different change actors into coherence and alignment (the catalytic actions) in new ways that enable them to be more impactful and effective because they understand themselves collectively *as* a T-system and begin to act in new ways oriented towards effective change. The authors conclude with five propositions and special digital tools for OD practitioners and argue that with their particular skills and knowledge base, OD practitioners are perfectly placed to help bring about the T-systems transformations that are urgently needed.

Our final article lives and models an important design thinking principle— "Avoid Fields. Jump Fences." That's what **Bruce Mau**, one of the world's leading design thinkers is doing. Building from an early work of his titled *Massive Change* where he stated, "it's not about the world of design but design of the world," the author explores a sampling of 24 design-inspired principles and reaches out in learning partnership to the OD field. In his view we are all designers and design catalysts and he suggests that our earthshot moment is a perfect time for interdisciplinary exploration and synergy. Just as the design field is entering a new era beyond "human-centered design" to a "life-centric" worldview the author is calling all of us in the fields of change to embrace ways of thinking and doing that place all of life at the center from which everything radiates. We cannot afford the luxury of cynicism, argues the author, and he believes the real story of our time is optimism—including the many people truly working together, doing things to help others, giving the world the gift of invention and creativity and culture.

Taken as a collective portfolio, these special issue articles paint a powerful picture of what is possible—and needed—for not only OD, but for the world—and for ourselves. As the author bell hooks (2009) once wrote in an essay titled *Touching the Earth*:

When we love the Earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully.
I believe this.
The ancestors taught me it was so.

We hope that you can see your own work echoed in and informed by these contributions. Our collective future as a field and as a planet is resting on what we do together from here.

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Renewing the Purpose of OD

From Sustainability to Leading Social Change

By Philip Mirvis

In its origins, Organization Development (OD) served noble purposes—to help people to grow and to increase the health and vitality of organizations. Pioneers used it to raise people's self- and social-awareness, promote democratic management, humanize the workplace, improve race relations, ameliorate conflicts, and enable people to work together better in their organizations and communities. As a child of the '60s, that's why I gravitated to OD.

Then things changed. The shareholder right's movement in the 1980s led business to fixate on maximizing short-term profits. The result: higher returns, but also widespread restructuring, downsizing, hostile takeovers, cheap labor outsourcing, and the like. Promises of life-long work for an organization gave way to free agency, job hopping, then gig work. The social contract between an employer and employees evolved into "what's in it for me?" Cynicism about people and mistrust of institutions crept into psyches and society (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Next technology stretched work to 24/7 and interpersonal relations were mediated by email, texts, and tweets.

Amidst all of this, OD became a "technique" (aka "change management") to implement this "new order" and was stripped of its animating intent, ethical moorings, and higher aims (Mirvis, 2006; Burnes, 2009). More than a few of its leading lights concluded "OD is dead!" But then, things changed… for the better.

Renewing OD—First Steps

Two forces led to the renewal of OD. On the supply side, positive psychology swept into society (Seligman & Csikszentmihali, 2000) and innovative ODers developed methods of "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI). According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005, p. 2), AI involves "the search for best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them," and the discovery of "… what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms." AI builds on the logic of social construction and the notion that people can construct new and better ways of organizing through imagination and collective will. Language and emotion are building blocks of this social reality. Hence much of the practical emphasis in AI concerns new ways of inquiring and talking about the world. Then came "Dialogic OD '' where generative conversations allow a multiplicity of views to emerge and coalesce on how best to adapt to change (Marshak & Busche, 2009).

On the demand side, business was awakened to ecological "limits to growth" and the "inconvenient truth" of climate change and turned its attentions to sustainable development. In 2004, Cooperrider and colleagues took leaders of business, government, and civil society through an AI process at the inaugural meeting of the UN Global Compact and collective conversations on creating a more sustainable

future followed in multilateral forums, company boardrooms, then offices, plants, and nowadays zoom meetings around the world (UN Global Compact, 2004). Millennials and then Gen Zers populated organizations and brought energy, idealism, and the drive to improve society back into OD. Seemingly it could help us to find our way to a better and more sustainable future!

A Premature Victory Lap?

But, before taking a victory lap, consider this: at their current pace, efforts to achieve environmental sustainability will not succeed. Even with "net zero" emissions, climate change effects will be calamitous (IPCC, 2021). The real challenge is to move beyond sustainability to develop practices that *restore* and *regenerate* the world we live in. Business today is on the cusp

stakeholders expect companies today to speak out and take action on racial and economic equity, #MeToo, a living wage and corporate tax rates, and, in the US, myriad political issues. Meanwhile, consumers worldwide today want brands that both "solve my problems" (85%) *and* help to "solve society's problems" (80%) (Edelman, 2020).

All of this is part of the new world of business—and society. Let's look first at the roots and ramifications of this new operating environment and then what it could mean for renewing OD... yet again!

The Promise and Limits of Sustainability

When the idea of sustainability first caught on in business, so did the need to attend to your company's *footprint*. Initially, the footprint referred to the

the environment, or taking bribes; and Google stopped selling ads using your personally identifiable information from web browsers. In his annual letters to investors, Larry Fink, influential CEO of BlackRock, has urged businesses to stop focusing on financial performance alone and take social and environmental concerns more seriously (BlackRock.com, 2021).

The point here is that a company's oversized footprint on the environment is bad. Everybody wants less of it! How about a company's footprint in society? No employee should suffer at the hands of an abusive boss or work for an exploitative company. No customer should be scammed or discover they purchased unsafe or defective goods. No investor should be lied to or cheated. And no community wants a bad company in its neighborhood. It is widely known that consumers, investors, and the public at large will punish "bad" company behavior—by bad-mouthing the business, giving it a thumbs down, and sometimes going so far as to join social media campaigns and boycotts. Even Milton Friedman would likely agree that company actions taken to forestall such problems are in the best interests of investors.

So we are all for reducing the harms of the company footprint as concerns the ecology of the planet and health of its inhabitants. But this approach has been mostly motivated by risk management. Attention to its footprint has seen companies focus on *minimizing* impacts, *mitigating* risks, *protecting* reputation, and "doing less bad." Operating in this mode makes managers reactive rather than proactive, dutiful rather than creative, and cautious rather than courageous.

Look at the consequences: John Elkington, the "Godfather of Sustainability" and originator of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) concept twenty-five year ago, has issued a "recall" on the TBL. He has "given up" on this "report card" because it has been "captured and diluted by accountants" and reduced to "box ticking" in corporate annual reports (Elkington, 2020). Like so many endeavors, it seems the sustainability movement has been damned by its first principle. With all of this focus on

> A sea change is underway where employees, customers, and other stakeholders expect companies today to speak out and take action on racial and economic equity, #MeToo, a living wage and corporate tax rates, and, in the US, myriad political issues. Meanwhile, consumers worldwide today want brands that both "solve my problems" (85%) *and* help to "solve society's problems" (80%).

of serious social change. In addition to its tragic toll on human health and well-being, the coronavirus stalled economic growth and shuttered over one-third of small businesses during lockdowns—historic numbers permanently (Statistica Research Department, 2021). It also accelerated shifts to digital shopping and e-commerce and a hybrid workplace of in-office and remote workers is the new normal. Social movements concerning racial, ethnic, and gender equity are sweeping into companies and most business leaders agree that it is essential to promote more equitable growth.

A sea change is underway where employees, customers, and other

environmental impact that a business has on society from its carbon emissions, energy use, waste production, pollutants, and such. Later, it was applied to a company's negative impact on society—such as unhealthy food, unsafe products, unfair employment practices, and other unsavory business doings. In response, food producers and consumer goods companies reduced their use of "bad" ingredients and turned to more environmentally-friendly packaging.

Recent years have seen many companies *stop* doing bad things: select ones stopped selling cigarettes and assault rifles; major retailers certify that their overseas suppliers are *not* exploiting labor, polluting

risk-management and harm-reduction, as some observers have put it, the company footprint is now "stuck in the mud."

Doing Better: Sharing Value & Serving Stakeholders

A familiar (and tiresome) critique is that CSR is just greenwashing, designed to deflect attention from what's really going on in companies. But a stronger challenge is that CSR-type activities are "bolted on" rather than "built in" to the business (Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2017). They are "nice" to do, but are simply not planned, managed, measured, and held-to-account like business activities connected to the P&L statement and manager's performance reviews.

Bridging this gap, Michael Porter and Mark Kramer (2006; 2011) proposed that companies key their philanthropy to the interests of stakeholders and the firm's brand and made a business case for "shared value" whereby companies could find business opportunities in social and environmental problems and devise business models that benefit both business-and-society. The *Harvard Business Review* heralded this as "the next evolution of capitalism."

Big companies first responded by acquiring socially responsible brands. Then leading ones took steps to clean up their existing product portfolios and develop new healthy, eco-friendly, and socially conscious offerings and brands. Nowadays,

"purpose" is the watchword in business circles. Consumer companies have turned to purpose-driven branding and marketing. B2B companies use purpose to differentiate themselves from competitors. Employers pitch purpose to their Millennial and incoming Gen Z employees. And countless management gurus promise business leaders that purpose produces significant profits. It surely can, but for whom: Shareholders?

We got a fresh answer when U.S. CEOs of the Business Roundtable declared, "Americans deserve an economy that allows each person to succeed through hard work and creativity and to lead a life of meaning and dignity" and were joined by the World Economic Forum in favor of stakeholder capitalism (Business Roundtable, 2019). But here's the rub: 84% of Americans agree that companies "often hide behind public declarations of support for stakeholders but don't walk the walk" and a great majority worldwide don't trust what CEOs have to say (Edelman, 2019; Just Capital, 2021). It is easy enough to see why so many view this purpose pledge, given past history and performance, as corporate PR, gaslighting, or worse, "putting lipstick on a pig."

Winners Take All, an insider's book about the big business leaders who meet at the World Economic Forum at Davos, sign on to Business Roundtable's purpose pledge, and herald their company's CSR and sustainability credentials, calls it all "an elite charade" (Girigharadas, 2019).

These business titans purport "to change the world while also profiting from the status quo," says one reviewer, and goes on "Theirs is conservatism camouflaged in radical adjectives; change you can't believe in" (Chakrabortty, 2019).

The Next Step: Leading Social Change

How about creating change people can believe in? We are at the 'end of the beginning' of this current wave of sustainability. One of the early movers into the next wave is Unilever, a global maker of food, beverages, and home and personal goods. Listen to former CEO, Paul Polman's beliefs as he took over leadership of the company:

> "Professor Michael Porter's shared value theory proposes aligning a company's purpose with meaningful contributions to society. My philosophy goes a step further: it's not enough to say you contribute to a better world. The world is at a point where you have to solve the issues and reverse what is happening.... Instead of finding ways to use the society and the environment to be successful, companies must contribute to society and environment in order to sustain success" (George et al., 2013, p. 4).

A report on the *Principles for Purposeful Business* by the British Academy states it in this way: "the purpose of business is to solve the problems of people and the planet profitably, and not profit from causing problems" (Mayer, 2018). This theme is developed and illustrated in *The Business of Building a Better World: The Leadership Revolution that is Changing Everything* (Cooperrider & Selian, 2021), and in this special issue as well.

Yes, progress is afoot. Some leading businesses are turning away from quarterly forecasts and short-term profit-taking toward longer term value creation. New ideas and models of a more equitable and inclusive economy are moving from academic circles into business practice. B Corps—now numbering over 4,000 companies—are legally required to produce

Some leading businesses are turning away from quarterly forecasts and short-term profit-taking toward longer term value creation. New ideas and models of a more equitable and inclusive economy are moving from academic circles into business practice. B Corps—now numbering over 4,000 companies—are legally required to produce a "public benefit" for society and/or the environment while earning profits. Companies individually and in partnerships with other businesses, government, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are tackling the world's most pressing problems.

Figure 1. Company Footprint versus Handprint

a "public benefit" for society and/or the environment while earning profits. Companies individually and in partnerships with other businesses, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are tackling the world's most pressing problems. Behind all of this is a new conception of the role of business in society: Attention to sustainability is good, but NOT GOOD ENOUGH to meet the "grand challenges" we face today.

**The Company Handprint:
Create Social Value, Do More Good**

Sustainability was symbolized by a *footprint*—with the message being to reduce your company's footprint and do less harm. How should we symbolize the message to increase a company's social impact—to create social value and do more good? My colleague Brad Googins and I have proposed the company *handprint* (Mirvis & Googins, 2022)! Here's a bit of backstory on where that idea and image came from.

Two decades ago, Dow Chemical announced bold goals to improve its environmental performance. Stretch targets for reducing energy use and waste, and for eliminating leaks, spills, and injuries on-the-job, would demand a 90% improvement from baseline performance. No one thought it possible but Dow met its goals and more—and saved $5.5 billion from these improvements, based on an incremental investment of $1 billion. Next round, Neil Hawkins, then Dow's VP of

Sustainability, proposed even harder-to-reach environmental impact reduction targets. But the reaction was ho-hum—"been there, done that." Colleagues challenged Neil: "If Dow is truly a leader in science and technology, why not apply that know-how to solve significant world challenges?" So beyond reducing its impacts further, Dow would shoot for a fivefold increase in sales of products using "sustainable chemistry" and it would deliver three breakthroughs from its labs to solve world challenges.

In discussing this game change with Hawkins and another executive Bo Miller, my colleague Brad Googins and I agreed that the company had shifted its approach from reducing risks to seizing opportunities. Bo summed it up this way: "we are not just doing 'less bad'," he said, "we are doing 'more good'." Thus, the idea of a company handprint was born.

We then compared differences between a company' footprint and handprint (See *Figure 1*). Typically, companies talk about their footprint in terms of the natural environment. The handprint represents a company's impact on the ecology *and* society. Companies try to *minimize* their footprint and "do less bad." The handprint is about *maximizing* a company's social impact—enhancing employee's lives, repairing the environment, finding opportunities in response to social challenges, and "doing more good" for people and the planet. Companies "tick the box" and report on their environmental and social impact. By comparison, hands

can reach out, feel, touch—and meet and mingle with other hands. Yes, green is gold. But the well-placed hand can create value, too, for both business and society.

To maximize a company's positive impact, rather than minimize its negative impact, calls for a paradigm shift (Polman & Winston, 2021). So shift your focus from footprint to handprint, from managing risks to creating social value. And imagine using your talent and skills as an ODer to help your clients or organization "solve the problems of people and planet profitably." What are the big problems to address?

**5 Big Problems and How OD
Can Help to Solve Them**

Wherever your clients or company is based around the globe, there are five universal problems that business must address to earn the public's trust and help to build a better future:

Purpose. The idea that the purpose of business is to maximize profits and serve only its shareowners is shortsighted, lopsided, and well past its shelf life. CEO's have agreed that employees, customers, suppliers, and communities are stakeholders who should be on the same footing as investors. But, at this pivotal post-pandemic moment, many say that business must take the lead, create solutions, and drive change on today's most pressing issues.

Less than half of employees worldwide know what their organization stands for and what makes it different (Robison, 2019). Can OD help? Methodologies like AI and Generative Dialogue can help a senior team think through the core purpose of their business and define its positive contributions to society. ODers can also facilitate all-company town halls, peer-to-peer discussions, and challenge sessions where managers and employees can weigh in on purpose and reality test whether the words match the company's deeds.

To get face-to-face with stakeholders, one company I worked with had its executives live in customer's homes for three days to better understand their needs and how company products served their purposes. Another had employees work

alongside business customers to gain a fuller perspective on their purposes as a supplier. A third had its corporate staff visit social service agencies, schools, and community groups to ask them how their company met their needs. In each of these assignments, company personnel were given a short training course on cultural awareness, interviewing, and observation and then operated as "business anthropologists" in their stakeholder's settings.

To raise awareness of purpose in Unilever, business group president Tex Gunning, working with a team of OD facilitators, led managers and young leaders from seventeen national companies in the Asia-Pacific on a series of "learning journeys" to raise their consciousness about social, economic, and environmental issues and the needs of their countrymen. They traveled to locales of historic and cultural relevance, hiked through mountains and deserts, met with school children, indigenous peoples, everyday consumers and the poor, learned from leaders in business, government, and community organizations, and talked deeply with one another about their personal and business purposes. He then assembled and led a multilevel and multidisciplinary study team that interviewed Unilever's top executives, its business leaders and marketers around the world, plus outside experts and members of the Board of Directors, to calibrate the company's purpose, The team also benchmarked firms in Unilever's industries and studied best practices worldwide.

Over two hundred executives reviewed the findings, discussed and analyzed the company's role in the parallel problems of obesity and malnutrition, its impact on air-and-water, and the like. This stimulated heated debate about the moral responsibilities of corporations versus the moral hazard posed by using shareholders' monies to address the world's problems. Then one executive made this breakthrough comment about Unilever's taking a purposefully positive role in society: "It's who we are. And the way we do business... It's in our genes." Generative dialogue led to action and Unilever today is rated the #1

company in the world on "doing good" (Globescan/Sustainability, 2021).

Prosperity. Let's be honest, business has not to date shared value equitably. From 1975 to 2019, productivity increased 155% in the US while wages rose roughly 12% overall and, inflation adjusted, actually declined for hourly and nonsupervisory salaried workers (Economic Policy Institute, 2021). Current pay gaps between employed men versus women persist in the US (16%), EU (16.2%), and Asia Pacific (14.8%) (Ortiz-Espina & Roser, 2019). And wealth gaps between rich and poor nations, and between majority versus minority populations within nations, have grown.

Business leaders seem to be waking up to fairness. How can ODers help to create more inclusive prosperity? Those who specialize in compensation can help companies to audit their current systems. Audits at Salesforce and PayPal revealed massive gaps between men and women and whites and minorities in similar jobs that were swiftly remedied. To open up job opportunities, several firms I've studied have "hire local" or "welfare-to-work" programs that include customized training, apprenticeships, mentoring programs, work-family support, and subsidized transport to and from the job (Mirvis, 2020). Shinola employs laid-off auto workers and young, mostly Black and ethnic minorities to make watches and leather goods in a reclaimed factory in inner-city Detroit. Ben & Jerry's sources chocolate brownies from Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, NY, made by the "chronically unemployed"—ex-convicts, former drug abusers, and disadvantaged youth—whom Greyston hires and trains in business and social skills. What could your company or clients do to promote more inclusive prosperity?

Black Lives Matter put social and economic justice on the corporate agenda. Leading firms are taking steps to build a more multicultural and bias-free workplace. Starbucks (2020), for instance, has pledged that BIPOC (Black, indigenous, people of color) employees will comprise 30% of its corporate workforce by 2025 and over 40% of its retail

and manufacturing jobs. With the aid of diversity-and-inclusion advisors, its managers are schooled in how "unconscious bias" intrudes on their judgments about people and the company launched a series of internal "courageous conversations" among staff about social justice. Starbucks publishes details on the racial, ethnic, and gender makeup of its workforce from top and bottom and measure-and-reward its managers based on diversity hiring and advancement.

People. Globally, just 20% of the workforce is engaged by their work (34% in the US and Canada; 11% in Western Europe). The rest just "show up" on their jobs or are totally turned-off (Gallup, 2021). Studies tell us that Millennials (born 1981–1996) and Gen Zers (born 1997–2012) work for purpose more so than a paycheck. And some 90% want to help solve social and environmental problems on their jobs! (Cone, 2016; Porter Novelli/Cone, 2019).

Helping people develop and express themselves as "citizens" is right in the wheelhouse of OD. Onboarding, personal development programs, and leadership training can be shaped to enable people to learn about social and environment issues, provide hands-on exposure to and experience with them, and include "service learning" projects where people can help address them. Over 30 companies I've studied created global pro bono programs where employees volunteer, often in teams, for service assignments to nonprofits, social enterprises, government agencies, and small businesses to build their capacities to solve problems and create social change (Mirvis et al., 2020).

For instance, German-based software maker SAP has sent over 1250 employees on pro bono service assignments to consult with innovation hubs, incubators, and academic centres to build their know-how and to brighten the prospects of over 450 social entrepreneurs and enterprises in 49 countries. Listen to one young SAP staffer, about to launch a social innovation lab for women entrepreneurs, "I want to help these women get new hope

for a better future. And I want to use this time to get to know who I am and what my potential is...."

Psychologist Michael Csikszentmihalyi (1993) depicts humans as having an "evolving self" whose growth hinges on attaining fuller consciousness of their inner nature and of the world that surrounds them. In developmental terms, this posits that human potential expands as people gain a deeper sense of their personal aspirations and connect it to what is happening in their world. In so doing,

companies—and the world—so desperately need. Would this form of employee engagement with CSR work for you or your clients?

Products. What we put in our bodies (food) and on our bodies (clothes) is problematic. Chief culprits include processed-food purveyors, fast-food franchises, and fast-fashion brands that exploit labor (overseas and domestic) and produce massive amounts of waste. Meanwhile, billions worldwide can't get access

How about promoting "social innovation" with your clients or organization? An article in the *OD Practitioner* on "Redesigning Business to Serve Society" reports myriad ways to connect OD to social innovation (Mirvis, 2017). ODers can, for instance, design and facilitate social innovation contests and "hackathons" and help to organize social innovation incubators and accelerators. Mark Thain, an accountant turned intrapreneur, is founder of Barclays Social Innovation Facility, an internal accelerator for the development of commercial solutions to social and environmental challenges. Employees within Barclays participate in a 3-day intrapreneur lab where their ideas are developed and they gain a deeper understanding of what it takes to launch innovations within the company. For the next three months, they get support from internal mentors and then pitch their innovations to senior execs. Innovations launched include a credit card that "rounds up" the charge at bank expense and donates the added funds to social purposes, loans with reduced credit charges for consumers who otherwise wouldn't qualify for such rates, and a suite of impact investing products. In service of the business ecosystem, the Barclays accelerator is also open to other companies.

> Pro bono service is a great way to engage employees and prepare them to lead in an era of rapid social change. By working collaboratively in a team of peers, and confronting and addressing clients' complex social challenges, pro bono participants take on new roles, experiment with new behaviors, and see markets and societies from a new vantage point. This readies them to be the agents of change that their companies—and the world—so desperately need. Would this form of employee engagement with CSR work for you or your clients?

Csikszentmihalyi contends, "One needs to step out of the cocoon of personal goals and confront larger issues in the public arena (p. 132)."

PYXERA Global, a Washington, DC based NGO that places pro bono volunteers for over thirty companies around the world, reports from its assessments that participants gain cultural awareness, problem-solving skills, and a new perspective on the role of business in society. Companies see an increase in staff motivation, retention, and performance and learn more about countries important to business expansion.

Pro bono service is a great way to engage employees and prepare them to lead in an era of rapid social change. By working collaboratively in a team of peers, and confronting and addressing clients' complex social challenges, pro bono participants take on new roles, experiment with new behaviors, and see markets and societies from a new vantage point. This readies them to be the agents of change that their

to banking, technology, or adequate health care while overconsumption in wealthy nations threatens our health, shrivels our psyches, and is killing our earth's life support systems.

Many ODers work with strategy, product development, and marketing teams to help them improve communication and coordination and become more agile and customer-oriented. All good. But ODers can also help them to "clean up" ingredients and waste, add social and environmental content to products, packaging, and brands, and involve customers in co-creation of what's on offer. LEGO got into the co-creation game early when its brand fans began to propose "idea sets" for the company and LEGO users devised brick constructions that promote STEM learning for youth. Now it crowdsources many of its concepts and designs from brand fans and invites super-users into its innovation center to co-create new products with its multidisciplinary design team that includes ODers.

Planet. The earth is warming. What's next? Glaciers, snowpack, and polar ice sheets melt and sea levels rise, threatening coastal cities and islands with flooding. Oceans heat up and become more acidic, bleaching coral and dissolving the shells of marine life. Heatwaves increase, wildfires, hurricanes, and storms intensify, and we get extreme weather events. Is sustainability the answer? As Bill McDonough, architect and pioneer in "cradle-to-cradle" design, likes to say: "sustainable means 100% less bad" which means not adding any more damage. A more ambitious agenda is to help restore our Earth that has been ravaged by centuries of industrialization and deforestation.

Top companies have a variety of "green" jobs in operations and supply chain, marketing and services, and other areas. ODers can broaden the base by helping firms create "green teams" to tackle

issues in the business and more broadly. Timberland, for example, engages its employees in green projects as 'Earth-keepers.' It also activates its retailers and consumers to serve alongside its employees in environmental projects in the spring on Earth Day and in community service in the fall through its "Serv-a-palooza." The aims: Develop young people's leadership skills and promote environmental and civic activism.

Experts in business, government, NGOs, and academe believe that the best way to address planetary problems is through partnerships between businesses, NGOs, governments, and universities. Today there are hundreds of global multi-business and multisector initiatives regarding climate change (alliances for carbon reduction, energy conservation, and green IT) and natural resource stocks (partnerships around sustainable fish, water, agriculture, and food), plus thousands at regional, state, and local levels.

Here, too, OD can play an important role in helping these multi-party partnerships to form and function effectively (Worley & Good, 2021). Peter Senge stimulated a revolution in business practice with his writings on mental models and systems thinking and his idea that organizational learning is key to success. Then he put these ideas into action facilitating multi-company and multiparty efforts to address environmental and social challenges (Senge et al., 2008). As he points out, the world is full of smart people but the only way we can solve our systemic problems is if we shed our particularistic assumptions and preferred solutions, combine our smarts, and learn together.

Repurposing OD— Leading Social Change

There you have it: There are lots of ways your clients or company can apply and enhance its handprint to better serve society. To review what's ahead as business, assisted by OD, takes a lead on social change:

» Companies will actively help to SOLVE SOCIETAL PROBLEMS.

» Attention will turn to EQUITY AND INCLUSION.
» Employees will DEVELOP as SOCIAL INNOVATORS to enable their organization to create a better future.
» Customers will be ACTIVATED and CO-CREATE products and services that solve their problems *and* those of society.
» Our collective ambition will be to RESTORE and REGENERATE the planet; and
» Business, government, and civil society will work together to create SYSTEMIC SOCIAL CHANGE.

That's a lot, so buckle up: the journey ahead won't be easy but you will be at the forefront of reinventing your client's or your own business and of repurposing OD.

Author Note: Select material adapted from Mirvis, P.H. & Googins, B. G. (2022). *Sustainability to Social Change: Lead Your Business from Managing Risks to Creating Social Value.* London: Kogan Page.

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Philip Mirvis is an organizational psychologist whose studies and private practice concern large-scale organizational change, the workforce and workplace, and business leadership in society. An advisor to companies and NGOs on five continents, he has authored or edited sixteen books including *The Cynical Americans* (social trends), *Building the Competitive Workforce* (human capital investments), *Joining Forces* (human dynamics of mergers), *To the Desert and Back* (business transformation), and *Beyond Good Company* (social responsibility). His latest are *How to Do Relevant Research: From the Ivory Tower to the Real World* and *Sustainability to Social Change: Lead Your Company from Managing Risks to Creating Social Value.* Mirvis is a fellow of the Academy of Management where he received a career achievement award as "Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner." He teaches Exec-Ed in business schools and is senior research fellow at the Babson Social Innovation Lab. He can be reached at *pmirv@aol.com*.

What's Trauma Got to Do With it?

Facilitating our Giant Leap through Resonant Transformation and Trauma-Informed Appreciative Inquiry

By Yabome Gilpin-Jackson

Abstract

This article proposes that in order to achieve the moonshot moment before us in ways that lead to positive transformation, we must facilitate and consult to address the current realities of continuous and compound social and planetary crises and traumatic events. The research and practice which is grounded in a posttraumatic growth and transformation lens is used to present a trauma-informed rendition of the 5-D Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Model, the classic strengths-based change and transformation process in the appreciative search for the best in people and systems regardless of their circumstances and starting points. The term Resonant Transformation is presented to denote the deep development and shifts from moments of awakening (Resonance) required to take us into a positive future. Practitioner implications for working in the context of the people and planetary challenges and traumas of our times are presented.

Keywords: Resonance, Resonant Community, Resonant Transformation, Trauma-Informed Appreciative Inquiry, Transformation, Dialogic Organization Development

Macro OD is the most powerful form of Micro OD—and the reason why is captured in the concept "mirror flourishing." (Cooperrider, 2017)

Recognize that all OD work, from the tiniest and most localized to the macro and most globalized, involves the intimate integrity of all ecosystems, economies, and societal systems and thereby needs all to be treated as one common system. It's a worldview mistake to view business, society and all of its organizations, and Nature as separate. Every act involving OD is, at once, a simultaneity. Every OD gesture is part of one resonating whole which impacts Nature, People, & Planet and our world's transition *successes—or setbacks*—to a sustainability+ future. (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2021)

In 2021:

» I was living in a community juggling daily wildfire alerts and emergency evacuation orders as fires burned in parts of Canada and the United States as well as Macedonia, Turkey, and Italy. I had to evacuate my home with my family in 10 mins one night and my community was also among the growing number of places contending with the recoveries of unmarked graves of children at former Indigenous residential schools in Canada (Voce et al.,2021)

» There was flooding around the globe from Germany to China to Colombia to Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Hawaii.

» In the wake of the heat dome in the Pacific Northwest (also where I live and experienced it), new research into the social cost of carbon and the mortality costs of carbon emissions and fossil fuel usage paints a dire picture of a ticking time bomb, in which we have till 2050 to radically reduce carbon emissions at macro policy levels to reverse our climate spiral. The analysis shows the impact on regions and countries generating the most emissions as well as the global consequences (Bressler, 2021; Millman, 2020; Vohra et al., 2021).

» Mediterranean Sea in 2015 (Cincurova, 2021, July 27).
» The Ethiopian Tigray crisis has continued to escalate.
» Haiti endured a presidential assassination, an earthquake, and tropical storm Grace.
» Meanwhile, the coronavirus is still with us, presenting a new wave of challenges as the delta, lambda, and omicron variants persist.
» … and global inequities and divides continue as the world maps and trackers on each of the sustainable development goals tells the clear and persisting

human technologies to achieve transformation at every level of the human systems we inhabit, with a focus on people and planet and especially leveraging the vast wealth of business and organizations towards the changes required.

This article proposes that in order to achieve the moonshot moment before us in ways that lead to positive transformation, we must first do so by facilitating and consulting in ways that address the current realities we find ourselves in following continuous and compound people and planetary crises and traumatic events. I outline and build on the research and practice grounded in a posttraumatic growth and transformation lens, to present a trauma-informed rendition of the 5-D Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model which is the classic strengths-based change and transformation process in the appreciative search for the best in people and systems regardless of their circumstances and starting points (AI Commons, n.d.). An inquiry into how to do this work in the context of the people and planetary challenges and traumas of our times is critical if we are to achieve the transformations the world needs to make the transition into a flourishing net-positive planet and an equity-centered future.

We need to transform a world that has become calcified into creating negative impacts for the majority of the world. We must therefore be willing not only to critically examine and deconstruct but also to create new forms to take us into a positive future by surfacing deep development and shifts from moments of awakening (Resonance). The question is: How can we achieve Resonant transformation in these times of interregnum filled with traumatic events and circumstances?

» In Afghanistan, there was a growing refugee crisis as US troops withdrew and the Taliban advanced across the country.
» Humanitarian and Refugee crises were continuing and escalating in Syria, Yemen, among the Rohingya Refugees, in Venezuela, and at the Southern US Border to name a few.
» Human rights abuses and violence continue in the cycle of humans seeking dignity and freedom who are being intercepted on the Mediterranean seas to prevent them from seeking asylum in Europe. Supported by European Union funding and policies, these asylum seekers are being sent back to Libya, where they are detained and exploited, facing cycles of beatings, rapes, forced labour, and atrocities over and over again. We seem to have forgotten the horror of the dead body of baby Alan Kurdi that shocked the world when he was found on the shores of the

story of systemic, racial, regional, and economic fault lines undergirding our world (Ritchie et al., 2018; United Nations, 2020).

And these are only a sample of the people and planetary crises facing us in this moment, amidst many more known and unknown ones (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2020).

As Organization Development (OD) professionals in a field where elevating humanity is a core value, we have come full cycle to examining our contribution in these times. We have the opportunity, the moonshot moment as this special issue indicates, to support and usher in transformation using our behavioural, organization and social science knowledge, and research. If you are anything like me, it is so tempting to shrink under the weight of it all, but it is the call of our times that social scientists across the board are responding to (Bartunek, 2021). This is an opportunity to scale our

Framings and Definitions

By *transformation*, I mean, metamorphosis —an enduring and fundamental change in *form*, where form is inclusive of cognitive, structural, interactional, systemic, and other fundamental worldview and ontological shifts in how we collectively think, act, and interact to create a better world (Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; Nicolaides & Eschenbacher, 2022). I also assume that to achieve this depth of transformation we will collectively be going through learning and unlearning in the era ahead, such that we achieve:

a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with

other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibility for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan et al., 2002, p. 11)

It is only in achieving this level of shift in our collective consciousness surrounding the people and planetary challenges and possibilities before us that we can achieve the transformations required (Nicolaides et al., 2022). I add to this framing that the type of shift we need is a *Resonant Transformation*. We need to transform a world that has become calcified into creating negative impacts for the majority of the world. We must therefore be willing not only to critically examine and deconstruct but also to create new forms to take us into a positive future by surfacing deep development and shifts from moments of awakening (Resonance). The question is: How can we achieve Resonant Transformation in these times of interregnum filled with traumatic events and circumstances?— this in-between grey zone where we are in-transformation and transition from the old world to a new world that we do not yet clearly see or know how we will get there? (Bauman, 2013; Gilpin-Jackson, 2020a; Owusu, 2022).

Note also that this work on Resonant Transformation emerged in the context of posttraumatic growth (PTG), which describes the growth potential that follows transformative shifts in cognition, social behavior and worldview after events of seismic traumatic impact (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006a).

Trauma and Transformation

The oscillating patterns of trauma we are currently experiencing seem never-ending. It is not surprising that we are simultaneously facing increasing mental health concerns globally (World Health Organization, 2021). We are collectively tired, stressed, overwhelmed, covid-fatigued, zoomed-out and hanging on by thin mental threads.

We are carrying the grief and traumatic impacts that have resulted from living through the era of a COVID-19 pandemic, heightened social action and responsibility for change, a global mental health crisis, climate change and ongoing virtual work (Weir, 2020). It is undeniable that we are going through individual and collective trauma that:

1. Results from an event or accumulation of events (e.g., COVID-19 and all it's ripple effects and the social and climate crises listed at the start of this article...)
2. Has seismic impact (can rock our world...)
3. Challenges core fundamental beliefs of our lives (we have worked remotely or from home for almost two years...)
4. Reduces emotional and overall psychological functioning of individuals and groups (global reports of increased mental health stress...)
5. Can be inherent in our organizational and social lives (it comes with us to work, especially when we are working from our bedrooms and dining room tables and cannot gather with friends and family for holidays due to a global health pandemic...)
6. Is an unconscious element of group life (we'd rather be in denial because we feel helpless/it's too hard to talk about it...)

For those of us now living through the COVID-19 and people and planetary pandemics of our times, life has already been redefined into life before and after the pandemic. We are not the same in our awareness and consciousness as we were in 2019. It is not that everything we are experiencing now were not issues before. The difference is that we are in a kind of crucible where our collective global consciousness has been forced to face these issues of global concerns through the steady and escalating stream of events that are forcing us, as a human collective, to examine our realities. Our work, our service to the generations to come, is going to be making the decisions needed to sustain and scale up the most critical transformations of our times that the 'crisis' phase of COVID-19 has led us into. It is a moral

imperative that we do not go back to 'the way things were' where those ways are no longer serving our shared human and planetary futures. All the ways we organize our lives, work, and world have been altered overnight. The fundamental assumptions that underpin our identities, relationships, and worldviews are all upended. It would be easy to be stuck here, oscillating between the hope and despair of whether we will get to the other side of it all. Yet for all the chaos, stress, and grief of these times, these conditions of traumatic impact that bring everything into question are the starting point for transformation. Indeed, transformation—that fundamental shift in identity and worldviews—is already here. I know this, because I have lived it and researched it.

Over 20 years ago, I experienced armed conflict and a civil war that impacted my life in both traumatic and transformational ways (Gilpin-Jackson, 2017). In the aftermaths, I became so intrigued by the identity and worldview changes I was experiencing that I moved beyond my own personal meaning-making to studying the lives of transformational leaders who had experienced social trauma and the phenomenon called posttraumatic growth and who were leading transformations in the spaces and industries in which they found themselves. The original research for my doctorate 10 years ago was with African war survivors who were transforming their organizations, communities, and their industries (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014). Since then, I have applied and expanded on the research through work in healthcare, social and immigration services, non-profits working with the under-served, social justice practitioners, and leadership and organization development practitioners working in complexity. I have learned that posttraumatic growth can scale at the individual, organizational, and societal levels and applies whether trauma results from man-made sufferings or 'acts of God.' I have learned that even though trauma is an unwelcome doorway to transformation, as the South African proverb goes, *some hardships teach*. Indeed, the entire Organization Development field emerged from

Figure 1. 5-D Appreciative Inquiry Model with Resonance

the social trauma of the World War II era, when Kurt Lewin and others took on the search for ways to support human organizing for development and thriving to counter the social psychologies and organizing that had resulted in the war. Likewise, David Cooperrider (2020) reminded us in his article "Appreciative Inquiry in a Broken World" of Victor Frankl's seminal work *Man's Search for Meaning* that points us to the fact that meaning-making and transformational possibilities can emerge from the most horrific circumstances if we choose. Cooperrider points to the contemporary developmental research of posttraumatic growth that has picked up the thread of this thinking and was the foundation of my research. Here's what I can tell you from my research and work on posttraumatic growth (Calhoun et al., 2010; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006b; Gilpin-Jackson, 2020b)

» Posttraumatic growth and transformation are possible responses to trauma that scales across all levels of human systems across individuals, groups, organizations, and society.

» Resilience is a necessary but insufficient condition for growth. While we have a tendency in OD to focus on Resiliency as an outcome to address organization complexity and trauma, we must make the mindshift to understanding that resilient outcomes orient us to "bounce back" as per its classical definition. An orientation to posttraumatic growth outcomes positions us to support organizations to "bounce forward" to transformation.

» Resonance, a narrative development and appreciative process, is at the heart of the learning zone that evokes the conditions for transformation after trauma. Resonance is a moment of awakening, through personal stories, that opens space or creates an opportunity for transformative learning. Resonance plays a central role in creating momentum for Resonant Transformation in traumatic contexts as expanded on further below.

» The conditions that support the unfolding of Resonance and transformation after trauma are:

1. Trusted disclosure through appreciative listening and inquiry
2. Insight development
3. Deliberate meaning-making (as opposed to automatic rumination inherent in a traumatic stress response)

Along with the uncovering of Resonance stories, these conditions match three of the five enablers for posttraumatic growth which are narrative development, emotional regulation, and disclosure (Tedeschi, 2020). The remaining two conditions of education and service usually unfold from the action-taking that happens as a result of Resonant Transformation experiences.

» The outcomes that signify Resonant Transformation are worldview shifts that emerge from individual and collective:

1. Realization of Purpose
2. Human Connectedness
3. Spiritual and Moral Development
4. Valuing of Life
5. Determination: The Will to Act

Achieving these outcomes is dependent on partnerships and co-creation, which acknowledges our human interconnectedness, shared responsibility, and the simultaneity required for working towards a flourishing net-positive planet driven by a mission economy and an equity-centered future. This makes it, along with AI, a form of Dialogic OD (Gilpin-Jackson, 2015) and aligned with the current third generation of OD practices oriented towards transformative learning and transformational change, with an emphasis on engaging disruption and emergence in ways that spark generativity and new narratives in the collective. Resonance and Resonant Transformation deliver on this. Thus, the search for Resonance becomes central to an Appreciative approach to Transformation along with the search for the positive core of the organization, system, or humanity as shown in *Figure 1*. The question that follows is: How might we integrate AI, posttraumatic growth and Resonant Transformation when facilitating in traumatic contexts?

Appreciative Inquiry and Resonant Transformation in Traumatic Contexts

We know from the vast research and practice of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) that we can achieve positive change when we inquire into the best of what is, in people and systems. However, while AI has emphasized the research and practice of uncovering the best of humanity it has never been meant to only apply in contexts of positivity which is a common critique of the AI body of work. Appreciative Inquiry has always been intended to transform organizations' orientation to the questions they ask themselves about difficult circumstances, such that new possibilities that uncover the best of humanity can emerge, in spite, and because, of difficult circumstances. Indeed, it has been noted that the highest developmental form and least understood AI practice is when it is engaged in tragic circumstances (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020).

What I believe has been missing is our understanding in the OD field of how to practice our craft and hold containers where trusted disclosure, insights, and meaning-making can emerge in traumatic circumstances and social complexity. In short, OD practitioners have not necessarily centered a trauma-informed or post-traumatic growth lens to their practice in ways that support trauma healing and transformation. This is no longer an option limited to those working in organizations and communities that center social change and justice work and clients (Brown, 2017; Owusu & Wilde, 2021; Vivian, 2021; Vivian & Hormann, 2017). It is a collective responsibility of our field and one of the fundamental shifts we must make to facilitate, consult, and lead in ways that will move us towards supporting organizations to become mission and purpose driven in the pursuit of a net-positive planet, and an equity-centered future.

In facilitating for Resonant Transformation, I usually work through three cycles of narrative development with groups:

1. Initiating: Understanding Trauma Narratives
2. Facilitating: Connecting to Resonance
3. Sustaining: Uncovering Possibilities & Igniting Transformation Narratives

In other words, first take time to surface, listen, and unpack the extent of traumatic experiences in the dominant narratives, then connect people to their Resonance stories and finally support the strategic planning required to uncover possibilities and ignite transformation. I have used this approach to facilitating Resonant Transformation with mission and purpose-driven groups and organizations working to transform the people and planetary challenges and opportunities of our times and I have

experienced the appreciative shifts it creates towards forward momentum and action.

In a recent session, here are some examples of how participants were able to articulate the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Understanding the Traumatic Narrative stage:

» *People are isolated... and yet more digitally connected than ever before.*
» *We are missing personal connection. There is less "belonging" in organizations.*
» *There's a lot of change.*
» *Fractured experience not being recognized; performance standards have not been adjusted.*
» *We made middle class biased assumptions that all could easily pivot to a virtual world.*
» *Disconnected and the "great resignation"; people leaving workplaces for better working environments.*

» *Tired of old paradigms; people are creating new futures for themselves and demanding more workplace support.*
» *It is rife with complexity.*
» *Disjointed but caring.*
» *It is forever changed—flexibility is here to stay.*
» *What does the new normal look like?*
» *Opportunity to create a new organizational life that is better, more human centered than before.*
» *Connection matters more now.*
» *It's hard to be apart or that people are burning out, isolated or overworked.*
» *Uncertain, burnout, pivoting to new future.*

OD practitioners have not necessarily centered a trauma-informed or posttraumatic growth lens to their practice in ways that support trauma healing and transformation. This is no longer an option limited to those working in organizations and communities that center social change and justice work and clients. It is a collective responsibility of our field and one of the fundamental shifts we must make to facilitate, consult, and lead in ways that will move us towards supporting organizations to become mission and purpose driven in the pursuit of a net-positive planet, and an equity-centered future.

» *It's painful and ambiguous.*
» *The employee has the power.*
» *More isolated and fragmented.*
» *It's an 18-month long zoom meeting.*
» *It's a marathon not a sprint.*

In taking time to unpack the dominant experience, traumatic impacts are released because the internalized and isolating experiences of trauma are transformed to experiences of connection (I am not alone!). Healing occurs in this sharing and a sense of movement from stuck to unstuck emerges. At the end of this stage, people make commitments to "let go" of the trauma narrative or to use it in ways that serve their transformation of it into a narrative that better serves their future.

Next, take the time to surface Resonance stories, a core medium for surfacing Resonance. A Resonance story is a personal

account of a past life experience that deeply connects you to your identity and purpose. Resonance stories can entail verbal, written, symbolic, metaphoric, or expressive forms. Have individuals and groups uncover and share with each other:

» What is a story from your life (remembrance from childhood or recent past—to a person, a thing, a trigger with the quality of nostalgia) that deeply connects you to and signifies your organizational and life purpose?

This story sharing shifts people toward possibilities for transformation and provides an anchor to move forward towards the third cycle of planning and taking action for transformation. Here is a sampling of the impacts participants report of surfacing and working from their Resonance stories:

» *There's more to unpack! It made me feel less alone.*
» *Connected wounds to present gifts and contribution*
» *Healing*
» *Emotional release*
» *We're responsible to get clear so we can be available to the world*
» *Reminder of purpose*
» *Realize how it is still in my body*
» *heart strings... connections*
» *Clarity, commitment*
» *Connection and hope!*
» *Part of my learning journey*
» *Love*
» *I felt connected to two strangers in a way that was powerful. It gave me more clarity around how I might make an impact.*
» *Powerful! Insightful!! Much needed!! Tears in our eyes!!*
» *Feeling seen and acknowledged*
» *Realized I still have strong emotions tied to this memory*
» *Each of us reflected on a way that covid gave us more time for something and the impact that had on us. Makes me wonder what would be possible for all of us if we could make more space and time.*
» *Connected with our common humanity. Witnessed.*
» *Put me in touch with the most traumatic time in my life and how it has made me who I am and how I am with others.*

» *A safe space to be vulnerable. Deep, vulnerable, resonant.*
» *Energizes my commitment to the possibility.*
» *Moved me from outside, in. Re-humanizing, Re-membering, Re-connecting.*

The power of sharing Resonance stories, which must be done in the context of trusted disclosure that allows for insights and meaning-making, is that it allows us to Re-member. The etymology of the word remember is from the Latin *rememoror*, meaning to call to mind... and also *memor*, which means to be mindful (Etymologeek, n.d.). When we operate from Resonance, we are able to pause, reflect, and re-member... put the pieces of memory back together and anchor again to what is most important. As one of the participants noted, to transcend collective trauma to healing and transformation, we must *move from outside, in. Re-humanizing, Re-membering, Re-connecting*. While I did not originally conceptualize my Resonance research and practice as AI, the questions and this recalling of deeper meaning, and the best of what is, makes it an appreciative approach. At the end of this cycle, groups scale up their personal resonance stories to search for and articulate their collective Resonance and the new narrative they commit to co-creating.

Finally, in the Uncovering Possibilities and Igniting Transformation stage, the group leans into designing their future and then determining what sustaining structures will allow them to achieve their intended outcomes and iterating as needed.

A recent case study directly made the connection between facilitation for Resonance and surfacing meaning-making as a precursor to the AI 4-D model (Clarke, 2021). I further propose an Integrative lens to embed facilitating for Resonant Transformation as described above throughout the AI 5-D process model. The contributions from a Resonant Transformation and Trauma-Informed lens are noted in blue in *Table 1* (next page). It is my hope that this will support AI and OD scholars and practitioners to integrate facilitating for Resonant Transformation into their research and practice.

Practitioner Implications

The UN 2020 report calls for a decade of transformative action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (United Nations, 2020). Climate research and activism is telling us we need to globally cut carbon emissions by 2050 and/or stop our climate spiral by 2050. This is a time for action... and the task before us is daunting. Yet, we know from the human complexity sciences that every subsystem is a fractal of the whole that can replicate and scale impact. This is likewise embedded in the AI principles of simultaneity (inquiry create change), positivity (positive questions lead to positive change), constructivism (words create our world), anticipatory (images inspire action/we move towards what we want more of) and the poetic principle (we choose what we study) (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007). What this means is we can have assurance that our work at any level as an OD community, whether micro or macro, creates change that can ripple and scale further in the direction of our desired and shared future.

So how might you focus in on what you can do as you work towards inspiring organizations to join the mission economy working towards a net-positive and equity-centered future? My response is that you need to **Find Your Squares**. This metaphor came to me in a recent fireside chat. I found myself leaning into the analogy of a quilt and simultaneously feeling the sensation of deja-vu as the historical significance of quilting in Black History ricocheted back to me (Sparks, 2016; Turner & Hicks, 2009). I followed that inspiration and spoke of what could be possible if we each found our square in the issues of change and trauma that concern us. Our square is that place of purpose in the broader movement to restore our humanity and heal our planet. This requires that we understand that while no one of us can solve it all, we each have a place in quilting our global futures. We need the faith to know that our square(s), connected to the emerging quilt of our global futures will make a difference.

1. **Operate from Resonance.** I encourage people to make resonance conscious

Table 1: *Trauma-informed 5-D Appreciative Inquiry Process*

Resonant Transformation Cycle	5-D Appreciative Inquiry Cycle	Appreciative Questions to Support Resonant Transformation
1. Initiating: Understanding Trauma Narratives	Definition / Disclosure	1. What is the topic/situation we want to transform? 2. What is our shared purpose? 3. What traumatic context/narrative do we need to disclose and acknowledge as we work towards transformation?
	Discovery	1. Resonance Stories: What is a story from your life (remembrance from childhood or recent past—to a person, a thing, a trigger with the quality of nostalgia) that deeply connects you to and signifies your organizational and life purpose? 2. What collective Resonance narrative is emerging?
2. Facilitating: Connecting to Resonance	Dream	1. What is the individual and/or collective Resonance narrative calling you to?
1. Sustaining: Uncovering Possibilities & Igniting Transformation Narratives	Design	1. What (re)newed purpose does the Resonance narrative evoke for you/us? 2. How will it shift y/our connection to others? How will it shift y/our worldview? 3. What deeper development will it require of you/us? 4. How will operating from Resonance help you better appreciate y/our life/life's work and contributions and that of others?
	Destiny/Delivery	1. What action(s) are you being called to, to create and sustain the Resonance Narrative?

and hang on to it. Resonance is moments of awakening, through personal stories, that opens space or creates an opportunity for transformative learning even in the most traumatic contexts. It allows you to make personal and collective meaning, (re)frame trauma into purpose and realize interior capacity to sustain you on the road to transformation. Getting to that level of connectedness to ourselves and others through Resonance, such that transformational change and action can happen, is a requirement for humanity in our times.

2. **Connect to your Resonant Community.** Connect to your resonant community of people who are focused on using their life stories and passions towards a shared purpose and focus your efforts. Part of the challenge I notice in communities seeking transformative action for change and transformation is the tendency to try to connect to everyone and do everything that seems possible to make a difference. This is ineffective and exhausting and only leads to dysfunctional team and organization dynamics as people unravel. You need only focus your efforts and maintain closest connection to the squares closest to your own to see the beauty of what is emerging and amplify your impact.

3. **Co-design your way forward.** Take the time with your Resonant Community to think through your process and theory of change and transformation. What impact and influence are you trying to have? What is the most important thing you can do to get there? What pattern do you want to create? With whom, when, and how do you need to connect with others.

4. **Collaborate, then differentiate and integrate.** The work before us is hard and working with your Resonant Community is essential to progress and success. However, doing everything, altogether, all the time, can be equally as exhausting as trying to be all things to all people. When you have confirmed your purpose and after you have collaboratively designed the way forward, differentiate into smaller groups or task individuals as needed, with a clear process for now to reintegrate the work as it builds and grows.

5. **Learn and Iterate.** Whether you work in organization development's first generation (action research), second generation (action learning) or third generation (dialogic/collaborative change) methodologies, learning in order to iterate forward is a core practice and often the difference maker. In the traumatic and transformative era we find ourselves in, pausing when feeling stuck to ask: *What is happening? So what? Now what?* may be the only difference that makes a difference.

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"With its democratizing values around inclusive and cooperative change, its living systems and applied inter-human science knowledgebase, and its overarching ideal for a future of full spectrum flourishing, what field is better situated than OD to lead this earthshot work?"

Our Earthshot Moment

Net Positive OD for the Creation of a World of Full Spectrum Flourishing

By David Cooperrider
and Lindsey Godwin

Abstract

All over the world, we are witnessing the potential of what leading economists are calling "mission economics." Today's emerging mission or purpose economy is, by far, the world's largest universal change project ever. To end the climate crises within a generation while creating a future of full-spectrum flourishing requires more than moonshot thinking or bold policies and breakthroughs in technology. The deeper cornerstone capacity is nothing less than the elevation and expansion of human systems collaborative change capacity at whole new orders of magnitude and inclusiveness—at precisely the time we are witnessing the anguished fraying of our social bonds. This article asserts that we are at a Lewinian-like watershed moment in OD and are poised to step into the next great episode in OD history. It introduces and explores key terms—such as "full-spectrum flourishing" and "net positive OD" and "micro- to macro-OD" and the discovery and design of "positive institutions." It seeks to articulate a new and timeless superordinate ideal for the field as well as a time-critical earthshot OD agenda and playbook that can deliver the scale and speed of change the world so urgently needs. But most of all it illustrates. It illustrates how industry-leading stars are fixing the world's problems instead of creating them and how net positive OD is helping bring their organizations alive in "mirror-flourishing" ways they've scarcely imagined.

Keywords: Net Positive OD; Full Spectrum Flourishing; Earthshot OD; Positive Institutions; Appreciative Inquiry Design Summits; SGD's; Regeneration; Business as an Agent of World Benefit.

"We are in a critical decade, maybe the most important one for humankind... climate change has accelerated and converged with multiple global crises: a once-in-a-century pandemic, widespread economic turmoil, a reckoning on race, democratic backsliding, mass migration, the crisis of social media, and rising inequality alongside diminishing trust in public institutions... the clock is ticking, future generations are counting on us, and 'history has its eyes on us.' How will you choose to lead? How will history remember you?"

—Jesper Brodin, CEO IKEA &
Halla Tomasdottir, CEO B Team[1]

1. *Jesper Brodin, CEO IKEA & Halla Tomasdottir, CEO B Team in their Foreword to Cooperrider and Selian (2022)* The Business of Building a Better World

Here is a truth that could change the life of every person in the field of Organization Development.

You are alive at just the right moment to help human systems at every level change everything. Ours is a once-in-a-civilization moment calling out for inspired transformation, especially in what Peter Drucker (1992) so aptly called "our society of organizations" where the scale, speed, and collaborative capacity of the human side of transformation is increasingly recognized as the difference that can make *all* the difference.

At this watershed moment in our collective human story, might it be that in relation to the great global-change agenda that Organization Development (OD) is the most important professional field in the world? It is becoming increasingly clear that we are entering a critical next decade to radically address the global challenges before us, what many have referred to as our "earthshot" moment. This term echoes the inspirational "moonshot" rally cry of the putting a person on the moon when it seemed all but impossible to do so at the time. As we enter into this earthshot decade, however, the work ahead of us as a global community does not entail building rockets to enter new atmospheres, but rather in regenerating our own atmosphere at all levels: from the interpersonal, to the organizational, to the communal, to the national, and to all of nature and our life-giving biosphere. With its democratizing values around inclusive and cooperative change, its living systems and applied inter-human science knowledge-base, and its overarching ideal for a future of full spectrum flourishing, what field is better situated than OD to lead this earthshot work?

Some will argue it's taken us decades to get here. Perhaps. But what's vital is that we are here now. The late Rudi Dornbusch, one of the world's macroeconomists, spoke to this. It's called Dornbusch's Law:[2]

> "Things take longer to happen than you think they will, and then they happen faster than you thought they could."

In this article, we share first-hand our journey into net positive and full spectrum OD and how the world's earthshot mission we face today as a human family has vitally elevated how we view the primary task and future agenda of OD. If you are looking for yet one more stale conversation on the withering away, even the end of OD, you will be disappointed. We also are not writing behind a veneer of objectivity, rather we unapologetically share our feelings openly and validly (grounded in our lived experience), and emphatically declare that it's an *incredible time to be alive* in this field. There is a sense of tremendous privilege in this moment. More and more, we also feel a growing gratitude for the courage and fervent spirit of OD's early creators, where names such as Kurt Lewin, Mary Parker Follett, Herb Shepherd, Elise Boulding, Edie Seashore, Abe Maslow, Bob Chin, John Carter, Suresh and Indu Srivastva, Warren Bennis, and many others stand tall. In tracing the arc of our field from these inspirational seeds to the work unfolding before us now, we and others have the distinct feeling that today OD is bursting with creativity, relevance, and fresh normative direction the likes of which we have not seen since its earliest days (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011; Bartunek, 2022; Meyer, 2021). Perhaps you can remember when you said "Yes!" for the first time to enter the domain of OD including the promise and excitement that moment held. For us, when we glance back, we feel it even more now, that indeed, we were born under a lucky star to have landed in this field.

We hope this article will help demonstrate why.

Follow Us on Our Learning Journey

We have organized this article to parallel the lived learning journey we have experienced as OD practitioners over our career, bringing us to this exciting inflection point moment in the field. First, we tell the story of the most shocking OD request we had ever received. I (David) will explain why I had to turn down the massive change request for it was, with clear honesty, far beyond my OD competence and training. Yet it was the spark that lit a torch and then a fire, for learning. For us, this story and request has become a metaphor for a call to all of OD. We hope the metaphor is meaningful for OD education and everyone on their journey into an OD that's a prime-time resource to leaders and organizations everywhere.

Then, we share the framework we now use for working with what we call "green micro-OD." This refers to OD work where the focus is on helping enterprises powerfully innovate and transform their inner organizational dynamics and designs to achieve new levels of competitive excellence via the lens of sustainable enterprise and inclusive shared value strategy (Yeganeh & Glavas, 2008). We then disclose our most exciting OD leap for moving from green micro-OD to blue macro-OD. Here we offer up our largely externally focused definition of "positive institutions" and invite a thought experiment: What if organizations and institutions are not viewed as our clients, but are instead themselves viewed as the change agents? Moreover, if macro-OD is about institutions becoming and being the change agents "out there" then what might, for example, be their top five interventions?

Finally, we conclude the article with the most important discovery in our careers: that macro-OD might be the most powerful way to raise the vibrancy and ultimate value of micro-OD. We propose that an integral unification of macro-and-micro in an "upward and outward" way is OD's new frontier. This infinite macro-micro-macro-micro positive loop opens vast vistas for OD innovation. We believe this will constitute OD's most generative pathway for helping organizations and the world succeed in the largest intentional change project in history.

A Request that Changed OD for Us Forever—and Now Dornbusch's Law?

At the outset it must be said that the letter's query was surprising, formidable, disconcerting—and totally compelling.

Although it was almost exactly three decades ago, I (David) remember the request vividly. The request was written by members of the UN's organizing committee for the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, what would in 1992 become the largest meeting on environment and social development in history. In essence (see Cooperrider and Dutton, 1998) the call said:

"We are about to step into an unprecedented experiment in global cooperation. And frankly, there is cause for concern. The issues to be discussed and acted upon are tremendously complex, scientifically uncertain, interrelated, dynamic, and monumental. Consider just a sampling of the issues requiring deliberation:

» World population, in the lifetime of those born after World War II, will soar from two billion to ten billion—though it took 10,000 lifetimes for the population to first reach two billion.

» The world's forests are being destroyed at a rate of one football field-sized area every second and every day a species becomes extinct; and since mid-century it is estimated that the world has lost nearly one-fifth of the topsoil from its cropland.

» A continent-sized hole is opening up in the earth's protective ozone shield as the world's emissions of chlorofluorocarbons doubles every decade, having already increased 40 times over since World War II.

» Fossil fuel use has in the same time period increased ten times over, flooding the atmosphere with unprecedented levels of carbon dioxide.

» The economy, which grew five times in size, is pushing human demands on the ecosystem beyond what the planet (our soils, water supplies, fisheries, etc.) has the ability to re-generate; and with around a billion new mouths being born each decade the pressures on the entire ecosystem will multiply.

» Every day, 37,000 children under age five die of starvation or preventable diseases; nearly a billion are suffering in desperate poverty (and the conflicts and wars associated with it) while a precarious global debt burden grows by $7.5 billion every month.

» And questions: Can the world survive one-fourth rich and three-fourths poor, half democratic and half authoritarian, with an oasis of human development surrounded by deserts of human deprivation?"

Then the UN's committee request went further (see Cooperrider and Dutton, 1998), in summary saying:

"We are, in so many ways, infants when it comes to our cooperative capacity for building a global society congenial to the life of the planet and responsive to the human spirit. So, as you know, over 30,000 people with diverse disciplinary backgrounds from all over the world—from the earth sciences, from economics and business, from governmental and non-governmental organizations, from religious and cultural institutions, and from the grassroots to the ivory tower not to mention the myriad of cultures from 100's of nations—will be assembling in Rio de Janeiro for what we call a summit, and what your field would call strategic planning. So, we have a puzzle for you.

Your answer is important. Indeed, what happens at this meeting in response to ecological and economic global change, will reverberate well into the future and across generations. Critics argue, and many of us actually agree, the world could be worse off as a result of this ambitious meeting (it could result in greater loss of hope, increases in cynicism in international institutions, identification of irreconcilable conflicts, waste of resources, much talk with no action, empty platitudes and promises, and others). So, we are asking for answers—from organization development and change management theory.

To help us organize and ensure a successful meeting, what knowledge can your field offer? Can you point us to the specific pieces of research, the theories, the principles, and practices that could truly make the difference?"

I was floored. It was like a lightning strike. Thirty-thousand people. Hundreds of nations and cultures. Science denial and paradigm wars. Cynicism in international gatherings. Temporary relationships. Exclusion of many voices, particularly the world's poor. And a domain with whole new languages emerging such as "a Keeling Curve"... "scope one, scope two, and scope three emissions"... Milankovitch cycles"... "industrial negative aerosol forcing".... "Decarbonization and decoupling"... "planetary boundaries"... "INGO's"... "carbon sinks"... "sustainable value" and more. My mind was reeling with the request—"what can your field share that could truly make the difference?"

How did I respond? It was time to write back with honest reflection: "Nothing in my OD education has prepared me to answer your question with solid evidence and real experience in this domain of sustainable systems design and deep appreciation of the complex interactions of environmental systems, including the atmosphere, biosphere, geosphere, and hydrosphere, as well as their interactions with human systems, including economic, political, and institutional arrangements that make choices, take action, and so forth."

To this day, we interpret the request as metaphor and clarion call to all of OD.

We went on a learning extravaganza (see a sampling from our "Earthshot OD Library" in *Figure 1*). We also launched a worldwide Appreciative Inquiry story-corps platform, searching for the greatest business and society innovations in sustainability and regenerative economy on the planet, a platform which is today used by over 200 management schools and OD centers of excellence. The platform—*www.Aim2Flourish.com*—is now home to

Figure 1. Our Sampling of Must-reads for Every Earthshot OD Practitioner

one of the largest databases of its kind in the world (read about its history in Sommer, Stavros, and Godwin, 2019). It hosts over 6,000 interviews of successful change and "corporate shared value" (see Porter and Kramer, 2011) and two-thousand published stories of the what and how of sustainable innovation and change-leadership in the areas of shared value strategy; regenerative organizations; business as a force for peace; OD and world changing megacommunities; net zero business designs and climate action; economic inclusion and eradication of extreme poverty; social innovations in tri-sectoral partnerships; and what we now subsume under the title "business as an agent of world benefit."

That Rare Second Chance

Lightning, as we all know, rarely hits in the same place twice. Yet, we received a second surprising call and request—it was, so to speak, a "second chance." This time we (both co-authors) did not decline. The call was directly from the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his team. This time we responded affirmatively. We were privileged to bring OD into the strategic heart what then-Secretary-General and Nobel Laureate Kofi Annan called "the largest world summit in history ever held at the United Nations between business, civil society organizations, and nation state

leaders."[3] The task: to collaboratively raise the ambition to achieve the world's millennium development goals. We were asked, using the Appreciative Inquiry approach, to help the wide-spectrum of stakeholders to discover, dream, and design the world-wide growth strategy and trajectory for the nascent UN Global Compact. The year was 2004.

At that time, there were less than 1,000 corporations participating. We not only helped to design and co-facilitate that world summit, but we then went on to partner with the UN Global Compact to co-create the Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit, where again we leveraged what we are now calling the Appreciative Inquiry Net Positive Summit to design yet another megacommunity of over 800 management schools. The mega-community, a community not of individuals but institutions, is known as "PRME" or Principles for Responsible Management Education (Cooperrider, 2022). Today the UN Global Compact, in addition to being home to PRME, has grown to become the world's largest corporate sustainability network, with 15,268 companies, 163 countries, and 87,530 public research projects and "how to" playbooks for turning every social and global issue into bona-fide

business opportunities to innovate, excel and "within each organization's sphere of influence" to become a platform for building a better world.

> "*I commend you for your methodology of Appreciative Inquiry and thank you for introducing it to the United Nations. Without this it would have been very difficult, even impossible, to constructively engage so many leaders of business, civil society, and government.*"
>
> —UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, from his letter gratitude for the OD Process[4]

In some ways, since that first surprising letter that was searching for OD knowledge for the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, it feels like we as a field have been

3. *See more details at:* https://appreciativeinquiry. champlain.edu/educational-material/ united-nations-global-compact-leaders-summit/

4. *See:* https://appreciativeinquiry. champlain.edu/testimonials/ united-nations-secretary-general-kofi-annan/

sleepwalking. However, in another way, it's been a profound prep and powerful prelude to something even bigger. We are sensing that very real kernel of truth in Dornbusch's law.

Something Remarkable is Underway

Yes, things did take longer to happen than we thought they would, and now they are happening faster than we ever thought they could. Consider the following:

» *In the domain of business and industry* it's being called "the business of building a better world" where virtually all of the world's largest corporations and leading entrepreneurs now are increasingly embracing a multi-stakeholder view of value creation and serious "ESG" (environmental, social, and governance) goals and ambitions baked into their long-term strategy, operations, and organization (Cooperrrider and Selian, 2022). One example of this is that today, through the recently organized Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), over $130 trillion of private capital is committed to transforming the economy for a net zero economic system by 2050. Published studies and careful forecasts show that these commitments, from over 450 firms across 45 countries, can deliver the estimated $100 trillion of finance needed for the net zero earthshot goal over the next three decades. Trajectories like this are not just empty words on a piece of paper either. In OD, we call this a critical mass, and a 2022 *Harvard Business Review* article declares: "this is not fringe anymore"... "it's now ubiquitous"... "The word 'someday,' seems to have finally become 'today'—and there is no going back" (Winston, 2022).

» *At the level of the grassroots*, Paul Hawken (2007) saw it coming—a "blessed unrest" he called it—with millions of organizations and concerned people, like our youth, spontaneously bringing about what may one day be recognized as the single most profound transformation of human society. Take for example the recent intergenerational climate cry of our world's young people—our next generation's voice, including 2019's *Time Magazine's Person of the Year* Greta Thunberg,[5] and over 7-million youth strikers from six continents. For them, the age of "climate gradualism" and "science denial" is over. These millennials and Gen Z voices are urging every one of us to listen to the finest science-based evidence, pointing to examples such as the recent climate emergency article in *Bioscience*, signed by 14,000 scientists stating: "We're asking for a transformative change for humanity" (Ripple et al., 2021).

» *Innovation's new frontier* is uniting exponential technologies with dramatic breakthroughs in collaborative capacities and in many cases are propelling companies to outperform, not incrementally but significantly. Companies such as Toyota (see Cooperrider and Selian, 2022) are building net-positive cities that give back more clean energy to the world than they use while leveraging artificial intelligence and biotechnologies to reinvent and individualize medicine, turn waste into wealth, propel zero-emissions mobility, and even purify the air that people breathe. Corporations such as Unilever, Danone, Westpac, Grameen Bank, Nedbank, and Greystone Bakeries have turned theory into reality with base-of-the pyramid innovation and social business strategies demonstrating how the enterprising spirit can eradicate human poverty and inequality through inclusive prosperity, profit, and dignified work. Companies such as Terra Cycle, Nothing New, Nike, and Interface are designing the future of circular economy modalities that leave behind zero waste—only "foods or nutrients" that create truer wealth through symbiotic economies of cycle while leveraging digital technologies that serve to dematerialize and decouple growth from harm. Likewise, revolutionary enterprises such as Solar Foods signal the potential of Schumpeter's great "gale of creative destruction." Their remarkable and, as yet, largely unknown, story of industry reinvention, has been cited as one of the "biggest economic transformations of any kind," heralding the possibility of making food 20,000 times more land-efficient than it is today while propelling a future where everyone on earth can be handsomely fed, using only a tiny fraction of its surface (Monbiot, 2020).

» *At the nation-state and global level*, the economist and Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus traces the massive numbers of dialogues and big steppingstones to what he called "a milestone in human history" and "the most important set of decisions ever made on the basis of global consensus with quantifiable goals" (2017). Today the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have been embraced by 197 countries. In her own mission economy research series on the innovation dynamism of "mission moments" the economist Marianna Mazzucato (2021) sees something equivalent of a moonshot economy emerging. She was one of the first to call it an earthshot economy moment, and the implications for OD are vast. Reaching the science-based targets of net zero climate emissions by 2050, and doing so in ways that inclusively, equitably, and collaboratively creates a better world for all—e.g., gender equality; zero hunger; quality education; good health and well-being; dignified work and good growth; stronger economies; indeed all 17 SDG's taken has a whole fabric—will require a "fundamental transformation of the global economy" according to a recent report by McKinsey[6] and leading world scientists.

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5. *https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg/*

6. See McKinsey's 2022 Global Institute Report in collaboration with McKinsey Sustainability. It provides an order-of-magnitude estimate of this earth-wide change. *https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/the-net-zero-transition-what-it-would-cost-what-it-could-bring#*. Also see the IPPC science report *https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362*

Moreover, Mazzucato's research reminds us. We know from the past that public, private, and non-profit can come together to do extraordinary things—to innovate, invest, and grow unimagined new industries, to collaborate night and day for a common cause. Earthshot OD is about the next decisive decades. It is time-bound and realizes it's today's collaborative change barriers and broken social bonds, more than technology barriers or even economic ones, that present us with a beautiful, and crying, call. We will rise together if we have the courage and conviction to lift our gaze higher, aiming for something far more ambitious than sending a person to the moon. *OD's earthshot moment means ending the climate crises in a generation and creating a regenerative economy in the service of life—a future of full-spectrum flourishing.* And because of the unthinkable high stakes of failure, this emerging world macro-project will call all of us in the field to dare in scholarship, to stand up, step up, and scale up in practice, and to reach far beyond our competence.

How Our OD Work Has Come Vibrantly Alive

Nearly every OD request we receive today involves the explicit application of OD to empower organization-wide transformations harnessing the lens of sustainability and to accelerate net-positive, flourishing enterprises that create new sources of shared value and world betterment. We call this work 'net positive' OD. Net positive occurs when an organization has more positive than negative impacts. In business terms net positive enterprise has recently been defined as "an organization that improves well-being for everyone it impacts and at all scales—every product, every operation, every region, and country, and for every stakeholder, including employees, suppliers, communities, customers, and even future generations and the planet itself (Polman and Winston, 2021). What's the core question for every organization? It's this: is the world better off because your organization is in it? Net positive is a

new horizon, a new standard, and includes stakeholder and shareholder value that includes the planet, fellow citizens, and future generations. Doing OD through a net-positive lens involves the opportunity to invest in radical innovations, it puts organizations into a leadership space, it requires a systemic view, and it is a north star not a short-term plan.

We have seen this net positive OD work steadily grow over the last several decades. From working with organizations such as Keurig Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Apple, Fairmount Minerals, National Grid, Walmart, Clarke Industries, entire cities such as Cleveland and Tampa, whole industries such as the US Dairy Industry, and so many corporations that are participants and signatories to the UN Global Compact, such as Microsoft, Daiwa Asset Management Ltd., Siemens, Tata Industries, Novo Nordisk, China Mobile, the Gap, Starbucks, Novartis, IBM, Unilever, Natura, the Dalai Lama and the United Religions Initiative, and others, we are inspired by the direction we see OD work taking in these transformational cases.

In almost every one of these engagements, we leverage the strengths-based mindsets and multi-stakeholder systems methodologies of Appreciative Inquiry, especially our most recent advancements we are calling the AI Net-Positive Summit (NPS.) Like all AI Summits it involves the rigorous co-inquiry and the leveraging of AI's action-research "4-D cycle" of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider, 2021). It commonly involves anywhere between 300 to 2000 stakeholders, although in one initiative, combining AI and IDEO's open-innovation design and prototyping tools, we involved some 20,000 people digitally, from 100 countries.[7]

The most distinctive advance in this new AI summit method is how the design phase goes far beyond dialogue. It incorporates powerful tools used in leading edge *design studios* such as empathy and user-experience designs, model building,

framing, and reframing, elevating the inspiration phase, and embracing constraints and creative opportunities. Then, instead of creating action plans (words on a piece of paper), we come out of the design studio phase with artifacts, with rapid prototypes, where we move from words and imagination to tangible artifacts that can be rapidly deployed, iterated in beta mode, and scaled.

For example, a sand mining company launched its sustainable value and "do all the good you can possibly do" design summits. The sand loader operators came out of the summit with a concept prototype of a low-cost sand water filter to be used to create clean drinking water for families where clean water could save lives, support child and family health, and create economic opportunity. The sand loader operators literally built it—a working mockup—in the design summit. They found a plastic cylinder. They went out into the quarries and sand production sites. They layered the various filtering components. When they presented it to the multi-stakeholder crowd, including community residents, they showed how it could fit into a FedEx box, how it had no moving parts, and could be made at low cost and be scaled up. Today, via a partnership with Aqua Clara, the device is contributing to healthier and better lives in 44 countries.[8] This prototype was just one of the 12 exciting initiatives to come out of the summit. Moreover, two years later, Fairmount Minerals was named the number one corporate citizen in America by the US Chamber of Commerce. The company reached zero waste in landfills across the nation and internationally (Cooperrider, 2013).

The CEO of this company, Chuck Fowler, and his family foundation observed how the business of building a better world brought his company to new life and collective pride; it elevated employee engagement scores significantly; and set off new waves of innovation and pride, all well-documented empirically (Glavas and Piderit, 2009). Fowler's mantra became

7. *https://www.huffpost.com/entry/business-as-an-agent-of-w_b_2091045*

8. *https://ungc-production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/338/original/COP.pdf?1262614183*

Figure 2. Twelve Opportunity Areas for Net Positive OD Inquiry, Intervention, and Innovation

"Do Good, Do Well" and soon Fowler Family Foundation stepped forward to endow and name the *Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit* at Case Western Reserve University with several transformative, multi-million dollar gifts.[9] Aligned with the Masters in OD and the MBA programs, the center has grown to become something of a creative design studio for graduate students, with is action-learning out in the field, bringing net-positive OD all over the world.

A Model with Design Elements for Net Positive OD

From our many Net Positive Summits, we have created a playbook, a generic composite which combines and elevates the best across these summits and draws empirically from the *https://aim2flourish.com* data bank of over 6,000 interviews. The playbook has been informed by hundreds of AI Summits that we or our many colleagues have run. For example, with Apple, the company learned how to leverage their world-class design-studio

capacities—remember Steve Jobs' obsession for "insanely great products"—*and* then transfer that same kind of obsession into the operations arena of *supplier-responsibility*, focusing on human and ecological initiatives across vast supply chains, touching many millions of lives. With Interface, our colleagues have taught us how the AI Summit can help create a totally unified company in what CEO Ray Anderson called "Climbing Mount Sustainability." Their work demonstrated how each of whole system-in-the-room convenings, when applied over the years, invited radical progressions, with each summit producing unstoppable waves, as witnessed in Interface's "Next Ascent" net positive summit (Anderson and White, 2011). With Whole Foods, we learned how the Appreciative Inquiry mindset can become part of everyday meetings, not just large group events, but embedded as an integral part of the strengths-based DNA of the working culture. Roberta Lang, VP, and former Whole Foods chief legal counsel, shared how almost every meeting soon applied the method of Appreciative Inquiry for after-action reviews: "What was best?" "What's the new possible?" "How might we make it so?" At Walmart we learned, perhaps not

surprisingly, how the NPS can scale for larger systems innovation, for example, how Walmart strategically leveraged the AI Summit methods to convene the entire value chains of whole industries around sustainability—the dairy industry, magazine industry, seafood, electronics, apparel, and more—and now how these are now leading to even more ambitious projects, such as *Project Gigaton*[10] with 2,300 suppliers in collaborative partnership. Project Gigaton is a remarkable illustration: its aim is to avoid one billion metric tons (a gigaton) of greenhouse gases from the global value chain by 2030 through pathways such as their 100% renewable energy investments, zero waste initiatives, net positive product designs, sustainable packaging breakthroughs, and more.

In *Figure 2*, we share our model of the most typical design-inspired *opportunity areas* for incorporating a global people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership perspective into a NPS. You can imagine design teams using the lens of going net-positive for the world and searching for new sources of business and society

9. *https://weatherhead.case.edu/centers/fowler/about/history*

10. *https://www.walmartsustainabilityhub.com/climate/project-gigaton*

Conceptual Note on the Importance of Flourishing

There are many conceptual and interdisciplinary reasons for opting to put "flourishing" at the center of our field's focus, as the center from which all of its scientific pursuits and ultimate applied purposes radiate. Firstly, we see it as a homecoming to some of OD's earliest ideals for community and self-*actualization*, that is, on the full flowering or flourishing of our highest human potentials. Secondly, in positive nature terms, the biology of enlivenment has opted for the biocentric or life-centric focus on flourishing and thriving eco-systems, not just on surviving, or sustaining (Weber, 2016). Our third reason is one of rigorous measurement and advancing OD research. Over the past two decades the science of positive psychology has become prolific—our whole human science library has been transformed—and the burgeoning field of study has made human flourishing its dependent variable. Flourishing can be robustly and rigorously measured in persons' lives and in organizations (see Butler and Kern, 2016.) And in his classic volume *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, Marty Seligman (2010) provides a grand synthesis of the concept with the acronym PERMA. PERMA as many in the human sciences now know, is the acronym summing up over 1000 studies on the concept of human flourishing—what it is, how to measure it, and how to advance it. It involves the study of high states of well-being, happiness, and lives of purpose, meaning, value, and vital relationships. Specifically, in empirical research terms, it involves the study of what good are **P**ositive *emotions* such as hope, inspiration, and joy—and their contribution to lives of flourishing. It involves the study of **E**ngagement of our signature or unique *character strengths* and how playing to our strengths brings us alive. It involves the role of high-quality connections and growth promoting **R**elationships, the kind that are *life-giving,* not toxic. It involves the study of the role of **M**eaning and living lives of purpose. It also involves the ability to **A**chieve or accomplish what matters to us most. Later in this article we will simply call it *PERMA flourishing* to encourage use of the concepts, the language of life, and the gold standard measurement tools as we have found the PERMA formulation so useful in own research with organizations (see McQuaid and Cooperrider, 2018).

value. The core design question at this design thinking stage is not whether to, but "HOW MIGHT WE…?" We have seen transformational questions such as these guide entire organizational systems' work:

» How might we turn social and global issues into new and industry leading **Shared Value Strategy**?
» How might we imagine winning the hearts and minds of our customers through the design of new **Net Positive Products**?
» How might we turn our organization into an **Entrepreneurial Humanocracy** with innovation and inclusive leadership from everywhere?
» How might we enable a **Culture of Regenerative Leadership** as a way of life around here whereby *doing all the good in the world we can possibly and more profitably do* is an enterprise-wide mindset and is embedded, not bolted on, and in a manner that's strategic to the core business?

These and other examples of design opportunities as pictured in *Figure 1* are available in our generic net positive OD playbook (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2022).[11]

The future, whether we are ready for it or not, is imminent. Our quest in net positive OD is ultimately to explore the profound new enterprise logic propelling the "business of building a better world"—ways that organizations and tri-sector collaborations are increasingly becoming an *agent of change* and a partnership power for building a better world—together with all of this serving as a catalyst for the betterment of the enterprise. Moreover, this includes all the pathways that can lead inside the enterprise to bold new waves of innovation, business outperformance, and flourishing inside and outside. Flourishing enterprise on the inside is, in our experience, something every leader wants. Flourishing enterprise is about people

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11. *For those who would like their own copy of the Playbook—a high level composite and workbook of all the best Appreciative Inquiry Net Positive Summits we've conducted—please go here for the downloadable pdf:* https://www.champlain.edu/ai-home/what-is-appreciative-inquiry/resources

The Betterment of Business + The Business of Betterment

Creating Shared Value
Purpose-Driven Shareholder and Stakeholder Business Outperformance+

Mirror Flourishing

Platform for World Betterment
Human Outbehavior in the Mission Economy

Thick Value: multi-Capital Wealth Management: Stakeholder relationship value; brand admiration management innovation, culture, natural capital renewal etc. All the tangible and "intangible assets."

Entrepreneurial Humanocracy: from bureaucracy to fully human organizational designs.

Positive Revolution in Products and Markets: every world problem potential net-positive product in disguise—reconceiving needs, products, and customer endearment and empowerment.

Disruptive Circularity: from efficiencies of scale to efficiencies of circularity, technology dematerialization, and regenerative design.

Radical Transparency Advantage: embracing extreme transparency as markets become truer and freer of externalities.

Anticipatory Global Learning: scaling up excellence through 10X learning, sharing, open innovation, and ambitious X-Prizes.

New Impact Tri-sector Innovation: Win-win-win partnerships unlocking new sources of value and moonshot dynamism.

Mission Economy Business Megacommunities: Creating B2B magnification of strengths and systems change.

Strategic Convening and C-Connectivity: Accelerating community betterment and regenerative inclusive growth.

Enhancing & Elevating Human Lives: Inviting customers and stakeholders to platforms for flourishing and conscious leadership.

SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE EXCELLENCE FOR LEADING IN THE GENERATIVE ECONOMY

SOURCES OF COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH BUSINESS AS AN AGENT OF WORLD BENEFIT

Figure 3. Mirror Flourishing and the Two-Pillar model for Net Positive Organization Development. Adapted from Cooperrider and Selian (2022) *The Business of Building a Better World*.

being inspired every day and bringing their whole and best selves into their work; it's about innovation arising from everywhere; and most importantly, it is about realizing shared value with all stakeholders. These include customers, communities, shareholders, and societies, all coexisting ultimately within a thriving biosphere.

The Most Exciting Observation of Our Career and a Major Research Opportunity

Today it's time for OD to aim higher, to define its superordinate "why," its reason for existence. We contend that our ultimate North Star as a field is not just *eliminating* unsustainability but *enabling* the actualization of a world we've termed **full spectrum flourishing**. This is a world where "organizations and economies can excel, *all* people can thrive, and nature can flourish, now and across the generations." (See our "Sidebar Conceptual Note" for further context on this important point.) The work before us as leaders and facilitators of change is to

explore how we can serve the change challenges of our institutions, not just with their "internal" change management agendas, but also with their "external" opportunities to lead in response to the call of our times. Consider Alex Steffen's words from his book, *Worldchanging* (2006) as he situates our global transition agenda of historic significance and high stakes:

"So here we are. We need, in the next twenty... years or so, to do something never before done. We need to consciously re-design the entire material basis of our civilization. The model we replace it with must be drastically more ecologically sustainable, offer large increases in prosperity to everyone on the planet, and not only function in areas of chaos and corruption, but also help transform them. That alone is a task of historic magnitude, but there is an additional complication: we only get one shot... fail to act boldly enough and we may fail completely." (p. 21).

In *Figure 3*, we share one more conceptual model—starting with the left-hand side of the model—where OD is doing its net-positive work largely within an enterprise-wide *lens* of development where the change target is the organization. This builds directly on the conceptualization we've spoken about and described earlier in *Figure 1* and is about organization development in the service of shared value, creating cultures of innovation for new net positive products, efficiencies of circularity (all waste is wealth), more entrepreneurial fully human organizations, embracing radical transparency in a world where hidden and often toxic externalities will increasingly expose organizations to great risk, while also and more positively expanding a view of value-creation that creates multi-capital for all relevant and affected stakeholders including shareholders, communities, and nature as a stakeholder. We call this (green) micro-OD because its goal is to help actualize the full potentials of the organization in market-driven terms—that

is, shared value strategies, operations, products, services, and culture—leading to organizational effectiveness and competitive excellence. Corporate Shared Value (CSV) as it is known in both the sustainability and strategy literature (Porter and Kramer, 2011) is demonstrating that many of the greatest opportunity spaces for new sources of value creation are today found in providing market-driven solutions to the world's problems. Moreover, a mounting body of research backs this up and data suggests there is no reversing the fundamental recognition that providing market-driven solutions to the world's greatest social, ecological, and human challenges is a winning strategy (see Kramer, 2022; Hoek, 2021).

But now we want to bring more attention to the right side of *Figure 2* where there is a largely underrecognized, underanalyzed, and underdeveloped new continent of change leadership opportunity. This side represents a wide new axis of OD potential to be elaborated, appreciated, and extended. Here the focus is not so much on *outperformance* but *outbehavior*. Here, the focus is on platform models of organization. Platforms are not programs for change; they are bigger than that.

Platform business models—for example, Wikipedia, or better yet, Patagonia's new activation platform that connects thousands of customers to one another and to hundreds of world-changing causes they can join—serve to harness and create large, scalable networks of users, human strength combinations, and resources that become their own self-organizing ecosystems of cocreation.[12] These platforms produce scaled-up action and turn action into an effective antidote to despair while augmenting

12. Patagonia's "action works" serves to connect customers, employees, and many stakeholders with 100s of action initiatives empowering and enabling people with many choices to lead lives of purpose, meaning, and value. As a positive institutional platform action works helps to elevate human strengths, combine, and multiply our highest human strengths, and then ultimately refract those magnified strengths out into our world. That's what positive institutions do. They augment human capacity. See—https://www.patagonia.com/actionworks/about/

human agency and driving human well-being. Platforms create communities and markets with network effects that allow users to interact, learn, enliven—and collaborate. Instead of being the means of production, platforms are the means to connection.

More academically, in the *Oxford University Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, we talk about change making, with its usual focus on change management on the inside of the building, where the enterprise is the object of organization development and change (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011). But now we want to pose a new question... a thought experiment. *What if* we conceived of institutions not as the clients of change but as *the* change agents for attracting resources, partners, persons, communities, customers, coalitions, investors, and mission-aligned change makers of every kind? Here the focus is not *competitive excellence*, but *collaborative advantage* and outside systemic change. It involves strengthening the shared and pervasive life-giving *envelope of enterprise*—the biosphere, our societies and human lives, the earth. The larger concept involves the discovery and design of "positive institutions":

> Positive institutions are organizations and structured practices in culture or society that serve to elevate and develop our highest human strengths, combine, and magnify those strengths, and *refract our highest human strengths outward* in world-benefiting ways leading, ultimately, to a world of full-spectrum flourishing. (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011, pg. 737)

The world is the ultimate context for the OD of betterment. It's not enough to be good within an organization's own operations and capabilities. Positive institutions, as macro change platforms and interventionists, serve as strategic convenors of local and regional communities, unlock the barriers to improving people's lives by uniting the developmental resources from across the public, private, and social sectors with an *all of society* mobilization,

create big tents to leverage and multiply siloed strengths of whole industries, create and participate in megacommunities not of individuals but of organizations, enable open innovation and world inquiry platforms, and augment human powers.

Positive institution interventions (see right hand side of *Figure 2*) help multiply and augment human capacities—enhancing and extending the capacities of individuals, networks, megacommunities and transorganizational systems, tri-sectoral collaborations, and world learning—especially for systemic change. This is macro-OD, for example, when—even while doing their own net positive innovation work inside the enterprise—Patagonia also creates a new outward-facing activation platform that connects thousands of customers to one another and to hundreds of environmental causes they can join, self-organize around, and live greater lives of meaning, purpose, and impact. This kind of new horizon intervention is macro-OD.

Consider another example whereby the institution-as-change agent emerges beyond micro-OD. National Grid US, a leader in the utilities industry, began its OD work internally training change champions in the theory, mindsets, and practices of AI for use in teambuilding, strategy work, mergers, employee engagement, and in searching for new sources of sustainable value by turning waste to wealth, developing new smart grid approaches, etc. Soon they did a companywide AI Summit, and they were inspired by the magnification of strengths, the bonding across silos, and the bold and unifying visions of the future. Then the Chief Innovation Officer, Cheri Warren, declared "with this new capacity let's do more than focus groups and customer surveys... let's become a convenor of the cities we serve and help them collaboratively imagine their green agendas, not only related to the renewable energy future, but all the visions they have for sustainable development, job growth, racial healing, empowering well-being across all neighborhoods, and more." Soon, National Grid was serving communities in ways they had never imagined. For example, by strategically convening the city of Worcester, Massachusetts, their intervention, with

every sector of the city involved—including an impassioned youth delegation—was called "Green Today, Growth Tomorrow: Transforming Worcester into the Innovative Energy Leader of a Smarter Commonwealth." Their macro or outward facing OD was so collaboratively successful that soon they expanded their macro work beyond cities, to the whole state of Massachusetts. With Governor Deval Patrick kicking it off, National Grid co-convened the entire energy sector, transposing OD methods from micro inside the enterprise to macro outside of the building work, while helping Massachusetts become the #1 energy efficient state in the nation (Warren and Cooperrider, 2022).

We could go on with numerous illustrations of organizations becoming platforms for macro systems change, for example, see the article in this special issue ("Changing Organizations to Change the World") where one of the largest corporations in the world is propelling the convening of entire industries with OD's net positive design methods. One of those summits was not only industry-wide but nation-wide. The Sustainable Dairy Summit, for example, catalyzed by Walmart and the Innovation Center for US Dairy, created a radical sustainable development charter and industry manifesto, and a growing and expanding OD-powered systems shift. The macro-OD project has been singled out by the White House. Hosted at an honors ceremony at the nation's capital, the White House called the sustainable dairy initiative "a model for industry-wide change."

Could Macro OD Be the Most Powerful Form of Micro OD?

So why—beyond being a force for good—will such *institutions-as-platforms* for world-changing, matter in terms of internal organizational effectiveness and enterprise vitality?

The answer revolves around what unites the right- and left-hand sides of *Figure 2*. It involves the observable and mutually reinforcing and positive loop of how being a platform for world change "out there" is rapidly and paradoxically becoming one of the most inspiring and

repeatable ways for bringing the "in here" of the enterprise powerfully alive. It's called the "mirror flourishing effect" and it involves one of the greatest learnings of our career (Cooperrider & Fry, 2013). What we've found most concretely is that after some 30 years of doing OD in the real world that there is nothing that brings out the best in human enterprise faster, more consistently, more powerfully that calling a whole organization to design net positive innovations to humanity's greatest challenges—to be an agent of world benefit "out there." The moment people come together to accomplish "doing good" out there—that is, concentrating and uniting their strengths in the service of building a better world, or a healing of nature, or activation of a flourishing regeneration of a whole community or nation, they too activate the PERMA-flourishing mechanisms for their own internal flourishing as persons, as teams, and as a whole organization. The more successful macro-OD becomes—for example helping a Tesla Motors and their employees *electrify the renewable energy age*—the more powerful their micro-OD work will become. Can companies, by engaging people in radically reducing energy watts, also in a reverse fashion actually produce more human energy?

Beyond the sustainability literature, Post and Neimark (2007) detail it in their meta-analysis of more that 500 studies of this reverse flourishing dynamic in their volume *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*. They demonstrate with large data sets that when we work for *betterment beyond* and give our energies to causes greater than ourselves, we in turn flourish. If you engage in doing good "out there" as a teen, for example, science shows you will be reaping health benefits 60 or 70 years later.

The accomplishment of being of benefit to others and to nature does not involve a sacrificing of our own flourishing— quite the contrary. It often is accompanied by a profound feeling of fullness and has been shown in the laboratory to activate the most brain areas linked to positive emotions such as hope, inspiration, love, curiosity, and joy (Fredrickson, 2013).

And remarkably, just the mere witnessing benevolent action, seeing someone else doing good, lights up the same areas of the brain as if you were the one being the agent of betterment (Fredrickson, 2013) while the emotions of flourishing have a contagion effect—they have been shown to flow through networks just as a virus does (Fowler and Christakis, 2008).

Mathieu Ricard, a scholar of super cooperation argues it's intrinsic. When we accomplish positive change that benefits others, for example when we help someone to heal, or realize their potentials, or when we step up courageously to save someone's life—"don't we feel," asks Ricard, "as if we are in harmony with our deepest nature?" (Ricard, 2015, p. 81.) And isn't that the nature of interdependence, that is, we are all connected? Mirror flourishing suggests an intimacy of relations between entities to the point where we can posit that there is no ultimate separation, only the creative unfolding of an entire interdependent field of relations or connections. As Martin Buber (1937) once wrote, "In the beginning is the relationship," and Alfred North Whitehead, in his process philosophy, called it a concrescence, a literal growing together of entities (Whitehead, 1929). Hence, we define *mirror flourishing as a co-elevating concrescence, a co-flourishing or growing together that happens naturally and reciprocally to us when we actively engage in or witness the acts that help nature flourish, others flourish, or the world as a whole to flourish* (Cooperrider & Fry, 2013).

Of course, this growing together can work for good or ill. When, for example, our companies are involved in destroying nature or degeneration of life and value in the world it can have massive effects on the inside of an enterprise. Consider of how the people of BP were feeling in relation to the horrifying images of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the industrial disaster that began in April, 2010, flooding the ocean with 210 million gallons of oil, destroying all forms of wildlife in its path, including scenes spread all over the internet, with BP shown as helpless to seal up the well for not weeks but over a period five excruciating months. It was, for every employee at BP, the opposite of flourishing. Let's call

Table 1: *Summary Concepts Related to Net Positive OD for the Creation of a World of Full Spectrum Flourishing*

Concept	Definition
Earthshot OD	*Earthshot OD aims to end the climate crises in a generation and then help to enable a regenerative economy in the service of a world of full-spectrum flourishing.* This is a time-sensitive macro world-project in which the field of OD intentionally brings its collaborative change capacities and newest theories of change, in and through every organization and industry, to help leaders and citizens from everywhere take on the immense global challenge of our age as measured through the realization of the 17 SDGs and the establishment of a net zero economy by 2050.
Full Spectrum Flourishing	The superordinate ideal for the field of OD to enable *a world where organizations and economies can excel, all people can thrive, and nature can flourish not just now but across the generations*.
Net Positive OD	A new horizon and standard for the field of OD where the aim of every touch point with an organizational system is *to create an organization that improves the well-being for every stakeholder it touches, including employees, suppliers, communities, customers, and even future generations and the planet itself*. With Net Positive OD, the guiding question for every change effort becomes: How is the world better off because your organization is in it?
Green Micro-OD	OD focused on the internal institution-wide embedding of sustainable value and *the "greening" of the enterprise which includes the search for corporate shared value—that which is good for the world and good for the business—and involves incorporation of environmental, human, and societal betterment into the enterprise's core business with no tradeoffs in price or quality*.
Positive Institutions	Organizations and structured practices in culture or society that serve *to elevate and develop our highest human strengths, combine, and magnify those strengths, and refract our highest human strengths outward in world-benefiting ways* leading, ultimately, to a world of full-spectrum flourishing.
Blue Macro-OD	OD focused on the external impact of organizations, whereby the aim is *to facilitate the creation of positive institutions in which the organization is seen not as a client, but rather as the change agent* for world betterment. Macro OD's aim is the exponential mobilization of *systemic change capacities*, literally by many factors of magnitude.
Mirror Flourishing Effect	The *infinitely reinforcing loop of flourishing* that occurs when an organization's stakeholders come together to advance full spectrum flourishing externally, thus concentrating and uniting their strengths in the service of building a better world "out there" and as a result simultaneously activate the PERMA-flourishing mechanisms for their own internal flourishing as persons, as teams, and as a whole organization.
Net Positive Summits (NPS)	A specific form of the AI Summit whole-system methodology that combines *AI's rigorous action-research "4-D cycle" with IDEO's open-innovation design and prototyping tools* including user-experience designs, model building, framing, and reframing, and embracing constraints and creative opportunities to ensure that summit outputs are not simply action plans on paper, but rather tangible artifacts that can be rapidly deployed, iterated in beta mode, and scaled.

it mirror-languishing. There are colossal human costs, and in this case billions in economic costs, of being part of destroying value. Much of the heartsickness we see in our world today happens because we know, deep down, that environmental and social collapse is not separate from our lives.

Concluding Call to the Field: What if Every Organization Aspired to Becoming and Being a Positive Institution and Change Platform for World Benefit?

In this article we shared our journey into the "call of our times" and the next great episode in OD history. We invite you to evolve the lexicon of our field, but more importantly your own work, to include the many concepts we have highlighted here (see *Table 1* for a summary).

We said it before and we will say it again in conclusion: it's an incredible privilege to be alive at this time, in this field, when what the world needs most is the collaborative capacity to reinvent the entire material basis of our civilization. The world is the ultimate context for OD just as it is for every organization and leader today (see Schein and Schein, 2022). OD's future will be of larger scope and greater purpose than it has been in the past. To create a world of full-spectrum flourishing, in a *society of organizations*, opens up a kind of macro-OD whereby we can elevate and mobilize *systemic change capacities* exponentially, literally by many factors of magnitude. When institutions are not just the clients of OD and change, but themselves become *the* change agents we can imagine the change potentials, in this earthshot moment, when 100s of millions of organizations become positive institutions, platforms for elevating, magnifying, and refracting our highest human strengths outward in the service of full spectrum flourishing.

OD will speak ever more fully to the destiny of humanity and nature, as macro-OD is embraced and as OD's innovation frontier involves a perfect union of net positive micro-OD and macro-OD. If you can see OD happening through and not just for institutions, then you can instantly sense the exciting vistas and courageous contours

of an OD that is shaping the better future of the planet, its peoples, and our world systems. In all of this we have shared vital examples and two new conceptual models of this kind of full spectrum OD. Moreover, we have made the case both in terms of our experience in the field and with contemporary research, that building a better world is the most potent force on the planet—for generating, on the inside of the organization, the most engaged, empowered, and innovation-inspired enterprise every leader wants. The radical and even paradoxical message for OD practice is that macro-OD may be the most powerful form of micro-OD—and the reason why is captured in the concept of "mirror flourishing." This is big news for every single leader who would love to have a workplace that is alive with PERMA-flourishing, passion, meaning, high-engagement, trust, and a super-unified mission.

We invite every OD practitioner to join in this earthshot moment. As we stated at the outset of this article, it will call all of us to dare in scholarship, to stand up, step up, and scale up in practice, and to reach far beyond our competence. Together—only together—can we reach that ultimate North Star as a field: enabling a future world, a better world, of full spectrum flourishing.

Although things in this earthshot space did in fact take longer to happen than we thought they would, they are now happening faster than we ever thought they could. We are on the eve of OD's greatest potential and generative calling and, as the two world-respected CEOs declared in the opening epigraph... *"The clock is ticking, future generations are counting on us, and 'history has its eyes on us.'"*

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"... changing behavior away from deeply embedded unsustainable patterns requires a gradual and emergent transition. It involves a dynamic network of activity and transformation that may not easily fit into existing frameworks of OD interventions."

Organization Development as an Agent of Ecosystem Change

What It Will Really Take?

By Jean M. Bartunek and
Susan Albers Mohrman

Abstract

It is crucial that Organization Development move beyond a focus on individual organizations to address the sustainability of our larger ecosystem. We present a revelatory example of such a change that was partly stimulated by Appreciative Inquiry, but whose implementation over time has required a great deal of other activity carried out by a complex and growing set of actors. Our example is the building of a local foods economy in Northeast Ohio. We depict the development processes entailed in moving toward a more ecologically and socially viable way of providing healthy food to a megacommunity, and draw from them some challenges that Organization Development needs to address to foster such long-term efforts. These include the building of infrastructures that support change implementation, dealing with conflicting interests and agendas among participants, and attending to the larger temporal context in which change is implemented.

Keywords: Ecosystem, Local Foods economy, megacommunities, politics, Appreciative Inquiry Summit, dualities of hierarchy and emergence

In their call for papers for this special issue of the *Organization Development Review,* David Cooperrider and Lindsey Godwin wrote: "We have an incredible opportunity to reimagine an OD field that propels and provides the change leadership and collaborative change capacities required to create entirely new sustainable and net positive organizations, tri-sector partnerships, and megacommunities for mobilizing cooperative change, while in parallel helping to transform existing systems." Their ambitious call echoes recognition among many organizational scholars and consultants of the need to contribute to change processes that transcend individual organizations (e.g., Bartunek, 2022, Battilana, Ferraras & Meda, 2021, Janoff, 2022, Schein & Schein, 2022) towards fostering "our common home" (Pope Francis, 2015).

However, much of what is involved in creating and maintaining such entities as tri-sector partnerships and megacommunities has not received the explicit attention it needs from OD practitioners and scholars. In particular, there is little discussion of what it means to *implement over time* the processes required for megacommunities to survive and prosper. Such processes require moving beyond gathering people and groups together to aspire to and plan for a different future, though that is a crucial component. They also require nurturing complex infrastructures that will allow movement beyond aspirations and designs to enduring realities.

The Role of OD in Implementing Megacommunities

Cummings and Worley (2008, p. 2) defined Organization Development as "a systemwide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the

planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization effectiveness." This definition focuses primarily on within-organization efforts, as do most OD interventions. However, Cummings and Worley also noted that OD must have a wider vision. That is (p. 699), "there are increasingly clear warnings that the ecosystem can no longer be treated as a factor of production, and that success cannot be defined as the accumulation of wealth and material goods at the expense of the environment." Thus, it will be necessary that OD becomes concerned about ecological sustainability.

Cummings and Worley also noted that OD must have a wider vision. That is, "there are increasingly clear warnings that the ecosystem can no longer be treated as a factor of production, and that success cannot be defined as the accumulation of wealth and material goods at the expense of the environment." Thus, it will be necessary that OD becomes concerned about ecological sustainability.

The emphasis on moving beyond intra-organizational processes is certainly not new. Open systems approaches have always emphasized connections between organizations and their contexts (e.g. Cummings, 1984; Pasmore, Winby, Mohrman & Vanasse, 2019). Further, trans-organization development approaches are used in many multi-party interventions to address complex societal problems (e.g., Cummings, 1984; Gray, 1989; Worley & Mirvis, 2013). However, the scale and urgency of the problems faced by humanity require a fundamental expansion of the premises, foci, capabilities, and technologies of OD to foster dynamic collaborations between diverse sets of stakeholders over extended time periods.

Dialogic, community-based interventions such as those recently discussed by Immendorf and colleagues (2020) and Gandhi and Johansson (2020) are crucial in developing shared understanding and aspirations, bringing in future-oriented perspectives and designs, and fostering communication and collaboration across multiple community groups. Here, however, we focus on the additional activities required to institutionalize new ways of operating that accomplish the well-being of megacommunities, societies, and the earth. Considerable work must accompany dialogic approaches, including among people who have not initially participated and who have different priorities. In other words, considering the full cycle of development requires thinking more broadly about the roles of multiple stakeholders than those often considered in OD (e.g., Hörisch, Freeman, & Schaltegger, 2014).

We use a revelatory example, the building of a local foods economy in Northeast Ohio (NEO), to depict the development challenges entailed in moving toward a more ecologically and socially viable way of providing healthy food to a megacommunity. In the case we are discussing, Appreciative Inquiry (e.g., Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Glavas, Senge & Cooperrider, 2010; Watterston, 2013) has been effectively used to catalyze broad stakeholder commitment to change. But much that happened outside of AI has been necessary to develop and implement such change over time.

As the case will show, changing behavior away from deeply embedded unsustainable patterns requires a gradual and emergent transition. It involves a dynamic network of activity and transformation that may not easily fit into existing frameworks of OD interventions.

The Case: Building a Sustainable Local Food Chain

Our case draws on key learnings from a longitudinal study of the development of a sustainable local foods economy in NEO, especially Cleveland (see Mohrman, Breyley-Parker, Palacpac and Wilk [2016] for a more complete report.) The study consisted of 55 interviews conducted over the eight years from 2008 to 2015. It also included gathering and reviewing archival materials, including city records and reports, laws and regulations, and on-line materials. We also provide an update on the development process since the formal study ended.

Background:
The Agri-foods Industry
The agri-foods industry is core to the discussion of sustainable development because of its direct relationship to life, health, and cultural identity, and because of its impact and dependence on the limited natural resources of our planet. The industry's search for lower costs, greater yield, and global markets has helped reduce hunger, but has also taken a toll on the environment and human health through the use of pesticides, growing practices that harm the earth, greenhouse gas pollution resulting from the transport of food around the world, and food processing that contributes to obesity and disease by relying heavily on sugar, salt, and fat (Gerbens-Leenes, Moll & Uiterkamp, 2003; Godfray et al., 2010).

Local foods initiatives are one approach to building a more sustainable food chain. They aim to restore the close connection of communities to the food they eat, and to grow and produce healthy foods that are accessible to all. But accomplishing and sustaining local foods initiatives is very complex.

The NEO local foods case demonstrates the long-term challenge of achieving a more sustainable food chain. The seven-year-long longitudinal look at the local foods movement we summarize here provides a glimpse into this system as it adapted and evolved, and what was

required for the development of new behaviors, assumptions, beliefs, and changed patterns of relationships across a complex and diverse set of actors and stakeholders.

Phases in the Development of the NEO Local Foods System

The study and this article focus on Cleveland, Ohio, the largest city in Northeast Ohio and a hub of the regional local foods development network. As accounts note (e.g. Glavas et al., 2010; Watterston, 2013), Cleveland had grown into a booming industrial city that became prosperous during the early industrial revolution due to its location, proximity to natural resources and an industrious immigrant population. However, its "rustbelt" industries generated unmitigated environmental destruction during much of the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, in 1969, the Cuyahoga River caught on fire (Boissoneault, 2019), bringing considerable unwanted international attention to the city, its environmental plight, and social blight.

Cleveland has lost more than half of its population since 1950 and is now the poorest big city in the US (*https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2020/09/18/cleveland-cincinnati-among-top-10-poorest-big-cities-in-america*). This has resulted in large numbers of vacant lots and extreme poverty in juxtaposition with a rich cultural heritage, lush lakeside parks and neighborhoods, and a cadre of civic minded citizens eager to help revitalize the city and region. The larger Cleveland metropolitan area continues to house multiple Fortune 500 companies and internationally acclaimed medical and educational institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University. Recently, services firms have brought an increasing number of professionals to the city, leading to the gentrification of some neighborhoods.

Phase 1. Mohrman et al. (2016) took a retrospective perspective on initiatives from 1994–2005 to reinvigorate traditional local farming. Funded largely by state and federal grants, philanthropy, and university extension programs, these included various programs to recruit interested farmers and others interested in becoming farmers, help them develop farming and business skills, build interest in local food and connect farmers to markets in the city, largely through the establishment of farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. These activities instilled interest in Cleveland to start to build urban farming capability to take advantage of the large areas of vacant and unused land within the city.

Phase 2. From 2006–2011, a loose network of civic, business, and city government leaders became involved in championing and providing resources to support urban farming, removing legal zoning and other barriers and creating the enabling conditions that allowed a variety of urban farming to begin. In 2008–2009, Mayor Frank Jackson of the City of Cleveland (who in 2022 completed his fourth, and last, consecutive term as Mayor) convened, together with the Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit at Case Western Reserve University, the first of what were to become yearly tri-sectoral and large group Appreciative Inquiry Summits. These were aimed at catalyzing action to increase the vitality of the city and the region by building an economy around and a reputation for sustainability (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012). The first summit identified local foods as one of multiple focus domains for reinvigorating and rebranding Cleveland as a "Green City on a Blue Lake." (e.g. *https://www.clevelandohio.gov/node/9057*).

Under the agency of Neighborhood Progress, a citywide, public non-profit partnership that serves as a funding intermediary to secure and distribute funds to local neighborhood boards looking to revitalize their neighborhoods (*www.clevelandnp.org/reimagining-cleveland/*), in 2008, the city and its surrounding areas started a pilot program, "Reimagining a more sustainable Cleveland," for vacant land reuse (Litt, 2009). Funding and technical assistance were made available to neighborhood groups, churches, schools, and individuals to transform vacant lots from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank for green uses such as community gardens, pocket parks, phytoremediation sites, or urban farms (*https://renovatingtherustbelt.wordpress.com/category/re-imagining-a-more-sustainable-cleveland/*). Reimagining Cleveland developed into a comprehensive strategy for land use to create sustainable solutions to vacancy.

Broad regional support for urban agriculture enabled the emergence of many initiatives, including multi-acre urban farms, several of which were located in less advantaged areas of the city and managed and staffed from the local neighborhoods, including by people of color, immigrants, and residents of public housing facilities. Several different models emerged. For example, with start-up support from large anchor institutions in the area, Green City Grocers, a large, worker-owned, 3.25-acre hydroponic greenhouse produce farm was established and staffed with employees from the surrounding neighborhood (*http://www.evgoh.com/gcg/*). Cleveland Crops, the nonprofit farm and food unit of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (*https://www.eatwell-guide.org/listings/73509/locations/29139*) began operating multiple farms in and around Cleveland and built a food processing center which turned excess produce into healthy food products. Its mission is to provide training and work experience, and open up employment opportunities in the agriculture and food industry for its participants.

Phase 3. In association with the 2012 AI Summit, the Mayor declared 2012 the year of local foods. A tri-sectoral committee coordinated through the Mayor's office developed a food cluster roadmap and proposed a go-forward strategy. During this time, rural and urban farming initiatives continued, but many of these initiatives were barely scraping by financially, relying in part on philanthropy, goodwill, and support from institutions and government and operating on inexpensively leased land.

Not owning the land they farmed, and unable to secure capital to invest to diversify and grow, the farmers looked for ways to become economically viable. Partnerships and entrepreneurial initiatives emerged to leverage resources, achieve larger scale, and build out a fuller, more diverse, and more sustainable local foods

chain. The new elements that appeared included: an economic community development institute to make small business loans to local agricultural businesses; shared culinary kitchens to provide farmers the opportunity to produce more durable food products and get past the limits of seasonality; on-line green grocer and delivery services; more than a score of farm-to-table restaurants, often partnering with particular farms to ensure a steady stream of produce; a vertically integrated farming model that included a farm, restaurant, and skills development programs;

network of local farms, urban gardens and farms, entrepreneurial businesses, and distribution channels for locally grown food.

Developments since 2015. There has been ongoing development of the local food chain. Focus on locally-made foods has become an embedded aspect of Cleveland's food economy (*https://www.cleveland.com/cooking/2015/06/cleveland_expo_local_foods_goi.html*), and some of the larger urban farms have increased their size and scope of activities as well as their contribution to the development of their surrounding

city for other purposes (Glanville, 2021). Many others still depend on foundations and government grants for infrastructure funding, and the whole system depends on consumers and customers who value local healthy foods to keep the local food chain viable by paying above-market rates and tolerating uncertainty of supply (e.g. *https://observer.case.edu/plum-market-opens-to-mixed-reactions-from-students/*). Some food policy experts in Cleveland fear that there are signs of decreasing enthusiasm for a movement once touted as an innovative reuse of the city's underused land. There is concern that the focus of revitalization has shifted to bricks and mortar, residential and retail development (Glanville, 2021).

Reflections on the Evolution of Local Farming in NEO

Over time, multiple elements have contributed to the evolution of the local farming system. There is a great deal we can learn from them.

Emerging Sets of Actors
Extensive networks of actors, bringing resources, knowledge, and new connections and combinations of activities, have emerged as needed at different stages of the local food system's development (Mohrman et al., 2016). They have enabled and enacted the development of the local farming system over many years. We summarize contributions of many of these groups below.

City and regional civic, business and city leaders, champions, and supporters have collectively and individually provided a supportive context and lent expertise. Beyond the urban and rural farmers who have toiled to fulfill their aspirations to build a life around sustainable farming, many others have brought required skills and resources and expanded the scope and embeddedness of local foods activity in the region. These have included: *food aggregators* who brought food from many farmers direct to consumers including through farmers markets and CSAs; *NGO's and non-profits* providing knowledge, lobbying, technical, and business support to develop traditionally and sustainably run

> To offset the engrained unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity, the ensuing changes needed to be accessible to many stakeholders unlikely to have excess capital to invest in a new future. Many of the people who built the NEO food chain did not have hierarchical, political, or monetary power, and relied on building network connections to access resources, goodwill and support from those who did. A new sustainable future cannot be built if only the wealthy members of the population direct the transition, benefit from it, and afford it.

and full cycle models including the collection of restaurant food scraps that were then composted and sold to farmers as natural fertilizer. Some farmers explored regional cooperative approaches to leverage costs such as transportation, and to be able to aggregate product in order to reliably provide local foods to larger retail and institutional customers.

In 2015, Brad Masi, a local writer, filmmaker and agricultural development consultant, who had been active in building many elements of the local foods system (*https://oberlinproject.org/blog/local-foods/blogger/listings/bmasi/*) organized a Network Analysis and Collaboration Conference. Over 150 participants from the region came together to examine ways to increase collaboration to grow the viability of the local food chain to help it move toward self-sufficiency.

When data collection for the study ended in 2015, the local foods system had grown substantially. There was a robust

neighborhoods (*www.thelandcle.org/stories/farmers-markets-nutrition-assistance-programs-serve-as-oases-in-clevelands-food-deserts*).

Yet the system is still insecure (e.g., *ocj.com/2015/04/usda-grant-addresses-food-insecurity-in-ne-ohio*). The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on restaurants buying produce from local farms (e.g. *https://go.openathens.net/redirector/bc.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/reimagining-business-after-coronavirus-how-one/docview/2397161918/se-2?accountid=9673*). Even without regard to the pandemic, the local foods system still depends largely on the use of farm land which, because plentiful, often is leased at well below market values.

Many farms have struggled to achieve a critical mass to reach a living income and access to capital that would enable investment to build a viable future. At least two of the smaller urban farms have shut down because the land was appropriated by the

farms, build markets, and enable efficiencies through collective action; *purveyors of specialized educational programs* accessible to farmers, food entrepreneurs, and the public, including local colleges and USDA extension programs and others who secured grants and other funding and partnered with other agencies to set up demonstration projects; *micro lending institutions* to address needs for resources to scale up operations to a viable size and margin; *businesses establishing new niches on the value stream*, such as farm-to-table restaurants, shared culinary kitchen facilities to process food sustainably and create year-long offerings and revenue, and to develop profitable ways to achieve zero-waste; *foundations that provided start-up support for large initiatives* that addressed the sustainability and community well-being aspirations of the region; *worker-owned sustainable foods businesses* to build wealth, skills, and community vitality in some of the poorest neighborhoods of Cleveland; *community development activists and consultants* who convened a myriad of bottom up and top down multi-stakeholder forums and helped develop networks of activity including for advocacy and collective lobbying; and *champions in governmental agencies and legislatures* who could help remove barriers, enact enabling regulations, secure resources and provide administrative and organizing support.

Differences in Emphases and Interests

Although all the actors have shared the ultimate vision of building a viable local foods eco-system, diverse stakeholders and actors have brought to bear different and sometimes contending perspectives, interests, and desired outcomes. For example, *local governments* were interested in the best use of tax money and resources such as land to revitalize the region and to address the needs of the population. *Farmers* were motivated to build thriving farms that adhered to sustainable principles, the growing and distribution of healthy foods, the preservation of the earth—and by the autonomy and meaning they found in their mission. *Small businesses* guided by an entrepreneurial spirit looked to create

profitable market niches that brought together growers and consumers of local foods. *Community developers, churches and other NGO's* were interested in bringing healthy foods, urban agriculture, and employment opportunities to underserved neighborhoods and populations, including to people of color, large immigrant communities, and ex-felons. Local *"anchor" institutions*, such as universities, hospital systems, and businesses were interested in revitalizing a city and its population that was the lifeblood of their organizations.

Tensions resulted from the different emphases. For example, there were pressures on the local foods actors to reduce price and increase scale and reliability in order to attract larger institutional customers and achieve a viable scale contended with the social mission focus. As Cleveland worked to build a thriving city, the potential for losing the key resource, land, to other urban growth-oriented purposes always loomed. The staying power of the stakeholders who provided external support was tested, as other critical needs and priorities for investing in the sustainability and well-being of the community were vying for resources (Pothukuchi, 2018).

The Duality of Hierarchy and Emergence

The NEO local foods transformation, like change and adaptation in all complex systems, has depended on both top-down leadership and planning *and* on emergent activities from within. Various populations and networks of actors have joined together spontaneously to collaborate in building different parts of the system. Coordinating and enabling parties, voluntarily or in their civic and institutional roles or as paid consultants, have helped create leverage and coordination among loosely coupled initiatives and actors. Regulatory, policy, and appropriating groups have removed barriers and made resources available to seed this new capability. Civic groups and NGO's have provided funding and expertise to many promising elements of the system, and to support its evolution.

Developing sustainable systems relies on securing and redirecting resources—financial, knowledge, time,

and attention—in order to reconfigure the status quo and change behavior patterns throughout the eco-system. In the NEO local foods case, this has entailed leadership from a visionary mayor and many forums for dialogue (including the AI Summits) to move sustainability, prosperity, and well-being for all onto the agenda of civic, business, and political leaders. To offset the engrained unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity, the ensuing changes needed to be accessible to many stakeholders unlikely to have excess capital to invest in a new future. Many of the people who built the NEO food chain did not have hierarchical, political, or monetary power, and relied on building network connections to access resources, goodwill, and support from those who did. A new sustainable future cannot be built if only the wealthy members of the population direct the transition, benefit from it, and afford it.

The Necessary Role of Politics

Change that redirects resources and focuses on new purposes is a political process and change agents are political actors. Competing purposes and interests are inevitable, as are disparate visions of a prosperous society and of the best means to achieve the health of the earth and the well-being of its population. Aspirations and "pledges" to achieve new ways of doing business are only the first step toward the redirection of resources. As was evident in the NEO foods example, fundamental change that disrupts the status quo requires a long-term commitment of resources to support action and innovative solutions, in the midst of contending preferences.

Criticisms

The urban farming initiative in Cleveland has received criticism for not going far enough to truly redistribute resources. For example, Pothukuchi (2018) criticized it because the land has been leased, without extended long-term commitments. He said that "This organization of the city's agriculture is a direct result of urban and land governance that privileges development and considers agriculture only for interim

use and prefers community development corporations (CDCs) and other nonprofits to transfer parcels for agriculture" (p. 658). Akers (2020, p. 221) also raised concerns, suggesting that "On the one hand, urban agriculture, here, does indeed create good quality jobs. But on the other one, it also contributes to silencing voices against the demolition of predominantly Black neighborhoods." Further (p. 222), "This search for investors wishing to confer a 'green' use on the land is more generally in line with the gentrification strategy implemented by several powerful players in Cleveland's governance."

was particularly evident when there was funding and energy among participants for convening, learning from one another, developing deeper understandings of needs and opportunities, and revitalizing commitments to work with others. At different times, various champions emerged who helped take the local foods system in new directions. Slowly but surely, season by season, an adaptive infrastructure was built. Accomplishments like this reflect a long-term, perhaps never-ending evolution that depends on a reliable flow of resources, including to promote learning in an ever-changing context.

in NEO makes evident that this challenge calls for non-trivial change and learning within OD. It shows the importance of providing support during complex transformations that may be decades in the making. New frameworks and practice patterns of OD are needed in order to attend to the full, multi-year cycles of interrelated innovation and adaptation that accompany such transformations.

Updating the Tenets of OD to Create Infrastructures for Change

There is a need not only to expand the domain of OD to deal with the design and implementation needed to accomplish ongoing transformation over many years, but also to alter some of its long-standing tenets and expand our methodologies and frameworks. That is, while OD frameworks and methodologies are crucial in developing alignment of stakeholders and commitment to values and goals, there is also a need to help create an infrastructure to support emergent networks of activity and learning required to evolve and scale up new patterns of individual and collective behavior over extended time periods. This may best happen not through planned change, but by approaches that enable change through time by fostering self-forming networks of activity that contribute to the development of a new operating logic. Based on the NEO case, we suggest that building an infrastructure to support fundamental change entails several elements. These have to do with planning and implementing change, differing interests and agendas among participants, and larger contexts in which change is occurring.

Planning and implementing change. Planning, visioning, and assessment of need are important, but OD frameworks need also to pay attention to implementation, and to ongoing activities involving increasingly diverse sets of stakeholders bringing different resources, knowledge, skills, perspectives, values, and preferences to bear. Dealing with learning and uncertainty will be fundamental to needed transformation of system operating principles. Getting the (whole) system in the room to commit

> Dealing with learning and uncertainty will be fundamental to needed transformation of system operating principles. Getting the (whole) system in the room to commit to a changed future is crucial but only the beginning. The actual work occurs through ongoing and emergent activities and shifting of patterns of activity within a large, diverse, and growing eco-system, as participants are enabled to pursue and implement new approaches, some of which should be expected to fail...

Tensions like these are fundamental to transformation initiatives that purport to simultaneously address sustainability, well-being, and social justice, and where there are different priorities, interests, and criteria among stakeholders, and conflicting views such as of what is just and sustainable. This underscores the need to attend to the incorporation of multiple perspectives and interests throughout the development process, and to prioritize them for particular initiatives at different times.

The Importance of Ongoing Learning

The foundational nature of learning through experience and through institutional and community-based educational opportunities was striking. Progress was made by establishing new connections among the actors in the system, collaborating to try out new approaches, learning together and teaching one another. This

Implications for OD

As of this writing, the local foods chain has a considerable presence in the region, even while confronting its limitations. It may or may not be viable over the long run, and this will depend on whether it can become and remain self-sufficient. Nevertheless, what has been accomplished is significant, and we can learn from it how OD knowledge and skills can help address fundamental megacommunity transformation.

A Necessary Expansion in OD Practice

The fundamental challenge to OD articulated in the introduction to this special issue is to become mission driven, to expand from focusing on organizations to focus on entire eco-systems in order to deal with big, global, and existential problems pertaining to sustainability and flourishing of humanity. The case example of the development of a local foods economy

to a changed future is crucial but only the beginning. The actual work occurs through ongoing and emergent activities and shifting of patterns of activity within a large, diverse, and growing eco-system, as participants are enabled to pursue and implement new approaches, some of which should be expected to fail (Heracleous & Bartunek, 2021) in the service of learning, and some to succeed.

Differing interests and agendas. Achieving shared values and purposes to guide large change may not be possible, or even desirable, given the fundamental fissures of values, purposes, geo-political tensions, and power relationships among parties/stakeholders who come to the same global challenges from their own individual contexts. They likely have quite varied interests, constraints, resources, power, and socio-political agendas, as well as different definitions of "the problem" and views of the best pathways to resolution.

The NEO local foods case suggests that this diversity may be functional in a complex system focusing on multiple, often at least seemingly conflicting desired outcomes. This means that OD will have to incorporate politics into its frameworks and methodologies. Development in a context such as NEO is as much a political process as a societal and organizational process. Working with burgeoning need, limited resources, and multiple, simultaneous, fundamental challenges to the status quo will entail trade-offs and, at least in the short term, create winners and losers and political pushback at various levels in the system. Varying groups will also bring with them conflicting preferences for emergence and hierarchical direction/convening. The NEO case illustrates the need to deal with the tensions and juxtapositions between these orientations, through time.

The temporal contexts in which change is occurring. OD will have to incorporate expanded temporal perspectives (e.g., Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller & Huy, 2017). If we assume only the immediate time period, the creation of winners and losers is a more formidable barrier than if we focus on long temporal horizons where multiple participants and stakeholders may benefit, perhaps at different times, from sustainable development. Further, crafting large eco-system level development entails the choreographing of interdependent activities along many value streams, the establishment of many full cycle eco-systems, and of many simultaneous development projects across many dynamic and cross-cutting vectors of activity. Adjustment and adaptation require a longer-term temporal focus than is typically considered in OD.

Conclusion

Based on our example of the development of local farming initiatives in NEO we have suggested a major expansion in ways that OD might contribute to ongoing, extensive, megacommunity change that itself fosters a more sustainable ecosystem. In particular, we have focused on the need to build dynamic infrastructures that support the emergence of new initiatives as they are worked out in practice. Such infrastructures entail continuous planning, implementing and learning over time, dealing with differing interests and agendas among participants, and paying attention to the larger context in which change is implemented. The kinds of developments that we have sketched are necessary if OD is truly to foster ecosystems that support the ongoing health of our world. We look forward to many more examples of such types of change.

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"…business can become a place of healing for employees and their families, a source of healing for customers, communities, and ecosystems, and a force for healing in society, helping alleviate cultural, economic, and political divides."

FIFCO

A Healing Organization and OD's New North Star

By Raj Sisodia and
David Cooperrider

Abstract
Ramon Mendiola is a CEO who has, with teams of change champions and collaborating widely with stakeholders, taken a traditional business, and transformed it into Costa Rica's most admired and highly conscious company. This became possible because of the deeply developmental work the company did to embody what it means to be a "healing organization." A Healing Organization says, "Our quest is to alleviate suffering and elevate joy. We serve the needs of all stakeholders, including our employees, customers, communities, and the environment. We seek to continually improve the lives of all stakeholders while making a profit so we can continue to grow and bring healing to more of the world." The purpose of this article is, therefore, to add to the conversation ignited by this special issue by exploring our superordinate ideal, both for the fields of conscious capitalism and OD—and propose that our deepest and most regenerative calling is about *healing*, and it involves advancing the "healing organization."
Keywords: Conscious Capitalism, Healing Organizations, Higher Purpose Organizations

A Significant Link Connecting OD and Conscious Capitalism

The principles forming the pillars of the Conscious Capitalism (CC) movement and OD's new North Star represent an aligned and increasingly high-potential partnership for bringing about the next great episode in business history. Why? The reason is simple: we need always to remember "the means and ends of change are inseparable" as we've described in the *Healing Organization* (Sisodia & Gelb, 2019, p. 226). That is why some of the greatest OD/CC exemplars in the real world—companies such as Whole Foods, Clarke Industries, Fairmount Minerals, and so many more—have been inspired and empowered by OD methods such as Appreciative Inquiry, large group multistakeholder hosting and co-creation methods, whole systems intelligence, future searches, and the building of teams-of-teams of change champions (Holman, 2009.) And while it is beyond the scope of this article to trace the mutually upbuilding dynamism between OD's values, and each of the core tenets of CC—designing for *Higher Purpose, Stakeholder Orientation, Conscious Leadership, and Conscious Culture*—it's important to underscore the vast vistas ahead in a world that is crying out for the business of betterment at scales and speeds we've never imagined. That's why I am honored to be part of this *ODR* special issue, embracing our civilization's earthshot moment, and our shared superordinate mission, which is to create a world of full spectrum flourishing (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2022):

> "A world where organizations and economies can excel, all people can thrive, and nature can flourish, now and across the generations."

The purpose of this article is to add new dimensions to this expansive and elevating conversation on the topic of our world-changing North Star, both for the fields of conscious capitalism and OD—and to propose our deepest and most regenerative work is about *healing* and advancing the "healing organization." This article, therefore, is not about the business of healing; it's about business as healing. Elsewhere (Sisodia and Gelb, 2019) we have articulated the healing cry and call of our time; in this article, I wish to illustrate through a real-life story and concept elaboration the beautiful power of this proposition in action—that business can become a place of healing for employees and their families, a source of healing for customers, communities, and ecosystems, and a force for healing in society, helping alleviate cultural, economic, and political divides.

**A Remarkable Story and
The Joy That is Possible**

Pura vida or "pure life" is a phrase expressing the essence of the spirit of the beautiful country of Costa Rica. One quarter of its territory is in protected areas or national parks. Although the entire country is about the size of West Virginia—less than 0.04 percent of the planet's landmass—it is home to 5 percent of Earth's biodiversity and also to FIFCO, one of the world's great examples of a Healing Organization.

The Florida Ice and Farm Company (FIFCO) started as an agricultural and ice manufacturing company in a small town in Costa Rica in 1908. Over time, the company evolved to primarily focus on brewing beer. When Ramon Mendiola Sanchez became the CEO in 2004, FIFCO had $150 million in revenues and 1800 employees. Its financial performance was mediocre, and growth was anemic.

Fast-forward to 2019. FIFCO is consistently rated the Best Place to Work in Costa Rica. It was classified as a "sustainability champion" by the World Economic Forum in 2011, along with only sixteen other companies in the world (Montero Soto, 2017). It is among the 1% of companies worldwide that allocate more than 7.5% of profits towards social investments. Revenues

had increased to nearly $1.3 billion. The company was thriving in virtually every dimension, with over 6300 employees and more than $300 million in profits in 2017. Its businesses spanned beer, spirits, non-alcoholic beverages, food, and hotels and resorts.

According to a 2021 survey of 1269 experts and business executives, Ramón Mendiola was the highest rated corporate leader in Costa Rica, far ahead of the other leaders cited in the survey.

How Did This Happen?
The company has been on a journey to becoming a purpose-driven, consciously healing organization. As Ramon puts it, "The business transformation that has occurred in the last decade has been tremendously more profound than what happened to FIFCO in the previous hundred years."

Ramon spent his first four years establishing the company on a more solid financial footing. The first two years, from 2004 to 2006, were about becoming more efficient. Ramon then embarked on a period of aggressive growth. He challenged his executives to double revenues and profits within two years, which they accomplished.

By 2008, the company started to face a societal backlash. Much of its growth had come from increasing alcohol consumption, leading to widespread criticism. The company's sugary drinks were being blamed for rising obesity. Many criticized FIFCO for its negative impacts on water, carbon emission, and waste. Ramon recalls, "We started receiving signals from society. In rapidly growing our business, we overheated a bit in terms of the consumption of alcoholic products. We had issues with drinking and driving. I really started paying attention to those signals. We decided to do a comprehensive stakeholder mapping—a qualitative and quantitative consultation with all our stakeholders. We normally do an exceptionally good job with our consumers, customers, and employees. I expanded it to include NGOs, society in general, those who regulate us, our shareholders, and suppliers."

The feedback was clear. The company had four major negative footprints: excessive consumption of alcohol; waste (people complained about FIFCO bottles floating in the rivers and on beaches); water (activists charged that FIFCO was taking water away from communities to produce its products); and carbon emissions.

Embracing the Triple Bottom Line
To Ramon, the way forward was clear: FIFCO had to become a "triple bottom line" company with positive impacts on people, the planet, and profits. He merged the company's business strategy with its environmental and social responsibility initiatives (as Unilever was doing under Paul Polman). Ramon tackled the social and environmental issues with the same rigor he had brought to improving financial performance.

To address excessive alcohol consumption, FIFCO partnered with a Canadian NGO which had successfully changed consumption patterns in Québec by reducing binge drinking and encouraging moderation. As Ramon says, "Alcohol is not good or bad as a product. It depends on who consumes it and how—the consumption pattern." Working with the Ministry of Health and Education, FIFCO made significant strides in altering consumption patterns. As president of the Latin American Brewers Association, Ramon mobilized the industry to change consumption patterns in the region.

Costa Rica was also confronting a skyrocketing rate of obesity, as were many other Central American countries. Mexico has the highest rate of consumption of carbonated soft drinks in the world, and Costa Rica was not far behind. The Minister of Health asked Ramon to address this crisis. Ramon committed to reducing sugar content across 70% of the company's non-alcoholic portfolio within three years. The only products he could not touch were the Pepsi brands that FIFCO produced under license.

Ramon was forced to remove carbonated beverages from vending machines at public high schools, replacing them with fruit juices and iced tea. He assembled a team, including R&D, to reformulate all

265 stock keeping units (SKUs): to reduce the amount of sugar and replace it with a natural low-calorie substitute. The team was asked to use artificial sweeteners only sparingly, to move towards all natural (it is now 80% natural).

To Ramon's amazement, the team reformulated all 265 SKUs within four months, reducing sugar and calories by 40 to 50%. He told the Minister of Health that FIFCO would start producing the new formulations within a week.

FIFCO launched the new formulations without any public announcement, just modifications in the ingredient lists on the labels. The company monitored the market reaction very closely. There was some backlash with a few of the SKUs but for the most part, people did not even notice and soon got used to the new taste. After two years, when consumers had completely embraced the products, the company launched an advertising campaign emphasizing how much healthier its products now were and changed its labeling. Ramon was then able to convince PepsiCo to let him reduce the sugar content in their products as well. The calories in a can of 7-Up went from 150 down to 100.

Raising the Ambition

Simultaneously, the company embarked on its ambitious environmental initiatives. The conventional wisdom is that the only way for a company to not have a negative environmental footprint is to shut down. But FIFCO made three bold public commitments in 2008: it would become a zero solid waste company by 2011, water neutral by 2012, and carbon neutral by 2017.

FIFCO accomplished these goals using a three-step process: measure the footprints precisely, reduce them to the maximum extent possible, and compensate externally for the difference. FIFCO invested in environmentally advanced technologies, educated its stakeholders, and linked environmental performance to executive compensation. It invested 7.5% of its net profit every year on projects to reduce footprints.

FIFCO reduced its water consumption from a peak of 10.9 liters used for every liter produced to 4.38. It compensated

for the remaining gap by providing clean water to people who lacked access, harvesting rainwater, and protecting rainforests in the countries where it operates.

The company reduced solid waste by recycling and reusing as much as possible and generating energy from what is left. FIFCO reduced waste by 99.4% and compensated for the rest through a volunteer program to pick up trash generated by other companies. It recycles over 80% of all plastic bottles that it sells and 77% of all other packaging materials. Its goal is to recycle 100% of its bottles and eventually produce them using biopolymers instead of harmful PET (polyethylene terephthalate).

FIFCO aims to become a carbon, water, and solid waste net positive company, working with its entire value chain to realize these goals. Its leading beer brand Imperial became the world's first water positive beer in 2017.

Here are six lessons from FIFCO's experience in mitigating and eventually reversing its environmental impacts:

» An integrated approach that looks at social, environmental, and financial performance simultaneously rather than sequentially.
» Listening to all stakeholders to better understand the problem as well as co-create the solution.
» Adopting a higher purpose that encompasses flourishing in all dimensions.
» Linking measurements and compensation to holistic goals. 40% of FIFCO executive compensation is linked to environmental and social goals; the remaining 60% is economic.
» A public commitment to tangible goals, generating pride, enthusiasm, and optimism among employees and other stakeholders.
» Widespread collaboration with academia, civil society, and the government, locally as well as globally.

When he started engaging with stakeholders in organization development multistakeholder ways to mitigate the company's footprints, Ramon's consciousness was rooted in fear. As he realized the impact the company could have, his fear gave way to excitement and then joy. The company

delivered on all of Ramon's bold public social commitments on schedule, burnishing its reputation and leading to a surge of pride in its employees.

Ramon realized that doing the right things makes people happy. The biggest impact of the initiatives was on employees, whose engagement and commitment went up tremendously. That created a virtuous cycle: doing the right things leads to greater employee commitment and engagement, which leads the company to be even more effective and creative at doing the right things, an observable and powerful dynamic that the OD literature has termed "mirror flourishing" (Cooperrider, 2017).

Discovering FIFCO's Purpose

By 2014, the 10-year mark of his tenure as CEO, Ramon could look back on a decade of extraordinary progress. The company he was now leading was dramatically different in every dimension than the one he had walked into in 2004. He had driven his people hard, set ambitious goals and realized nearly every one of them. But he felt a little uneasy about the culture. "To be honest, we lost some connection with our employees, because we stretched too far too fast including four acquisitions in eighteen months. We were missing something important for me, and that was the higher purpose of FIFCO. So, we went out to search for our purpose."

Thus began the next exciting chapter of FIFCO's evolution as a conscious, healing organization. Ramon recognized that he and his colleagues needed to be able to answer the question, "Why are we here? Why do we wake up every day and come to work?"

Ramon assembled a team of twelve leaders to join him on this quest, and they went up a mountain for three days. This was not something they could delegate to an advertising agency; it required each of them to look deeply within their hearts and souls. "The purpose is so important because it touches the hearts of the employees. The strategies and the vision all impact you in the mind. I'm a strong believer that if we can connect to the hearts of our employees, we will have their minds forever."

By the end of the collaborative retreat, FIFCO had discovered its purpose: *We bring a better way of living to the world.*

These innocuous seeming words carry great power and meaning. They describe what the company is when it is being its highest self. It creates opportunity, well-being, and growth for its employees. It elevates the lives of its customers. It generates robust financial results. It does all this while improving the environment and strengthening its communities.

No Family Left Behind

Ramon and his team started sharing the purpose within the company, starting with the top 100 executives, then with 500 middle managers and eventually the whole organization. At one of these meetings, an employee said, "Ramon, I am very proud of everything this company has done in terms of alcohol consumption, obesity, water use, emissions, waste. I read about it; I see you on TV. But do you know that we have employees living under poverty conditions?"

Ramon was stunned. He realized that a purpose which is about bringing a better way of living to the world rings hollow if people working in the company could not look after themselves and their families. He replied, "Thank you for pointing that out. I don't know how many of our employees are living under such conditions. Please allow me six months to find out and develop a comprehensive plan with my management team."

Over the next six months, Ramon and his team created a program they called FIFCO Opportunities (*Opportunidades* in Spanish). It included education and support in four areas: nutrition and healthy lifestyle, housing, education, and comprehensive family financial management.

According to the United Nations, 22% of Costa Ricans then lived under poverty conditions, 6.7% in extreme poverty. Costa Rica had experienced a dispiriting phenomenon: people escaping poverty only to fall back in. A major factor contributing to this was the aggressive marketing of consumer durables. Windows at electronic stores were plastered with signs advertising the low monthly cost

of buying a large flat screen television. Similar signs dominate the showrooms of dealers selling motorcycles. The fine print on these signs includes the startling disclosure that the interest rate on those installment plans ranged from 50 to 60% a year!

Financial literacy is a problem everywhere, but especially in poorer countries. Aspiring to a better life, people succumb to the lure of low monthly payments to acquire coveted products. They end up paying many multiples of the price of the product—if they can keep up with the payments. If they miss a payment, they start accruing additional charges, which most have no hope of ever being able to pay. Soon, they owe far more than what the item is worth. The items get repossessed and sold to someone else, while the crushing debt remains.

FIFCO hired social workers to help with the project. Ramon went with them to interview employees and family members to better understand the problem. It was not because of inadequate salaries; FIFCO pays some of the best salaries in Costa Rica. But many factors cause employees to be in a vulnerable financial situation: making bad financial decisions, installment debt, health issues, and having many dependents. Overall, the team found that 3.6% of FIFCO's Costa Rican employees were living under poverty conditions: 161 employees and 644 relatives who were dependent on them.

Ramon made a public commitment that FIFCO would help these families escape poverty in three years. The company assigned a mentor for each family to help them better manage their finances. Ramon gave one of the toughest cases to the company's CFO, saying, "If you cannot help this family get out of poverty, nobody can!"

As promised, exactly three years after launching the program, 100% of the group had been lifted out of poverty. FIFCO is expanding the program to its Guatemalan and El Salvador employees.

Beyond the obvious impact on the 3.6%, FIFCO found a more subtle impact on the other 96.4% of employees. As Ramon says, "The employees are grateful. They see our company taking care

of their colleagues." FIFCO's rating as a "great place to work" was already high, but it skyrocketed because of this program—the largest single year increase they had ever experienced.

The program cost FIFCO $1.5 million, or $1863 per person for the 805 people impacted—a small price to pay for the profound impact on all those lives. The program has a multigenerational impact as children grow up in more secure households and learn about financial responsibility at an early age.

The Opportunidades team conducts a final visit six months after a family exits the program to evaluate their adherence to the commitments made and assess how family dynamics have changed as a result.

FIFCO has made public everything they have learned, with the goal of inspiring other companies around the world to eliminate poverty within their employee base. Ramon believes that the private sector can help create a fair and more equitable society and eradicate poverty one organization at a time. It saddens him that other companies have not attempted something similar. "Unfortunately, most companies simply don't care; they think it is not their problem."

Enrolling All Stakeholders

Like many companies, FIFCO has a volunteer program: two days per year for each employee. By 2016, employees had done 450,000 hours of work. In his usual fashion, Ramon made a public commitment that by 2020, FIFCO would contribute one million hours of voluntary work. He had no idea how to reach that goal.

To produce a plan, he used one of his most effective organization development and change innovations: cross-functional collaborative-change teams to deal with challenges or devise strategies for taking advantage of opportunities. Each team consists of 8 to 10 individuals—change champions—with diverse backgrounds. Any leader can form a team. In the past, leaders assigned direct reports to work on such projects. Under the collaborative team model, the leader acts as a facilitator for teams that include people from different

functional areas, age, and genders. Teams can also include external consultants and employees of NGOs.

This approach has proved to be wildly successful at FIFCO. According to Ramon, "This is a fascinating way to disrupt and challenge the hierarchy. In a hierarchy, the boss normally imposes his or her thinking on the way to do things. When you are collaborating in a team, you need a different mindset. You have to empower the people. It democratizes the way decisions are made."

Ramon set up a team to figure out how to get to a million hours of volunteer work by 2020. That would require doubling the annual hours of volunteer work. The company could not double the employee population, nor was it feasible to ask each employee to double the amount of time devoted to volunteer work. The team came up with an innovative idea: engage all the stakeholders of the company, starting with the children of employees. The company started by inviting families with children 12 or older (for insurance and liability reasons) to engage in meaningful volunteer work, which they loved. It drew families closer together and taught children about significant issues facing communities and the environment.

The next initiative was to engage consumers as volunteers. That too proved wildly successful, generating a huge amount of publicity. As Ramon observed, "Consumers nowadays, especially millennials, want to transcend. They want to be part of something important, they want to have meaning."

FIFCO then started to include other stakeholders as well: shareholders, suppliers, retail partners and community members. The company provides transportation and meals; volunteers do the rest. Consumers, shareholders, suppliers, and employees work side-by-side, strengthening relationships, generating goodwill, and making a difference. One shareholder wrote, "What does a shareholder do for a company other than go to the annual meeting and receive dividends? Nothing. Getting up early and doing volunteer work is a new kind of relationship between a company and its shareholders."

Healing and Uplifting Our Humanity

Ramon's journey at FIFCO started with healing the business model. He then started healing the company's footprints through the triple bottom line journey. Next, he embarked on the healing journey of finding FIFCO's higher purpose, which led to the journey of healing employees struggling with poverty. FIFCO then enlisted all stakeholders in the healing process by giving them opportunities to reduce and reverse the company's footprints.

Ramon reflected, "This decade has been life-changing for me. I have redefined what success means to me as a CEO. I have gotten closer to my executive team and my employees by volunteering with them, sharing the passion and excitement of accomplishing social and environmental endeavors. We have grown together. I have realized that my purpose in life is to use all my energy to motivate other business leaders to take this path."

Operating From a Foundation of Higher Consciousness

The healing journey is important to Ramon. He shared: "We are living in a society that has not quite failed yet, but we have so many social and environmental issues to cope with. Our governments do not have the resources or competence to deal with them. I strongly believe that the private sector must play a role and be a part of the solution."

As a leader, Ramon publicly sets audacious goals, challenges people to accomplish the seemingly impossible, and almost always succeeds. He empowers people to become agents of healing. He has gone from reducing suffering to elevating joy, from doing less harm to doing much good, moving from deeply negative to strongly positive impacts in every dimension. He has transformed FIFCO into a model for the future of business and leadership.

Implications for a Full Spectrum Approach to OD and the Business of Betterment

Charles Eisenstein (2013), author of *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*, talks about how people try to start change movements by creating a big wave.

But he asks, "You can make a big wave but how do you change the deep currents?"

This is a deep current moment for OD and all of our organizations. I see this special issue and this article as part of a movement to elevate humankind, the world of business and OD itself as a force for full-spectrum flourishing. Moreover, many terms are being used seeking to define our higher purposes in OD such as sustainability, regeneration, and net positive. My purpose, and hopefully, my enriching contribution to this conversation is to elevate the concept of the Healing Organization. The Healing Organization is a new dream about business. Stories such as FIFCO illustrate that indeed business can become a place of healing for employees and their families, a source of healing for customers, communities, and ecosystems, and a force for healing in society, helping alleviate cultural, economic, and political divides. Webster's Dictionary defines healing as "to make free from injury or disease: to make sound or whole; to make well again: to restore to health; and to cause an undesirable condition to be overcome." The word healing shares its etymology with the words whole and holy. Whole means complete, unhurt, healthy, and undamaged. Holy means consecrated, sacred, godly, that which cannot be transgressed or violated. Most human beings are wounded, and their psyches are fragmented. They yearn to become more whole as they progress through life.

What if the workplace could help fulfill that yearning? We have documented remarkable and real-life developmental stories of organizations like Ramon's (Sisodia and Gelb, 2019) and although none are perfect, they operate in a way that generates engagement and fulfillment for their employees, delight and loyalty for their customers, positive contributions to their communities and to the environment, and excellent returns for their owners and investors.

A Healing Organization is also a loving organization. This is what Ramon Mendiola did when he vowed to his employees that not a single one of them would have to contend with the ravages of poverty. A Healing Organization reflects a

mindset of living in harmony with nature rather than seeking to conquer or dominate, and extends goodness by integrating ecological awareness and stewardship into its purpose. Again, the FIFCO story illustrates this journey. Moreover, a Healing Organization's purpose is grounded in strategic thinking, careful financial planning, and attention to detail. The biggest step for many in the journey to becoming a healing leader is understanding that it is possible to alleviate suffering and elevate joy through business, and it calls for a continuing commitment to healing oneself, especially for leaders and change agents.

Finally, this is where OD values and the conscious business movement intersect; together they help us remember that *the means and ends of effective change are inseparable*. The means, the path, must always be life-giving—and healing.

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Leading By Nature for Flourishing Future-Fit Business

Embracing an OD in the Service of Life-Affirming Futures

By Giles Hutchins

Abstract

Now more than ever, organizations need to adapt to disruptive innovations and new ways of working while co-creating life-affirming futures for all. Today's new-norm of unceasing transformation demands a new-norm in leadership and organizational development (L&OD). The old Industrial-age *organization-as-machine* metaphor is breaking-down and a new one is breaking through—the *organization-as-living-system*. *Leading by Nature* goes right to the heart of this by providing the framing, practices, tools, and techniques that catalyse the shift in consciousness now needed for future-fit life-centric L&OD.

Keywords: Living Systems World View, Life-Affirming OD, Systems Awareness, Leading by Nature

Context

We are living through a once-in-a-civilization moment marked by great upheaval, where the breakdown of global systems has become impossible to ignore and signs of breakthrough are starting to emerge. This metamorphic moment is characterized by the need to evolve our enterprises from polluting extractors into life-affirming contributors. Our collective future requires that we learn to flourish within planetary boundaries while respecting all life on Earth. This is what the term 'regenerative' means, to adapt and evolve towards life-affirming futures.

There is a rising zeitgeist around 'regenerative.' Yet what regenerative truly points to is a timeless journey of becoming more in-harmony with life; to attune with the way nature works. For an organization to become regenerative it works towards enriching all stakeholders, including the wider society and the environment, and hence becomes life-affirming. Key

to this is leadership—and in particular Leading by Nature—which establishes a leadership consciousness that attunes with *Nature's Wisdom*.

Leading by Nature is a fundamental departure from the traditional mechanistic management theory that much of today's mainstream leadership and organizational development (L&OD) is rooted in. This regenerative approach works with a living-systems worldview, unlocking self-and-system consciousness within us so we can better sense and respond to dynamics at play across the *organization-as-living-system*.

A New-Norm of Unceasing Transformation

It's a fascinating yet challenging time to be a leader. Multiple and profound shifts affect the way we work, how and why we do things, and the purpose and meaning we bring to our organizations. This new-norm in business is characterized by unceasing transformation. Change upon change upon change is what leaders are
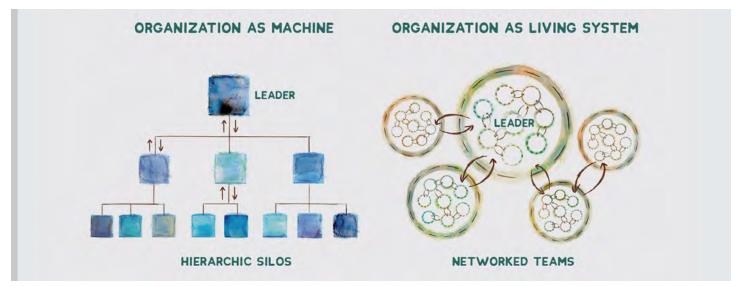
Figure 1. Living-Systems Logic

now dealing with. There's a maelstrom of motives contributing to this volatile business terrain: hyper-connectivity, erratic transaction costs, disruptive innovations, shifting societal norms, new ways of working, fragile supply chains, resource scarcity, rising mental health and wellbeing issues, widespread disenfranchisement across workforces, increasing systemic shocks (COVID and the Climate Emergency are but two, there are more looming on the horizon), and the search for deeper meaning and purpose through work. No organization is spared, and the call for a life-centric OD has never been more profound or needed.

This new norm in business demands a new norm in leadership: a leadership consciousness that cultivates organizational cultures able to adapt and evolve during unceasing transformation in ways that create flourishing for all.

Moving Beyond the Machine-Mindset

Much of today's L&OD logic continues to be cemented in a worldview of mechanistic reductionism originated by the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries. This view of the world draws upon assumptions of separateness, predictability, replicability, and control. Life is assumed to be made up of separate things struggling for survival in a dog-eat-dog world of hyper-competition. It is then assumed that these separate things in life can be compartmentalized, controlled, measured, and managed in linear predictable ways through

push-pull mechanisms. As a result, relationships between component parts and their wider context are often overlooked or de-emphasized.

This view of life informed Frederick Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* published in 1909. Taylorism became hugely influential in setting the context for viewing the organization as *a machine*, a view that is still dominant today. Employees are relegated to the role of efficiently performing the duties as defined by management who compartmentalize activities and relationships to make operations easier to control and measure.

When this machine-logic becomes a dominant worldview, we start to believe that the organization is a set of neatly definable parts that can be measured and controlled in isolation, where the leadership team controls from the top, cascading commands through layers of management to the workers at the bottom, and a narrowed focus is applied to optimizing short-term returns while perceiving stakeholder relations through the threat-tinted lens of hyper-competition. This mentality creates fragile organizations based on control, fear, and exploitation, undermining trust, disempowering employees, corrupting purpose, and exploiting the wider business ecosystem—all in the name of short-term maximization. This reductionist view is a recipe for extinction not evolution. While the logic of the machine may pride itself on driving out inefficiencies, it ultimately creates burgeoning bureaucracy and disempowerment within the organization and widespread fragilities beyond.

Gary Hamel and Michele Zanini's London Business School research explores how the stratified power structures, specialized roles, and standardized tasks of the organization-as-machine create a massive bureaucratic-drag, which costs the US economy alone over $3 trillion annually. (Hamel & Zanini, 2016) Another organization-as-machine inefficiency has been brought to light by Harvard Business School professors Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey. Most leaders and employees are doing a second job no one is paying them for—the job of managing other people's impressions of themselves, covering up their weaknesses, playing politics, hiding uncertainties, and not showing their true selves at work. (Kegan & Lahey, 2016) Far from the machine-mindset driving out inefficiencies, this method of operating destroys productivity, resilience, innovation, and initiative.

In reality, organizations are constantly evolving. They are relational and purposeful systems made up of messy unpredictable human relationships that thrive within a diverse web of stakeholder relations that are intimately interrelated with wider society and the natural world. Organizations display non-linear dynamics and self-organizing behaviors and are more akin to living-systems than machines. These living-organizations respond to continuous change and continually learn, evolve, and thrive during unceasing transformation. The organization-as-machine, on the other hand, with its top-down perspectives far-removed from the customer and expensive and cumbersome change-management

programmes, falls woefully short in future-proofing the business. Global research shows that the shareholder returns of living-organizations consistently out-perform their mechanistic counter-parts, especially through volatile times. (Bragdon, 2016)

The Necessary Evolution From Machine to Living-systems L&OD

The L&OD living-systems paradigm is a worldview shift that moves us onward from yesterday's machine paradigm. A 'world-view shift' may sound daunting, especially when many of us experience enough stress, busyness, and volatility in the workplace today. The good news is this worldview shift is a genuine return—a revitalization of something innate, a reconnection with the true nature within us and the rhythms and ways of nature all around us. Woven deep into our human physiology and psy-chology is the natural capacity to embrace a living-systems worldview.

Letting-go of old illusory ways while welcoming-in our deeper nature, what could be more invigorating?

When, as leaders, we are able to let go of old mechanistic tendencies and expand our restricted view of the organization, we open ourselves and our teams up to more of how life inherently operates in har-mony. We learn how to work with natural rhythms and methods that encourage the vitality and adaptability of the organization. We learn to lead by nature.

Table 1: *Worldview Shift*

Machine Worldview	⋯⋰	Living-Systems Worldview
Dominator Culture		Partnership Culture
Parent–Child		Adult–Adult
Control–Manage		Sense–Respond
Disempowering		Empowering
Unnatural		Natural
Life-Denying		Life-Affirming

Let's take ourselves out of the busy work environment for a moment and reflect on our everyday life outside of work. We successfully go about our daily chores, errands, and affairs without the need for top-down, command-control managers tell-ing us what to do. Whether it's picking the kids up from school, washing up after Sun-day lunch, going to the theater, catching a train, or organizing a birthday party, we seldom hand over our self-authoring power to managers. We might seek advice from partners and friends or ask experts about certain projects, yet when someone starts to tell us what to do in a dictatorial way, our defenses immediately go up, we get wary, and start to switch off.

Being 'managed' feels like a form of oppression that undermines our own sov-ereignty, and so we retract. As we retract, the relationship between ourselves and the other person is subtly inhibited; it no lon-ger flows so naturally and creative poten-tial is lost. There will certainly be times when it is wise to exercise authority or assertiveness of one's view. This is not a namby-pamby way of relating to others in the organization. No, not at all. Lead-ing by Nature is about noticing when we are standing strong in our authentic true nature as opposed to instances when we are either forcing another person or being forced-on by another trying to dominate us. To use psychology lingo, it's the differ-ence between an 'adult-adult' dynamic and a 'parent-child' dynamic.

A recent global Gallup poll shows that 85% of workers are disengaged, illustrat-ing how much today's mechanistic mindset is crippling organizational effectiveness. (Gallup, 2017) It's a mindset that creates human suffering, psychological distress, and unhealthy interpersonal relations right at the heart of our enterprises, the very place where creativity, passion, purpose-fulness, and adaptive learning ought to be unlocking our brilliance.

Hence, the number one most impor-tant thing our leaders need to address is the ability to transcend the old, life-denying organization-as-machine mindset and expand into a leadership consciousness that frees our self-and-system awareness

so that we can better sense and respond to the systemic dynamics at play across the organization-as-living-system. This evo-lutionary shift in L&OD is a learning-in-action process. First and foremost, it's an internal shift, an embodied process rather than a linear tick-box exercise where one must become self-aware of old habits while patiently practicing new ones. Secondly, it requires enriching the cultural soil of the organization so that each person can draw nourishment from everyday interactions as they learn and adapt.

The good news is that we need look no further than within and all around us to find inspiration for this L&OD shift from a machine into a living-systems world-view. In our natures and within the natural world, there are systemic dynamics at play that have been honed through 3.8 billion years of life on Earth.

When we observe a forest or woodland, reductive machine logic sees trees strug-gling against each other in a competitive battle for survival of the fittest. However, when we deepen our lens of perception— using a living-systems lens—we start to see the immense inter-relational venture at play where different species of trees share nutrients with each other through the soil. Tree roots form intimate relationships with mycelia, bacteria, and microbes. The forest-floor is teaming with networks that benefit the vibrancy, resilience, and evolutionary dynamics of the whole ecosystem. In only a handful of healthy soil there are more living beings working together than there are human beings on the entire planet.

What Charles Darwin originally meant by the phrase 'survival of the fittest' was not 'dominate or become dominated,' but rather each species adapts to an ever-changing context by 'fitting-in' to its niche. As he famously noted, "It's not the stron-gest species that survive nor the most intel-ligent but the ones most able to adapt to change." (Hutchins, 2012) This adaptive edge is what our organizations need to fos-ter by welcoming-in the living-systems worldview into our L&OD.

Future-Fit Organizations as Living-Systems

There is so much to learn from our trees and soil, let alone nature's fuller ensemble. The soil of the forest-floor with its networked relationships are constantly exchanging ideas, updating different parts of the network about changes in the system, self-organizing, and locally attuning—all without waiting for some far-removed hierarchy from above. In nature's collectives—ant colonies, beehives, flocks of birds and shoals of fish—

Tier 2 consciousness (the next-stage of consciousness he saw emerging in adults across business and society) is hallmarked by the capacity to sense the systemic inter-relational nature of emergent systems in both nature and human-systems. "Know how nature functions and you know how to behave [in Tier 2]," said Graves. (Beck, 2018)

Hence the rising trend these days to learn from nature. Yet, even when seeking to learn from nature, all too often we get caught up in yesterday's logic, which, as we know, seeks to compartmentalize,

insightful wisdom. My Leading by Nature coaching work draws upon numerous wisdom traditions that understand the importance of the underlying wisdom innate in life, such as Ayurveda, Buddhism, Shintoism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Sufism from the East, Alchemy and Hermeticism from the West, and Tantric and Shamanic traditions found the world-over. This underlying wisdom of life I refer to as *Nature's Wisdom*.

Nature's Wisdom

All of life—including human society, the organization, and the leader—is immersed in an ever-changing rhythmic and relational dance. When off-kilter with the rhythms of this dance, chaos and fragility ensue; when in-tune, all parts find flow and the capacity to flourish. It's the same for life within the organization as it is for life beyond the organization—those organizations and leaders who learn to attune with the rhythms and ways of nature are the ones most able to adapt to change.

> It is not the outer forms, functions, and designs of nature, but rather the inner underlying rhythms of transformation which precede the outer natural forms that provide insightful wisdom. My Leading by Nature coaching work draws upon numerous wisdom traditions that understand the importance of the underlying wisdom innate in life, such as Ayurveda, Buddhism, Shintoism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Sufism from the East, Alchemy and Hermeticism from the West, and Tantric and Shamanic traditions found the world-over. This underlying wisdom of life I refer to as *Nature's Wisdom*.

we again find the pervasive behavior of sensing-responding. A scientific descriptor for this sensing-responding behavior is 'stigmergy' where collectives create adaptability, coherence, and resilience without the need for planning, control, direct communication, or top-down dictat. But it's not just swarms or shoals that display this sensing-responding behavior, it's a core life-behavior that we can observe anywhere from the forest floors to deep-sea vents, mountain ranges, prairies. Everywhere there's life we find sensing-responding behavior.

Adult developmental psychology studies indicate that leaders able to sense and work with the emergent and evolutionary dynamics of life are better equipped to lead 21st century future-fit organizations. (Laloux, 2014) Take developmental psychologist Clare Graves who painstakingly researched levels of consciousness across thousands of adults. What he called

categorize and rationalize our reductive examinations of nature. We bring the same old mechanistic lens to our biological explorations that desensitized us to nature's relationality in the first place. While a reductive scientific understanding of nature along with a systematic set of nature's principles is indeed useful (and certainly something we can draw-upon to inform the new L&OD logic), the challenge and the opportunity lie in shifting our consciousness into a more holistic attentiveness to the nature of life all around and within us. This endeavor is as fresh as it is ancient.

For instance, the ancient Chinese sages perceived the manifest phenomena of nature as conveying deep insights about how change unfolds in life. It is not the outer forms, functions, and designs of nature, but rather the inner underlying rhythms of transformation which precede the outer natural forms that provide

The ability of our sophisticated, digitized, yet stressed-out organizations to attune with Nature's Wisdom is the next greatest frontier. It means aligning with life itself, nothing more nothing less. Through many collaborative initiatives and my practitioner-based fieldwork, I have spent more than a decade exploring nature's principles as applied to organizational development. What I now offer here is a level deeper than such principles. Rather, it's a universal substratum underpinning how nature and human nature operates: Nature's Wisdom. This wisdom can be attuned to through certain practices of learning how to sense and work with life's subtle ways. It's a learning journey that involves becoming more intimate with our own true nature (self-awareness) and with the relational behaviors and characteristics of the living-organization (systemic-awareness).

In short, all life is imbued with a field of interconnectedness. Out of this field arises the emergent ever-changing nature of life that unfolds through relational tensions. Let's take a look at three aspects of this wisdom:

» **Life is ever-changing:** Change is happening everywhere all the time. In everything there is both stillness and movement. Movement is pervaded by stillness. Stillness gives rise to movement. The emergent evolution of life spawns from this movement arising from stillness. This ever-changing dance of life follows the pulsating rhythm of arising, expressing, doing (yang) and falling away, reflecting, being (yin).

» **Life is relational and interconnected:** Infusing all of life is a universal field of consciousness that informs and interconnects everything. Scientists call it the Quantum Vacuum, or field. Each manifest aspect of nature, along with ourselves and our organizational systems are distinct in their own right—holding their own boundaries, essence, and purposefulness—yet all are immersed in this field. Nothing is separate; everything inter-relates in

or virtually—are immersive in that they invite leaders to learn-through-practice by going inward into themselves and also into the inner hidden dynamics of the organizational system and wider stakeholder ecosystem they operate in. These journeys are the lived experience of leading by nature.

Leading by Nature

I call this regenerative, nature-inspired approach to L&OD Leading by Nature. It is simultaneously completely natural and radically different from today's dominant leadership narrative. Above all, *Leading by Nature* is a journey not a destination. This journey has both inner and outer dimensions for the leader and the organization:

For the leader and OD practitioner: The inner dimension is the capacity to connect to our true nature within; tapping into our essence so we lead with authenticity, coherence, and purposefulness. The outer dimension is about attuning with life around us, being open and receptive to the ever-changing nature of life, and creating generative spaces where trust, responsiveness, and developmental learning thrive. This inner-outer leadership coherence allows us to create regenerative potential in ourselves and through our relationships with others.

For the organization: The inner-dimension is the mission, culture, values, meeting conventions, and decision-making protocols that support the organization's way of being. Creating a more purposeful, adult-adult, entrepreneurial, self-managing, diverse, and inclusive way of working unlocks the organization's regenerative potential. The outer-dimension is the customer value propositions, supply-chain, and wider stakeholder relationships that drive how the organization shows up in the world. This inner-outer organizational coherence allows diverse stakeholder relations to flourish and "mirror flourish" (Cooperrider, 2017) through the products, services, experiences, and communities the organization facilitates.

The up-shot of regenerative L&OD is a working environment where people feel welcome to bring their whole selves to work, therefore able to discover more of their natural creative spark. This humanness invites innovation, collaboration, and purposefulness into the heart of everyday meetings and decision-making. An adult-adult culture of agility and empowered entrepreneurialism allows failures to be continuously transformed into learnings and reduces the burden of bureaucracy.

» **Life is full of tensions:** There is tension between the yang and yin, which is what impels nature's creative advance. Tension creates the crucible for creativity. Sometimes there is a little more yang, sometimes more yin. This yin-yang tension creates opportunities for synergy and 'dinergy.' Synergy is where two or more inputs come together and form something new through their tension of complimentary difference. Such as two people coming together in a meeting with different perspectives who work together to come up with something richer than their individual aspects. Dinergy is where seemingly opposing perspectives, such as a clash of views, may collide. Such as two people having a tense discussion that can feel uncomfortable yet if worked through something new can emerge beyond the initial perspectives. Learning to be comfortable with the uncomfortableness these tensions give rise to is an important leadership skill to acquire.

varying degrees. The leadership team is nested within the organizational system, which is nested within its wider stakeholder ecosystem, which is nested within societal and ecological systems. All living systems, including human ones, thrive through reciprocity. These nested, relational, reciprocating systems give rise to systemic dynamics—pulsations, ripples, repercussions, flows, and potentialities. We can learn to sense and work with these dynamics as we become more attuned with life.

While we might be able to intellectually comprehend these aspects, Nature's Wisdom is revealed only through embodied experience. Future-fit leaders can cultivate this embodied capacity by embarking upon a transformational journey. I have spent over a decade honing a coaching-based practice to guide senior leaders, leadership teams, OD and change catalysts, and organizational cultures through advanced developmental learning journeys. These journeys—whether taken in-person

The up-shot of regenerative L&OD is a working environment where people feel welcome to bring their whole selves to work, therefore able to discover more of

Table 2.

Worldview:	Separateness	Relational interconnectedness
Metaphor:	Organization-as-Machine	Organization-as-Living-System
Relational Dynamic:	Control-Manage	Sense-Respond

their natural creative spark. This humanness invites innovation, collaboration, and purposefulness into the heart of everyday meetings and decision-making. An adult-adult culture of agility and empowered entrepreneurialism allows failures to be continuously transformed into learnings and reduces the burden of bureaucracy.

This might sound like fanciful utopia to some. Surely business is about the bottom-line? For sure, every organization needs to survive in order to thrive in today's world, which is why there are clear financial benefits in becoming regenerative. It is life-affirming—even for business. Years of detailed research by The Global Lamp Index show that companies embracing this living-systems approach consistently outperform their mechanistic counterparts. (Bragdon, 2016) To attract and retain high quality talent and innovation, to out-perform and adapt amid increasingly volatile times, we need to shift the way we lead and operate. Especially if we are going to meet the needs of the wider societal shift that is demanding more meaning, purpose, engagement, and creativity in the workplace.

The old machine logic has an inherent *control-manage* dynamic that subverts and manipulates, whereas the living-systems logic has a *sense-respond* dynamic that empowers and enables. This shift in relational dynamic from *control-manage* to *sense-respond* requires a personal shift in consciousness, from separateness to relational interconnectedness. This starts with our leaders cultivating conditions in themselves and through their relationships across the wider organization to better sense-respond and so become future-fit.

As leaders, we've become well-heeled in the control-manage dynamic. We can unlearn this dynamic through a developmental journey of learning-in-practice. As we unlearn, we create space for a deeper knowing inside ourselves to be heard. We start to trust our natural, inner capacities

(non-rational intuitions, hunches, gut-feelings, heart perturbations) as well as our rational reasoning, but it is these natural capacities which help us sense how dynamics play out across the living-organization. This calls upon a combination of *self-awareness* and *systemic-awareness* inside ourselves.

Self-Awareness can be conveyed as containing two dimensions, a horizontal dimension and a vertical dimension.

The horizontal dimension relates to the quality of presence we bring to each evolving moment. This quality of presence depends upon our capacity to notice our patterns of reactivity, habit, bias, conditioning, triggers, and projections.

In OD thought leader Otto Scharmer's Theory U, he refers to the Voice of Judgment, the Voice of Cynicism, and the Voice of Fear (Scharmer, 2009). These three voices speak to us all the time, keeping us safe from potential danger, yet in the process they are also keeping us small and reducing our capacity to adapt and evolve. As we become more intimate with our inner ways, we learn how to acknowledge these inner voices and the habitual patterns of reactivity they create, so they do not hijack us as much. That way, we can

keep ourselves receptive and sensitive to the present moment, along with all its challenges and tensions. We improve our ability to sense-and-respond to life, whether that be a difficult conversation down the corridor, a public-speaking engagement, or listening to the needs of our team members in unfiltered, non-judgmental ways.

The vertical dimension of self-awareness relates to our adult developmental psychology stage-development. All advanced adult developmental psychology models show the stages of psychological worldview-development we progress through as we evolve our consciousness as adults. These models pinpoint a significant threshold—when we shift from a worldview of separateness (separate self as performance-achiever maximizing output in a dog-eat-dog world) to a worldview of interconnectedness (relational interconnected self as participator-facilitator helping co-create life-affirming futures). As we advance in our adult developmental psychology—which is more of an inner-deepening than an outer-advancement—we start to open up more readily to the systemic and evolutionary nature of life. We are more able to tap into Nature's Wisdom and sense the systemic dynamics at play within the living-organization. And so, as our self-awareness deepens, our systemic-awareness naturally arises.

Systemic-awareness is the capacity to sense the wider relational system we lead and operate within and its hidden ordering

SELF-AWARENESS & SYSTEMIC-AWARENESS

INNER SELF-AWARENESS

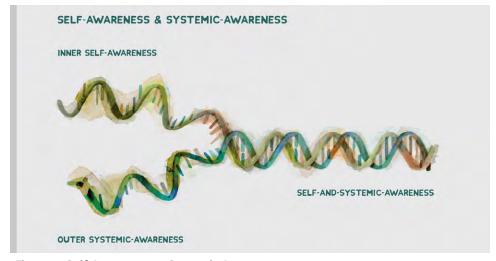SELF-AND-SYSTEMIC-AWARENESS

OUTER SYSTEMIC-AWARENESS

Figure 2. Self-Awareness & Systemic Awareness

forces, patterns of behavior, historic conditioning, habituated responses, and energetic networks of participation, learning, and evolution. As we begin to realize that life itself is developmental (ever-learning) with emergent patterns of unfolding evolution, so too are our living-organizations.

Systemic leadership coaching can help here. While conventional executive coaching focuses on the leader as an individual actor, systemic coaching seeks an understanding of the ever-changing relational field with its relational tensions and developmental dynamics. Systemic coaching facilitates the L&OD shift with systemic tools, such as relational system-mapping,

like acupuncture can help the human body, small pin-prick interventions can help the organizational-system flow with greater potential. In place of invasive surgery or system-wide overhauling, we can sense into smaller interventions that are less costly, less intrusive, less destabilizing, and more respectfully aligned with the nature of the living-organization. Although there may well be times when the future-fitness of the organization would be best served through major surgery (replacing a toxic Board, or carving-off a part of the business, for instance) we ought first learn to sense how the living-organization can unlock its innate regenerative powers.

Systemic Enablers

A leader selects a diverse group of people from across different functions in the business—any number from 4 to 14 people can work well, regardless of the organization's overall headcount. These are your 'Systemic Enablers.' This group of people ought to be diverse in terms of the functional business areas they represent, therefore it's useful to have one member from either the exec or senior leadership team and yet hierarchy is not important here. What is important is the aptitude, perception, and relational-engagement each person has with the organizational system. These Systemic Enablers should have healthy peer-connectivity and diverse networks of sharing and collaborating across the business, such as colleagues often seek advice from them or turn to them in times of challenge. They are seen as positive agents of change and have a strong resonance with the purpose and values of the business.

This cohort of Systemic Enablers then becomes a community of practice embarking upon a transformational learning journey both for themselves, as a community-group, and for the wider organization. When they convene as a community, they are in-service of the organization. Through regular (for instance, monthly) circles, the cohort shares their insights on the living-organization using an appreciative inquiry method of positive questioning and collaborative inquiry. (Cooperrider, 2021; Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011) I also call upon Theory U practices, deep listening, structured constellations, generative dialogue techniques like Way of Council, mindfulness, and somatic-based practices, in-person nature immersions, and online meditations. These practices, and more, are all aimed to help create psychologically deep yet safe-spaces for the Systemic Enablers to sense into the systemic dynamics of the organizational living-system.

Upon identifying and acknowledging systemic patterns, the cohort learns to discern where and in what way to engage in small systemic interventions that send positive ripples across the system—just like acupuncture pinpricks do in aligning

Once we align with the inner-nature of the organization, we can shift its vitality from a survivalist-stressed machine into an emergent-evolutionary living-system by re-patterning relational tensions in ways that allow better flow, richer purposefulness, innovative value propositions, and greater impact across its wider stakeholder ecosystem. Inner-nature alignment allows the outer-nature of the organization to up-stretch towards life-affirming futures.

structured or unstructured constellations, deep listening, generative dialogue, Way of Council, Holistic Appreciative Inquiry, Theory U, Social Presencing, systemic immersions, and the application of Systemic Enablers.

The mindset shift of the leader of the future-fit organization is significant. Rather than trying to externally fix the machine, by repairing or operating on it from above, Leading by Nature senses how the living-system can start to internally heal, renew, and evolve on its own.

There are similarities here with eastern medicine, where every system in life, including the human body, is understood as being able to heal itself and realize its innate purposefulness when there is the right balance and flow of energy within the system. Blockages, stuckness, and imbalance limit and undermine growth and healing. Just as we human beings get stuck on past trauma, bad habits, or past-conditioning, so too do our living-organizations. And

Rather than trying to suppress or solve system challenges, we must learn to acknowledge, attend to, and attune with the relational dynamics at play in the organization. This process involves deep listening, circles of sharing, and open honest feedback across the system. Once we align with the inner-nature of the organization, we can shift its vitality from a survivalist-stressed machine into an emergent-evolutionary living-system by re-patterning relational tensions in ways that allow better flow, richer purposefulness, innovative value propositions, and greater impact across its wider stakeholder ecosystem. Inner-nature alignment allows the outer-nature of the organization to up-stretch towards life-affirming futures.

Over the years, I have found a few systemic practices to be particularly powerful. One I'd like to share here is the practice of what I call *Systemic Enablers* and their involvement in facilitating *Organizational Acupuncture*.

us to our inner healing potential. We re-pattern relational stuckness into better flow, richer purposefulness, and increased outer impact.

One example of these Systemic Enablers in practice is at the global lifestyle brand Vivobarefoot whose goal is to create regenerative footwear and experiences that bring us closer to nature. Early on in their journey towards becoming a regenerative business, I worked with the senior leadership team to identify a dozen Systemic Enablers who I have been journeying with for over 18 months now, through a blend of online and in-person sessions. Vivo calls these Systemic Enablers *Proprioceptors* (the biological name for the sensory neurons that sense and respond to movement in our bodies). These Proprioceptors enliven a culture of regenerative feedback, developmental learning, and self-system evolution by regularly checking-in and sharing feedback across the whole Vivo system. This has helped the Vivo-system adapt to significant market disruptions, to work through the COVID-pandemic with rising staff engagement scores, to attract and retain high-quality talent in an increasingly competitive industry, to radically innovate some of its value propositions, and to significantly grow both revenue and profit through a difficult trading period, while transforming its organizational structure from hierarchic to flatter networked self-managing teams.

To summarize, we are in the midst of a civilization-wide transformation on a scale never seen before: halving carbon emissions by 2030, reversing natural habitat loss, overhauling social inequality, tackling the mental health and wellbeing pandemic, embracing the digital revolution, and dealing with rising volatility and turbulence across all aspects of society and working-life. No organization is sparred. It involves a massive call to a life-centric—not only human-centered OD—and the capacity

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to model *"Leading By Nature"* where we embody, in our being, what OD has historically referred to as "the self as instrument of change."

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Positive Impact Organizations differentiate themselves with a sustainability culture, an external validation, a higher purpose and a governance alignment. Achieving these requires a mindset shift of the leader and the organization alike.

From ESG Management to Positive Impact Creation

The Dual Mindset Transformation

By Katrin Muff

Abstract

The pressure is on for business to embrace sustainability: mandatory ESG (environmental, social, and governance) reporting, regulatory changes, increased customer sensitivity, and pressure from within leave current CEOs little choice. And yet, it is critical to differentiate between an ESG-based risk management approach and true sustainability that aims at both ensuring reducing negative impacts and generating important positive value for society and the planet. The difference between these approaches has been measured in a first-ever CEO impact rating of largest Swiss organizations. Our research shows that this shift from risk management to impact orientation involves: 1) a strategic innovation, and 2) a dual mindset transformation. The first can be mapped with the Positive Impact Measurement Framework that outlines eight innovation strategies. The second requires an outside-in leadership mindset and a co-creative organization mindset, both can be measured in four distinct aspects. Mindsets are transforming in parallel with new generations that have been entering the corporate workforce. To become Positive Impact Organizations, it is important to: a) gain strategic clarity in terms of reducing negative impact versus increasing positive impact; b) set relevant 2030 goals making net zero a must and measuring positive impact products & services as a percentage of revenue; c) understand the status quo to adapt the transformation to the organizational change readiness and its current degree of sustainability; and d) prioritize the transformation process by implementing the strategic innovation and enabling the dual mindset transformation. This work presents both an invitation and framework for Organizational Development (OD) practitioners to support organizations through the transformations needed in the world today.

Keywords: Positive Impact Organizations, Positive Impact Measurement Framework, Net Zero Organizations, Dual Mindset Transformation

THE CHALLENGE FOR BUSINESS & THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD)

Business is facing increasing pressure from external and internal stakeholders regarding its sustainability efforts. Investors are demanding ESG (environmental, social, and governance) reports, the European Union is launching a series of new regulatory frameworks such as the Green Deal, the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive including the taxonomy for sustainable activities and the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation. Customers are increasingly aware and sensitized on sustainability matters and are adapting their purchasing choices, creating significant market shifts. And then there are the
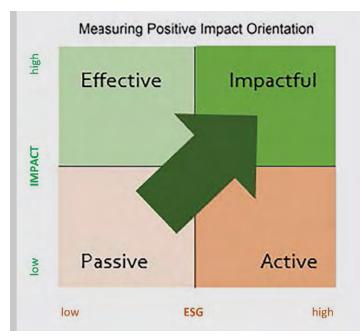
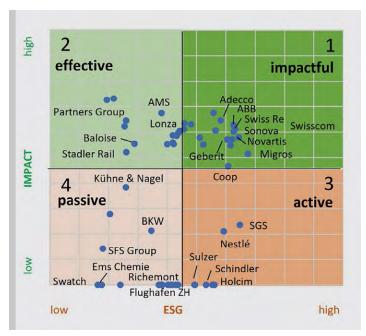*Figure 1.* Comparing ESG risk management against SDG impact orientation

Figure 2. Mapping the top 50 Swiss business organizations on the ESG vs. Impact scale

kids of corporate leaders who are driving different conversations at the kitchen table, as CEOs willingly admit (Dunn, 2019). The changing demographic in organizations is also seeing a shift with the baby boomers retiring and Generation X taking charge, pushed by the Millennials and Gen Y. This is resulting in values-driven innovations that result in organizations adopting new purposes that are society-oriented. The decade of action has kicked in and, in many ways this trend toward elevated organizational purposes aligns with the humanistic values that have long been articulated by the field of Organization Development (Margulies & Raia, 1972). As such, the opportunity for the field of Organization Development (OD) to support organizations through this transformation and impact the future trajectory of our society is vast. The challenges businesses are facing today call for alignment of strategy, structure, people, rewards, metrics, and management processes—the exact work in which OD specializes. Ultimately, this work is at the very heart of the work OD has defined for itself, that is working "collaboratively with organizations and communities to develop their system-wide capacity for effectiveness and vitality" (O'Brien & Gilpin-Jackson, 2021, pg. 12).

CLARIFYING ESG VERSUS POSITIVE IMPACT FOCUS

As we look at the work to be done within organizations today on this massive transformation (previously called "change management"), it is important to differentiate between greenwashing and truly sustainable efforts within organizations. An important distinction that enables us to recognize this difference is the perspective an organization takes when creating new products and services (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). We call it the difference between an inside-out and an outside-in perspective.

» **Inside-out:** How well is the organization prepared to reduce its sustainability risks and to benefit from its sustainability opportunities? This question is best answered with a traditional risk management and is currently measured through ESG reporting.

» **Outside-in:** Does the organization contribute positively to solving important societal and environmental issues? This question is addressed in the way the organization develops its new product and service offerings and is measured by attributing the revenue to various UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2021).

These two perspectives can be displayed in a two-dimensional matrix, whereby the ESG-based risk management is contrasted against the SDG-based impact orientation (see *Figure 1*). The ability to measure the positive impact orientation of an outside-in perspective is critical to entice the transformation needed so that organizations don't consider their societal duty done when they announce future net zero goals.

In Switzerland, the largest 50 employers and stock-quoted businesses were recently rated against these two measurements. The ESG category was measured using ISS ESG data developed by oekom.[1] The SDG category was measured using the Standard & Poor's SDG data which was developed by truecost.[2] While the SDG impact data is still in development, the comparison published in the renowned Swiss business journal *Bilanz* (for German language) and *PME* (for French language) generated an important public discussion about these two approaches. "We treasure what we measure," Paul Polman has once said, and this is exactly what this new rating does (see *Figure 2*).

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1. See: *https://www.intentionalendowments.org/oekom_research_inc*

2. See: *https://www.marketplace.spglobal.com/en/datasets/trucost-sustainable-development-goals-analytics-(163)*

TRANSLATING A POSITIVE IMPACT ORIENTATION INTO BUSINESS

There are two ways Positive Impact Organizations embed their outside-in thinking in their business. First, they embrace their negative impact on the environment and acknowledge the need to eliminate their negative impact. This results in calls for becoming "net zero," meaning that businesses commit to eliminate their CO_2 emissions. Looking at the global net zero emissions pathway shows how important it is to cut emissions across the entire value chain (scope 1 to 3) by 2030. Action in the next three to seven years will make the difference between a livable future or a world that will experience climate catastrophes as their new normal.

And yet, cutting CO_2 emissions is but a first important step. As we have defined in our research, "truly sustainable business

the space where OD can contribute change management theories and practices to catalyze this transformation within organizations. The following four steps outline a framework for the transformation needed to support organizations with the integration of sustainability into their core.

Step 1: The organization needs **strategic clarity** regarding its aims. The guiding change question here is: Does the organization seek to simply reduce its negative impact as it is in an industry that is causing harm through CO_2 or other GHG emissions, or is the organization seeking to increase its positive impact by focusing its product innovation on societal and environmental challenges such as the SDGs? OD practitioners can work with sustainability experts to help organizations clarify and understand the vast difference between these two pathways.

in governance and decision-making, which are—if ignored—the biggest potential obstacles of transformational success. The "True Business Sustainability" assessment helps an organization establish where it is in terms of sustainability. It differentiates between greenwashing and true sustainability and it assesses an organization's inside-out vs. outside-in perspective. The purpose of the assessment is to serve as a starting base for an in-depth internal discussion about an organization's sustainability status. Both assessments are available for free online: *https://sdgx.org/online-assessments/*

Step 3: Once clarified, the organization needs to set **relevant goals for 2030**. This decade of action is our last moment to bend the curve so that our children's children grow up in a world they can safely enjoy. Relevant 2030 goals can be expressed twofold: 1) reducing negative impact and 2) expanding positive impact. Organizations must recognize that achieving net zero across their value chain (scope 1 to 3) is a non-negotiable must. While many organizations will start by compensating their emissions, this target will clarify it as the operational priority it must become. In addition, those organizations that are aiming at generating a positive impact, can set a 2030 goal that measures their positive impact products & service as a percentage of their total revenue. The percentage will depend on the starting base of the company at the moment of goal setting. Research confirms that companies that set ambitious goals have a significantly higher chance of reaching their goal than companies that set modest goals. The message is clear: goals must be inspirational! This is something the field of OD has long known: positive images lead to positive actions (Cooperrider, 1999).

> **The guiding change question here is: Does the organization seek to simply reduce its negative impact as it is in an industry that is causing harm through CO_2 or other GHG emissions, or is the organization seeking to increase its positive impact by focusing its product innovation on societal and environmental challenges such as the SDGs? OD practitioners can work with sustainability experts to help organizations clarify and understand the vast difference between these two pathways.**

shifts its perspective from seeking to minimize its negative impact to understanding how it can create a significant positive impact in critical & relevant areas for society & the planet" (Dyllick & Muff, 2016, 165–166). This positive impact is created primarily through products and services as well—of course—by being a socially just and sustainable employer and producer. It implies orienting product and service innovation towards solving the SDGs. Paul Polman and Andrew Winston describe these two journeys in their recent book *Net Positive* (October 2021). It goes without saying, achieving this change in perspective from inside-out to outside-in depends on a mindset transformation. This is precisely

Step 2: Before getting started, we have learned that the organization needs to **understand its status quo**. As OD practitioners know, transformation journeys are challenging and knowing one's starting base and one's capacity for change are essential to identify appropriate processes. Two assessments can clarify things enormously. The "change readiness" survey is an excellent tool to host a discussion among the leadership team. It identifies the current and the desired culture of the organization along two important dimensions: organizational flexibility vs. stability on one hand, and internal vs. external focus. The resulting mapping allows for a focused discussion about potential changes

Step 4: The organization is now ready to embrace the **challenging transformation process**—which is the work that OD specializes in. Two key aspects ensure success in the transformation: 1) the *what*, which relates to selecting the most fruitful strategic innovation focus, and 2) the *how*, which focuses on the dual mindset

transformation so that the leadership and the organization can transform. The following two sections are dedicated to describing these two aspects of the transformation process, which have proven critical to implement the strategic goals in the organization.

THE 'WHAT' OF TRANSFORMATION: STRATEGIC INNOVATION FOCUS

Five years of researching Positive Impact Organizations (PIOs) has taught us that these organizations are different from traditional organizations in four distinct ways: 1) They have a sustainability culture including a leader and relevant performance measures in place; 2) they are externally validated by relevant external stakeholders; 3) they have a higher purpose that is translated in their products and services; and 4) their governance is aligned to support their sustainability vision. Furthermore, we have identified four related change challenges these organizations had to overcome in order to become PIOs:

» Change Challenge #1: The **priority challenge** which is observed in the organizational culture. Positive impact organizations with an advanced sustainability culture are inspired and led by a leader or a leadership team that gets the outside-in perspective of sustainability. Such organizations often attract employees who carry a desire to create positive impact in their hearts. Their compensation system is aligned with broader sustainability goals and the organization measures its ambitious sustainability goals. This priority ensures that in times of a crisis, the sustainability topic does not get put on the back-burner.

» Change Challenge #2: The **engagement challenge** to achieve a positive external validation. Positive impact organizations benefit from a positive external recognition of their sustainability efforts and have learned to excel in how to engage with external stakeholders. Although traditional firms often consider external stakeholders a potential danger and handle them with "silver gloves." truly sustainable firms have

Figure 3. The Strategic Innovation Canvas of Positive Impact Organizations

learned their lessons in how to engage authentically with critical civil society players and how to integrate constructive external views in their operational decision-making processes. Such open stakeholder engagement becomes the source of entirely new "outside-in" ideas that the organization can translate into new business opportunities.

» Change Challenge #3: The **positioning challenge** to accomplish the organization's higher purpose. Positive impact organizations have rewritten their purpose in a way to demonstrate their desire to create a positive impact for society and the planet. What differentiates advanced sustainability organizations from other firms with impact-oriented purpose statements is the fact that they have translated such a purpose into their products and services. They have reconsidered and identified markets which are relevant to them. Other firms have often not been able to make this translation from a lofty purpose to an amended or expanded product or service offering and they not only risk facing credibility issues but also cannot benefit from the opportunities such a new purpose potentially holds for them.

» Change Challenge #4: The **integration challenge** of a governance alignment. Positive impact organizations that have implemented alignment in governance

can attract suitable investors and are likely to have a board that is more supportive of a progressive sustainability agenda. This makes it significantly easier to integrate sustainability deeply within the organization." (Muff, 2021)

There are different ways of overcoming these challenges and our research has identified eight successful innovation strategies (see *Figure 3*). These strategies can also serve as a guiding framework for OD interventions to influence organizations toward becoming PIOs.

Strategies for Change Challenge #1:
The priority challenge

1. **Leadership mindset** is one predictor of success of a Positive Impact Organization. The mindset ranges from opportunity seekers to integrators of sustainability, all the way to idealists, that put societal and planetary well-being at the center of their corporate vision (Bukhari, 2015). Working to educate leaders of the difference between an inside-out and an outside-in perspective can be a critical intervention strategy for influencing system-wide change.

2. **Targets and incentives** including relevant non-financial, sustainability performance indicators are highly relevant in assessing the degree to which an organization has embraced a sustainability

culture. Early sustainability organizations tend to create short term, qualitative targets. Advanced sustainability organizations set smart targets and some non-financial incentives for management. True sustainability organizations find answers in how to create value for stakeholders and society and as a result create both moonshot goals as well as smart, science-based targets and sustainability incentives for all employees, management, and board members. OD as a field is well equipped to support organizations clarifying and aligning targets and incentives in new ways.

Early sustainability organizations tend to create short term, qualitative targets. Advanced sustainability organizations set smart targets and some non-financial incentives for management. True sustainability organizations find answers in how to create value for stakeholders and society and as a result create both moonshot goals as well as smart, science-based targets and sustainability incentives for all employees, management, and board members.

Strategies for Change Challenge #2:
The engagement challenge

3. The **societal stakeholder** is a new way for the organization to see itself in society. The range of options goes from viewing external stakeholders, to reaching out to stakeholders along the value chain, to ultimately adopting the perspective that as an organization, we are ourselves just one of many responsible stakeholders in society. Fortunately, OD has vast techniques for helping organizations engage the voices of diverse stakeholders.

4. The **triple value reporting** indicates how sustainable an organization is. It ranges from undertaking selective reporting, to reporting on all material aspects, to ultimately engage in the unchartered territory of attempting to report on the societal and environmental value, including negative and positive impacts.

Strategies for Change Challenge #3:
The positioning challenge

5. **Market framing** indicates the degree of outside-in thinking in the organization and its purpose. Initially, an organization reacts to outside pressures in existing markets, later on, an organization may explore new market opportunities and emerging segments inside or outside existing markets. Ultimately, the organization transforms existing markets or defines entirely new markets as a result of seeking to solve existing societal and environmental challenges, resulting in potential repositioning of future products and services. OD is well versed in supporting organizations through strategic reflections for such reframing; practitioners are advised to collaborate with sustainability experts to ensure that the size of the challenge can be properly understood.

6. **Products and services** are central to the repositioning of an organization. The development range goes from considering selective improvements of existing products and services, to undertaking systematic improvements across the product and service range, including the whole life-cycle, to ultimately develop products and services that generate a net positive impact on sustainability challenges, along several time horizons (Malnight, Buche, and Dhanaraj, 2019). OD practitioners have the skills to facilitate such explorations with multiple stakeholders and are advised to collaborate with relevant experts in product and service

innovation and in particular in sustainability and SDG-impact to frame the results appropriately.

Strategies for Change Challenge #4:
The integration challenge

7. **Sustainability in the organization** assesses the integration of sustainability is integrated into a hierarchy and structure. The range starts with the creation of a staff function and continues with integrating sustainability responsibilities across departments and divisions. Ultimately, it is about reorganizing the organization around its purpose of addressing a certain societal challenge, creating multi-functional teams that co-create dedicated positive impact products and services together with external partners.

8. **Transparency and board support** allow measuring the degree of sustainability integration. It ranges from defensive policies to protect against sustainability risks to a fully transparent integration of triple-bottom line objectives into policies and an inclusion of relevant societal stakeholders into decision-making processes across the organization, including the board, which is work that falls well within OD's realm of competencies.

We have translated these insights into a strategic innovation process that organizations of any type and size can use to implement a positive impact orientation into their business. The process was prototyped with businesses across all relevant sectors and was field-tested since. We call it SDGX-CHANGE and it works both online and with in-person workshops. We train consultants interested in using the methodology so that they can advise their clients in how to embed sustainability into their organizations. We offer all tools as open-source solutions. We want this to spread quickly as we want business to transform. More information is available at: *www.SDGX.org*, complete with proven tools to help organizations create the change we need in the world today.

THE 'HOW' OF TRANSFORMATION:
THE DUAL MINDSET TRANSFORMATION

Any of the eight innovation strategies serve to overcome the identified four challenges that are required to be resolved to realize the four strategic differentiators of PIOs: a sustainability culture, an external validation, a higher purpose and a governance alignment. When we analyzed the organizations during their transformation journey to become PIOs, we could identify two predictors of success during that transformation. If an organization had these two factors in place, it was only a question of time until they were able to create a positive impact. The two factors are not of strategic nor of organizational nature; they relate to the mindset of the leadership and to that of the organization (see *Figure 4*). We learned that an organization has a mindset too, not just a leader. We shall explore the two of them here further.

At the individual level of leaders, we are looking for an outside-in leadership mindset. A leader with this mindset has redefined their role and as a consequence the role of their organization in society. Such leaders experience themselves as one with the world and as a result they broaden their focus to serve the common good. They seek to provide a positive contribution to society and the planet, and they align their organizational processes to ensure the long-term well-being of the organization. These insights are supported by related research suggesting that sustainability minded leaders have an ecological worldview that comes with a high degree of eco-literacy and clarity regarding their contribution for society. Such leaders often develop a spiritual intelligence that springs from how they see themselves in nature and in how mindful they are with others (Rimanoczy, 2020).

At the organizational level, we have discovered the co-creative organization mindset. PIOs excel in how openly they engage with their external stakeholders. They are externally oriented and able to work as fluently outside of their boundaries as internally across divisions.

Figure 4. The two predictors of success: outside-inside leadership and co-creative organization

Figure 5. The two mindset transformations from traditional to positive impact

Multi-stakeholder processes have shown co-creative organizations successfully work with stakeholders outside of their traditional boundaries, living their positive impact purpose by co-creating innovative solutions with them. Organizational mindsets can be best observed in smaller groups. For example, a way to observe systems thinking is alive is to see the "both/and" approach applied in discussions. Such teams demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness and the capacity to reflect. They are interconnected and capable of engaging in purpose-driven innovation.

The transformation from a traditional mindset to a positive impact mindset can be described at the leadership level as transforming from "me" to "we," and at the organizational level as transforming from "competition" to "co-creation." This sounds easy and evident; yet shifting from a closed to an open stance at the individual level or from being risk aware to being opportunity aware is not for the faint-hearted (see *Figure 5*).

Research into mindset transformation has revealed interesting insights into what it takes get from a traditional to a positive impact mindset (Muff, 2018). The Outside-In Leadership Mindset Transformation consists of four aspects, two are visible (external), two are often hard to perceive (internal). This shift could be called as moving from an egocentric to an eco-centric worldview.

» The **internal aspects** concern a transformation from being internally closed to becoming internally directed; and from being externally directed to externally open. Internally directed can also be called being "values-based," which is quite the opposite of being externally directed, which is sometimes also called acting like a flag in the wind.
» The **external aspects** can be observed as a transformation from being self-focused to becoming other-focused; and from acting from comfort-centered preference to embracing a purpose-centered attitude. It is often quite easy to assess others in where they are on

Figure 6. The current and emerging generations in a typical organization

these two scales, albeit it is worth pointing out that depending on the type of pressure, most persons can become self-focused.

The Co-creative Organization Mindset Transformation can also be described in these four aspects, two are visible (external), two are often hard to perceive (internal). This transformation is also called moving from a state of competition to a state of co-creation.

» The **internal aspects** relate to the transformation from being tribe-oriented to being issue-oriented; and from rejecting differences to embracing differences.
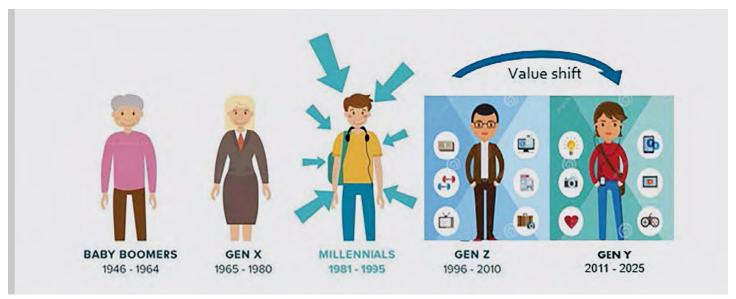
» The **external aspects** can be observed in how an organization lives its values. It is reflected in how an organization treats other organizations with different values. The transformation can be defined as moving from competing values to co-creating values. This can also be observed in how the organization operates. The transformation ranges from operating disconnectedly to operating in a connected way with other players.

This may also sound like much and a bit overwhelming. It may be helpful to remember that in any organization today, there are already different mindsets of different generations present. A typical organization today has four generations in-house that need to work together, and these four generations come with very different mindsets (see *Figure 6*). This reflection is not meant to categorize people into boxes, rather it is meant to help understand and recognize different mindsets. I find it helpful to consider a particular generation, let's take Gen Y, as an expression of the decade and a half in which they are born. The shift from Gen Z, which was focused on the status symbol latest tech gadgets to Gen Y, which is purpose-oriented and demands equal treatment of all minorities, is a shift of awareness and consciousness across a certain part of society of these times. The 2nd decade of the 21st century saw movements like "#MeToo," "Fridays for Future," and "Black Lives Matter" become important influences that shaped our society. Anybody in society, irrespective of which generation they are born into, has been affected by these influences.

A CALL FOR ACTION

If you are a business leader, an OD practitioner, or a next-gen future leader, I hope the message is clear: step up and help the organizations you are involved in embrace and integrate positive impact in their core business activities. Yes, it will involve new processes and innovation strategies. It will also require an ability to work inter- and trans-disciplinary. For OD practitioners in particular, this means reaching out to experts in fields of new subjects such as SDG-impact and sustainability from an opportunity-creation rather than just a risk-management perspective, as well as more traditional fields such as innovation and strategy. And, just as importantly, it will require a leadership and an organization mindset transformation that is nothing short of a revolution. The tools and measurement frameworks exist. The innovation strategies for the transformation needed in our organizations connect directly to the field of OD. What I am suggesting here is purpose-orientation of OD in service of helping organizations to provide positive value to society and our planet. What we need is you—a courageous change agent that will translate insights of lessons learned described here into concrete action. Remember, these four steps to embed a positive impact into organizations:

1. Create Strategic Clarity (Reducing negative impact, Increasing positive impact)
2. Understanding the Status Quo (Change readiness, Degree of sustainability)
3. Set Relevant 2030 Goals (Net zero is a must, Positive impact products & service as % of revenue)
4. Succeeding the Transformation Process (Strategic Innovation, The Dual Mindset Transformation)

The insights presented in this thought piece are based on published, open access research (*https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/16/8891*). Please *reach out to me* if you have questions. I am dedicating my life to help find answers to enable business to realize its positive business potential—the world depends on it!

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How to Change Organizations to Change Our World

A Time for Planetary Regeneration

By Jib Ellison and
David Cooperrider

Abstract

Our world needs new waves of positive change. Consider the prospects of runaway climate catastrophe; our a once-in-a-century planetary pandemic; cries for racial justice and inclusivity; growing inequality and economic turmoil; extremism fanned by social media; democratic backsliding; the mass extinction of species; and now youth everywhere rising up to save "our dying planet"—a piercing phrase that would have been seen as over the top, inflated, or unscientific not long ago. This article underscores that this is the era when building a better world is good business with the field of Organization Development (OD) as the catalyst. In sharing what is likely the largest, longest running corporate compliance-*to*-sustainability-*to*-regeneration project in the history of OD, we offer seven insights for the kind of Macro-OD that can help change organizations to change our world.

Keywords: Macro-OD, OD Case Study, Organizational Regeneration, AI Summits

"We must all take urgent, sustained action to reverse nature loss and emissions before we reach a tipping point from which we will not recover. People have pushed past the earth's natural limits. Healthy societies, resilient economies and thriving businesses rely on nature."
—Kathleen McLaughlin
Executive Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer, Walmart[1]

This article is a call to action for OD's new and expansive frontier indelibly linking human development within an organization to actively helping the organization be part of solving intractable societal challenges. Indeed, building trust by tangibly improving the material and spiritual outcomes between organizations and society has become the defining issue and need of the 21st century. Throughout the world immense entrepreneurial energy is finding expression to advance a "better business, better world" trajectory.

In sharing what is likely the largest and longest-running corporate compliance-to-sustainability-to-regeneration project in the history of OD, we offer seven insights for the kind of OD that can serve what's now called an earthshot moment. In this article we underscore the urgency and complexity of moving to a regenerative economy and then tell the story of our work with a corporation that has more than 2.3 million employees, an annual revenue of nearly $560 billion, and is propelling what some in the field are calling Net Positive OD (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2022) as the next logical step in the field of OD.

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1. *https://corporate.walmart.com/purpose/ sustainability#:~:text=We%20must%20all%20 take%20urgent,thriving%20businesses%20rely %20on%20nature.*

The Context of Massive Change

Our world needs new waves of positive change. Consider the prospects of runaway climate catastrophe and how it has morphed into what the world-renowned designer Bruce Mau calls "The Crisis Stack": a once-in-a-century planetary pandemic; cries for racial justice and inclusivity; growing inequality and economic turmoil; extremism fanned by social media; democratic backsliding; the mass extinction of species; and now youth everywhere rising up to save "our dying planet"—a piercing phrase that would have been seen as over the top, inflated, or unscientific not long ago.

There are three essential pillars underpinning our story. The first is the future of OD starts with the life-centric and net positive purpose the editors of this special issue have defined as our field's next, more ultimate ideal, or North Star. It places Nature, People, and Planet and "full spectrum flourishing" at the heart of OD's purpose. The full spectrum call to OD, or Macro-OD, involves one superordinate ideal: "a world where organizations and economies can excel, all people can thrive, and nature can flourish, now and across the generations."

The second pillar is the newly emerging definition of positive institutions. While most definitions of positive organizations emphasize the internal dimensions, for example, "a positive organization is a place where people are flourishing and as a result, they are able to exceed expectations" (Quinn, 2015; Cameron, 2012) we believe Macro-OD involves this, and then a remarkable leap beyond. Cooperrider and Godwin (2011) in the *Oxford University Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* talk about change-making, with its usual focus in OD and change management on the "inside of the building" where the enterprise is the object of organization change. But then they pose a question. What if we conceived of institutions not as the clients of OD but as the change agents, as OD platforms for mobilizing partners, communities, customers, coalitions, investors, whole industries, whole regions, multiple generations, and mission-aligned change-makers of every kind?

The larger concept involves the discovery and design of positive institutions:

> Positive institutions are organizations and structured practices in culture or society that serve to elevate and develop our highest human strengths, combine, and magnify those strengths, and then refract our highest strengths outward in world-benefiting ways leading, ultimately, to a world of full-spectrum flourishing (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011, 737).

Once we see OD changing organizations that will themselves go on to become the change agents changing the world, then the opportunities, and capacities, for systemic change soars. Hence our article's title: "How to Change Organizations to Change Our World."

Here, we share how a small OD and strategy firm, Blu Skye, with only *one* employee at the outset, brought Micro-OD and Macro-OD with earthshot overtones to the largest corporation in the world. The work began in 2004 and has, ever since, grown in scope, scale, and impact, and is a work in progress today. Observing that most change management efforts do not persist, many OD scholars have been calling out for far more sharing of the scarce longitudinal cases of OD work that endures, especially the kind of OD that multiplies in momentum, serves to elevate ambitions over time, and indeed becomes institutionalized and strategically embedded as an enterprise-wide competency (Cummings and Worley, 2019; Buchanan et al., 2005).

This article underscores that this is the era when building a better world is good business with Macro-OD as the catalyst. As prelude, there are many exciting questions to be explored. For example, how do you sustain an OD and strategic change process for nearly two decades? How do you work with an organization from ground zero—where there exists hardly any understanding of words like sustainability—and support them over time to develop innovation leadership in regeneration? How do you engender an "all in" culture of engagement for a company with 2.3 million employees—from personal sustainability plans for employees and their families, to whole system Appreciative Inquiry Summits engaging thousands—to something even more expansive, sustainable value networks engaging not thousands of individuals but literally thousands of other corporations and supply chain partners? How do you even contract for this kind of OD work—where nobody knows how to achieve audacious goals? And how do you arrive at a place where, at the time of this writing, the organization is leaping far beyond? It's nearly achieved zero waste; it has doubled wages for employees in the last 5 years; it is now working with 3,100 supplier institutions on project Gigaton to avoid 1,000,000,000 tons of CO_2 emissions in the atmosphere; it has accelerated its target date of 2035 to achieve zero emissions across the global operations; it has committed to protect, manage or restore 50 million acres of land and 1 million square miles of ocean by 2030; it has established shared value networks to help eradicate systemic racism including investing $100 million dollars in partnership with the Center for Racial Equity. The list goes on. Moreover, leaders throughout the company have applied Macro-OD methods, and are helping to convene whole industries frame their industry-wide earthshot goals. What's next? In 2021 the institution made a bold public commitment, yet another massive leap—moving from *sustainability to regeneration.*

Finally, we have written this article in the spirit that Herb Shepard once did in his thought-provoking article published in *OD Practitioner* called "Rules of Thumb for Change Agents (Shepard, 1975). In that article one of OD's great pioneers offered all of us insights such as "Stay Alive" and "Start Where the System is At" or "Light Many Fires" and "Never Work Uphill." These aphorisms spoke not to traditional notions of IQ, technical intelligence, or even emotional intelligence, but to the ultimate power of *contextual intelligence.* So much of OD that's done in the trenches, especially in new domains, needs to constantly be invented and re-invented *in-vivo* and involves the ability to seize the zeitgeist or the soul of a culture and the coming

tectonic shifts of the future. Contextual intelligence, in our view, is pivotal to OD success and involves appreciating deep currents as in whitewater rafting and involves seizing the moment, every moment, as if that would be *the* moment—because it is. There is no letting up in contextual attunement. It is relentless and evolving. Moreover, our learnings, like that of Shepard (1975), are not so many bits of advice but things we've learned and want to offer to OD practitioners as we enter frontiers of net positive OD each with unique enterprise and special context, one at a time.

CEO of Walmart, and Jib Ellison founder of Blu Skye. The reason I am writing this section is that Jib is exceptionally humble, and always works to empower the client to lead and own the change efforts.

For most of Walmart's rise to becoming the world's largest company, they had been the darling of Wall Street. As an upstart outsider led by people without MBAs from the Ivy League, Walmart's rise to dominance in the retail sector surprised most everyone. But in 2004 as they reached the pinnacle of business success, societal sentiment shifted.

helping big companies realize that "the greatest untapped source of competitive advantage in the 21st Century would be found through the radical application of sustainability principles into core business strategy." At the time, this was an unproven assertion, but was grounded in science. Jib's capabilities included a hybrid of strategy consulting and organizational development. He'd learned strategy consulting as a co-founder of The Trium Group.[2] He'd learned to develop effective leadership and teamwork through almost 20 years leading *whitewater expeditions* throughout the world to help improbable pairs, sometimes very conflicting parties, grow into collaborative partners. To these two capabilities, Jib added one more: science-based sustainability principles, which NGOs like the Natural Step had articulated in their peer reviewed System Conditions.[3] He was convinced that doing good would soon open new sources of innovation and shareholder *and* stakeholder value creation. He was sensing clarity in life purpose and his consulting mission. But where, with his brand-new firm, would Jib start? He reached out for help and contacted one person he knew who had perhaps the widest reach in the international environmental-science and non-profit organizational world. He asked for only one favor—a possible link to some captains of industry—leaders who could change the world of business for the better.

Three months later, without prelude, a bland email emerged on Ellison's home computer: "Rob Walton will call you." For Ellison, the name seemed familiar and after a Google Search the first thing to pop up was how Rob Walton took over as Walmart's Board Chair. Walton then soon arranged a meeting for Jib with Walmart's CEO, Lee Scott. This potentially world-changing connection, so improbable in and of itself, led to one of the most exciting conversations in Ellison's career. The Walmart juggernaut could be a far more powerful force for the world's solution revolution than many governments and nations.

> So much of OD that's done in the trenches, especially in new domains, needs to constantly be invented and re-invented *in-vivo* and involves the ability to seize the zeitgeist or the soul of a culture and the coming tectonic shifts of the future. Contextual intelligence, in our view, is pivotal to OD success and involves appreciating deep currents as in whitewater rafting and involves seizing the moment, every moment, as if that would be *the* moment—because it is. There is no letting up in contextual attunement. It is relentless and evolving.

The Unlikely Story of Walmart and Seven insights for OD

Insight 1: To Change the World, Nudge Something Powerful.
Or "Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world, when the time is right"

The Pulitzer Prize winning author, Edward Humes, in his book *Force of Nature: The Unlikely Story of Walmart's Green Revolution*, documents how in 2004 Walmart went from being a company focused single-mindedly on serving customers through "Every Day Low Price" to becoming a pioneer in corporate sustainability. I (David) have written much of this section with the help of Humes' (2011) carefully written and historically detailed book. I urge everyone in OD to read this book, especially the beginning, because it highlights how even one person—in this case my co-author Jib Ellison—can make a difference. The book details two amazing leaders, Lee Scott then

Seemingly overnight, horror stories of small-town business bankruptcies and employee dissatisfactions hit the front page of news outlets. The stories impacted sales. Something needed to be done. One area of vulnerability that hadn't yet been reported on the front page of the *NY Times*, related to Walmart's environmental footprint. Of course, the footprint was huge, especially if you included tens of thousands of suppliers and supply chain impacts. Remember, Walmart sells more products than any other company—by far. In addition to the almost 4000 stores in the USA, every single item had a footprint. Everything—each can of tuna, mobile phone, ceramic hummingbird, lawnmower, pair of jeans, and Halloween mask—had an unknown story and history.

The CEO, Lee Scott, wanted to get in front of the environmental story and reduce the risk, so he looked for help. Jib Ellison had just started a firm—Blu Skye Sustainability Consulting—focusing on

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2. *https://www.triumgroup.com/*

3. *https://thenaturalstep.org/approach/the-system-conditions/*

And that meeting happened *only* because Jib asked a friend to reach out: "Give me 5 minutes with any of them" he begged his acquaintance. "That's all I ask. A CEO-level conversation." That catalytic meeting with Lee Scott gave birth to a learning bond and has much to say about the 'use of self' as the instrument of change in OD (Jamieson and Cheung-Judge, 2020). The river guide painted a picture of how doing good for the environment could be an offensive strategy—a way to reduce waste, develop leaders, save money, attract talent, drive innovation, empower employees, serve emerging customer segments, and reduce risk. It was framed as "a massive business opportunity; the best business opportunity of our time." In a matter of months one of the most influential OD and strategy initiatives in environmental history began. Walmart became this OD and strategy firm's first client. Obviously, there are many implications. Here is one take-away for OD practitioners:

> *If you want to change the world, take something powerful and nudge it.*

Insight 2: Good Questions Have More Utility Than the Right Answers
Or "Have you harnessed the power of the Katrina Question?"

With the CEO and Board Chair enrolled in the idea of sustainability as being a transformative, offensive strategy, the question was how? In 2005, Walmart had $312.4 billion in sales, more than 6,200 facilities around the world, including 3,800 stores in the United States, and more than 1.6 million associates employed worldwide. The company was successful, the culture was strong, but actions to reduce the environmental footprint beyond simple compliance with legal regulations was non-existent. The CEO himself said, "We don't know what we don't know" about our impacts.

To begin, Jib enlisted a few friends who set out to enrich their contextual appreciation of current reality built upon the simple premise that to reach a destination far off the trodden path, you need to know where you're starting. How do you learn the current reality of the world's largest company? By asking good questions. Really good questions.

We asked for written information and talked to people. "What motivates people inside your company?" Jib asked. The head lawyer jumped in, "profit, margin, in stock..." then the CEO added, "actually, what really motivates our associates is doing the right thing." If that was true, the transformation had a chance.

The goal in asking good questions was to understand content and context. Content questions pertained to aspects of the company that could be counted and measured, things like number of employees, sales results over time, number of stores in what regions, the number of environmental fines, plans for expansion, etc. Content information is essential to understanding the mechanics of the business. How do they make money? What's the strategy? How do they organize to execute on the strategy? But while necessary, this information isn't sufficient to design, much less execute, an OD transformation of this magnitude. No, what's key is context. How do leaders see the world? How aligned are leaders and front-line employees around what's important? How much risk is considered acceptable? How are decisions made and who makes them? These are the questions that provide insight into why things are the way they are today, and they also provide the key to designing a guerrilla intervention.

Finally, another question proved critical: *"When do people throughout this organization come most alive, feel most engaged, and passionate AND what catalyzes the most elevated times when people go way beyond their job descriptions, collaborate, and innovate across specializations and silos, and are most filled with pride and collective achievement?"*

When Lee Scott reflected on his many years with Walmart, his answer was clear. It was right after Hurricane Katrina hit, ravaging the entire gulf region with death and destruction. When the government failed to mobilize quickly, Walmart stepped up. Immediately it donated $17 million, marshaled the use of trucks and stores, and empowered its employees to act. And they did by turning their stores into rescue hubs. They fed 100,000 people, provided shelter for rescue workers, police officers, and other first responders, and distributed medicine and food. All without approval from Bentonville headquarters. Walmart people "just did the right thing." During this crisis it was an organization alive, not in some utopian ideal, but in a tangible and practical way. Lee Scott had his answer. Walmart comes alive and is at its best, when engaged in doing something good—and extraordinary—"and get caught doing something right." That's when Lee Scott embraced the full potential of how authentic sustainability leadership could benefit the world and the business, and he soon announced it boldly and publicly in his remarkable "21st Century Leadership" speech.[4] It reverberated around the world, shocking Wall Street, suppliers, environmental activists, and business schools. In the speech, the CEO asked the world a good question: "What if we used our size and resources to make this country and this earth an even better place for all of us: our customers, associates, our children, and generations unborn?" He then set out clear goals: "(1) To be supplied 100% by renewable energy; (2) To create zero waste, and (3) to sell products that sustain our resources and environment." The takeaway for OD: "Where and how might *you* harness the power of the Katrina Question?"

> *Good Questions Have More Utility Than the Right Answers.*

Insight 3: Unleash "the Revolutionary Within" by Aligning with the Strongest and Most Radical Parts of the Culture.
Or "Don't try to teach a pig to sing. It will sound horrible, and you'll piss off the pig."

After reviewing materials, numbers, and interviewing several leaders, one thing became clear. This wasn't a broken company. Generally, employees were proud of their work. The mission to improve lives by lowering the cost of living resonated deeply from the store to the home office. Not that there weren't pockets of disagreement. But directional alignment on world view was strong. Everyone could articulate

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the core mission: Save money, live better. All investments in the supercenter, self-distribution, and new IT were completely mission-aligned. To work there you needed to support the mission. If you didn't, you wouldn't last.

Building on years running whitewater rivers all over the world, the Blu Skye team realized that fighting the dominant cultural current was a fool's game. So, like a team of skilled rafters facing Grand Canyon sized rapids, the way to succeed at Walmart was to let the dominant current push the boat in the direction you wanted to go. In this case, the OD effort needed to align sustainability with the core mission *to save people money, so they can live better*. At the very least, sustainability couldn't be understood as counter to this mission. We also learned that Walmart's earliest business proposition to bring low prices to rural communities was considered crazy by "all the smart city people." To a large extent Walmart leaders already viewed themselves as radicals and reveled in "changing the game." This cultural icon could be harnessed in service of sustainability.

This was the whitewater way. The transformation would tap the radical "dynamic strength" of Walmart's culture to build momentum and an appetite for embracing the adventure of innovation. This OD rule of thumb embraces a paradox: *managing continuity is essential to managing change*. Look for the one radical element embedded deeply in the dominant culture to establish stability-in-change. The insight:

Unleash "the Revolutionary Within" by Aligning with the Strongest and Most Radical Parts of the Culture

Insight 4: Keep it Simple, Stupid and "Non-Trivial"
Or "A–duh mom and dad, of course your company should be working on this stuff..."

The science behind sustainability isn't simple. The detail, data, testing, verification, monitoring for climate change, which is just one slice of the sustainability pie, has thousands of scientists all over the world, occupied 100% of their time for their entire professional careers. Now consider

other important elements: water quality; water efficiency; solid waste reduction; food waste reduction; plastics recycling; aluminum recycling; energy efficiency; deforestation; afforestation; soil health; ocean acidification; wild fishery health; aquaculture; etc. And that's just the environmental side of sustainability. Consider the social elements: gender equity; racial bias; fair wage; factory work environments; farm work environments; income disparities; government policies; etc. It's enough to make your head spin.

Given that the OD team was working with busy, successful executives, for whom time—not money—was the scarcest resource we needed to help them "see the world anew" without overwhelming them with the magnitude of what sustainability required. This required practicing the art of *simplification without trivialization*.

Like strategy in general, sustainability is like a Russian Matryoshka doll. There are many layers of nesting realities, each existing independently but also as part of a greater whole. The art of simplification demands that before plunging into a lecture on sustainability one understands the audience and their starting point.

So, we began at the beginning. Every aspect of sustainability in business can be articulated through the idea of waste reduction. Pollution leaving a factory is waste. A fish caught but not eaten is waste. A person forced to work against their will is waste. A forest clear cut, species gone extinct, or agricultural land turned to desert is waste. And in the dominant "save money" worldview, the idea of waste is something to avoid. Waging a war on waste fit the dominant cultural drift perfectly. Quick victories disseminated as stories told throughout the company would build self-reinforcing momentum for the harder changes to come. People quickly mobilized to reduce waste in the truck fleet, apparel, electronics, food, jewelry, building design and maintenance, energy management, packaging, and even toys. One doll, for example, came in an oversized, corrugated box. Using the lens of sustainability, the packaging team shrank the box and discovered that this seemingly inconsequential change led to other significant reductions in waste.

The same number of dolls in the new boxes could be shipped using 497 fewer containers, which resulted in saving $2.4 million, more than four thousand trees, and a million barrels of fuel. If something as simple as a reduction in packaging size could save millions and be more sustainable, the possibilities were endless. Waste reduced could translate to wealth. Everyone could be involved. Soon people took this sense of purpose into their homes asking their children what they thought about the company's commitment to sustainability. One daughter said: "A–duh, of course your company should be working on this stuff..." The OD insight:

"Keep it Simple, Stupid and "Non-Trivial"

Insight 5: Overlay an *Oxygen Rich* Open-innovation Network on top of the Formal Structure and Bring Learning Alive with Ever-widening Circles.
Or "How sustainable value networks helped everyone have two jobs"

Excitement and energy were turning into a positive contagion. With quick wins reverberating throughout the company, the path forward was becoming clearer. The "lens of sustainability" could be made relevant to every aspect of the business. While visiting cotton fields in Turkey, the EVP for apparel, for example, experienced the social and ecological costs of fields saturated with toxic chemicals. She and her team acted boldly. Within a year, Walmart became the single largest purchaser of organic cotton in the world. Each win pointed to more possibility. There would be no reversing the innovation logic of providing market-driven solutions to the world's greatest social, ecological, and human challenges. It was a win-win-win formula.

It was time to scale. Yet when the business is the biggest in the world, this presents a logistical problem. Early on, the CEO for Walmart US, the companies' biggest division, pushed back on an idea to transform the store environments store by store, saying to us "I'm confident that your OD team could go to a store, work with the associates for a while, and that there would be some great outcomes. But

Sustainable Value Networks (SVNs)

"Relevant Diversity" Is Key

A collection of "relevant, but diverse" internal and external stakeholders comprise the network

The true "power" of SVNs stems from its unique and diverse constituent base, wherein:

- Cross-functional employee involvement transcends organizational hierarchy and silos
- External stakeholders bring in new perspectives
- Diverse and unique perspectives foster faster innovation
- The group structure allows for "superstars" to rise to the occasion

An Invaluable Implementation Structure

SVNs exist to identify and implement projects ranging from the small and short-term to the large and long-term that create economic benefits from improved environmental and social outcomes.

When implementing sustainability strategies, SVNs are invaluable in:

- Driving idea identification and innovation
- Engaging employees and stakeholders
- Providing a means for developing a sensing and external communication vehicle

Environmentally-Friendly SVN "Effluent"

- Develops a "sensing organization," aware of the external business/political environment, and able to incorporate this information into decisions for the creation of long-term value
- Facilitates the dissemination of the sustainability vision beyond a narrow senior group of people, ingraining it into the culture

Figure 1.

do you understand that if you started today, and went to another store tomorrow, and another the day after, it will take you more than 10 years to get to every store!?" The leader even slammed the table for emphasis. Yes, scaling was going to require a guerilla approach, with an army of internal change champions, to leverage the lens of sustainability and enroll everyone around them.

To do this we created an ad hoc structure that would operate alongside the existing formal structure. It was designed to have participants learn and adopt the lens of sustainability, develop plans, and take responsibility for moving plans forward in the business. These "Sustainable Value Networks (SVNs)" included (see *Figure 1*) a diverse set of stakeholder configurations from both inside *and* outside the company. For example, internal participants to the waste network would include junior and senior leaders from domestic and international store operations, distribution, corporate affairs, and food merchandising as well as external participants including

representatives from suppliers, academic institutions, waste management companies, and environmental NGOs.

What is unique about SVNs in relation to OD's traditional use of "parallel structures" were the number of outside stakeholders involved. The direct and meaningful work on this topic turned previously contentious *we–they* relationships into promising seeds of trust and respect. The "Bentonville Bubble" began to take in lots of *open-innovation oxygen* leading to improbable insights and fresh air.

This was important, perhaps critical, because few environmentalists at the time saw corporations as doing anything other than greenwashing. In this case, the trust building interactions inside and outside the building, coupled with the vivid results would tell the story. Slowly, through the work of the SVNs and periodic Milestone Meetings where everyone involved met with the Executive Committee, the word got out. Walmart was up to something truly different and authentically co-created. This soon led, for example, to a *Fortune*

Magazine cover story with a picture of Lee Scott with a headline, "Walmart Saves the Planet... well, not quite."[5] Our takeaway:

Overlay an oxygen rich open-innovation network on top of the formal structure and bring learning alive with ever-widening circles

Insight 6: When You Need to Change a System, Put the System in the Room Together *Or "Be ready to turn over the keys. The institution-as-change-agent is ready to drive."*

Quick wins graduated from functional arena success to enterprise-wide *Innovations Projects* and then to more outside systems *Game Changers* with higher investments, opaque outcomes, and more risk (see *Figures 2* and *3*). Inherent in all these more complex projects was a simple fact. None of them could be undertaken by the organization alone. Even the biggest company in the world had to work with other

5. *https://www.pinterest.com/pin/370913719286104081/*

The Sustainable Pathway
Our approach captures near-term wins while building to long-term strategic advantage

VALUE (vertical axis) / **TIME** (horizontal axis)

Today's Business Practices
- Focused on a "win" for business
- Unintended negative consequences for society

Quick Wins (< 1yr.)
Actions that make business sense based on available technologies, products, and processes
- Energy and Water Efficiency in Refining
- Community Engagement Plan
- Waste reduction

Innovation Projects (1 – 3 yrs.)
Opportunities that make sense based on emerging technology, processes, and innovation
- Regulation sensing capability to inform M&A
- Sustainability overlay for Capex decision-making
- Water reuse
- Supplier metrics

Game Changers (Long Term)
Changing the "rules of the game" to tilt the playing field toward sustainable practices, where we are leaders
- Transforming waste streams into new products
- Zero-carbon fueling stations
- Sustainable Refining Index

Sustainable Business Practices
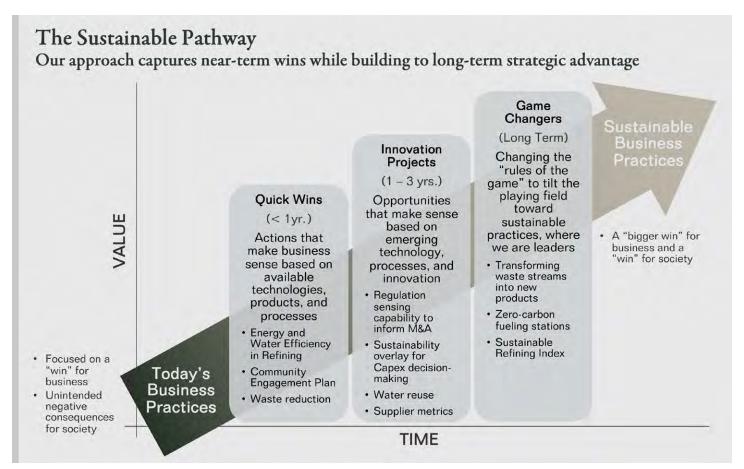- A "bigger win" for business and a "win" for society

Figure 2.

people, companies, NGOs, and sometimes governments to capture the next level of positive value for the world and business.

The Game Changer project proposals were fascinating. It quickly became clear that the biggest opportunities to create breakthrough results were to be found outside the company. Great OD within the boundaries of an organization as a system is a start. However, as Rosabeth Moss Kanter shows in her article *Taking Leadership to a New Place: Outside-the-Building Thinking to Improve the World* (Kanter 2022), more sustainable *change-making* requires additional actions and sensibilities. To make leaps as a sustainable enterprise, would now require catalyzing change across whole industries and sectors. If Walmart wanted to make sustainable food products radically more affordable for working families on difficult budgets, how might the sustainability lens be turned into a way to *expand economic opportunity* and new waves of innovation for farmers? We call this Macro-OD, where the enterprise, usually in a co-convening partnership with other bridging institutions, becomes a change agent and

systems change platform. It's an OD that attempts to change entire systems including the institutionalized sets of "rules of the game" across markets, industries, regions, etc. The thesis of this approach involves moving beyond competitive excellence to the leveraging of collaborative advantage. To address this reality in the Walmart work, the OD team was soon expanded to include Blu Skye's Academic Partner (David Cooperrider, co-author here) and his university team, leveraging OD's next generation Appreciative Inquiry *Net Positive Design Summit* for advancing outside of the building macro or meta-systems change (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2022, in this issue).

One example of this Macro-OD was the pioneering work with the U.S. Dairy Industry. The genesis of the collaborative effort came in response to a request from Walmart to their dairy suppliers for information on the carbon footprint of the milk they were purchasing. The timing was right. Dairy Management, Inc.—an industry-wide association—was studying the implications of sustainability trends and were fascinated by Walmart's unique

sustainability journey. Soon a *convening corps* was constituted with DMI drawing in other dairy industry associations, including the National Milk Producers Federation and International Dairy Foods Association. A national summit was co-created to help the entire industry become a force for "ensuring the health and well-being of the planet, our communities, and stakeholders." The whole value chain was involved. Hundreds of stakeholders from farm crop production, milk production, processing, packaging, transportation, and yes retail, engaged energetically. At the summit, competitors sat next to each other, and even more remarkably, dairy farmers and processors who historically have seen each other as opponents in a zero-sum game, came together to innovate across the value chain. A powerful portfolio of industry-wide initiatives resulted, focused on creating smart farm technologies, cleaning and renewing waterways, advancing healthier foods and nutritional excellence for children and schools, accelerating economically productive and homegrown renewable energy sources, innovating around net-gen processing via

Company Lifecycle and Evolution of Leaders

Leaders are Visionary
- High experimentation–low systemization
- Mistakes expected–learning happens
- Loose, informal organization
- High energy and passion

Leaders are Builders, Growers, Managers, Administrators
- Systemization and policies
- Hierarchy/title proliferation
- More formal organization, communications & relationships
- Diversity of ideas diminishes
- New contrary data is challenged or rationalized

Leaders must
- Flexibly span many time horizons
- Take responsibility for this curve and the next
- Understand and live with paradoxical ideas, feelings and organizational realities
- Appreciate the creative tension of chaos

CHAOS

Future Goal = Exploit the new business model

Transformative Period
Goal = Lead both curves simultaneously

Normative Period
Goal = Exploit the business model

Formative Period
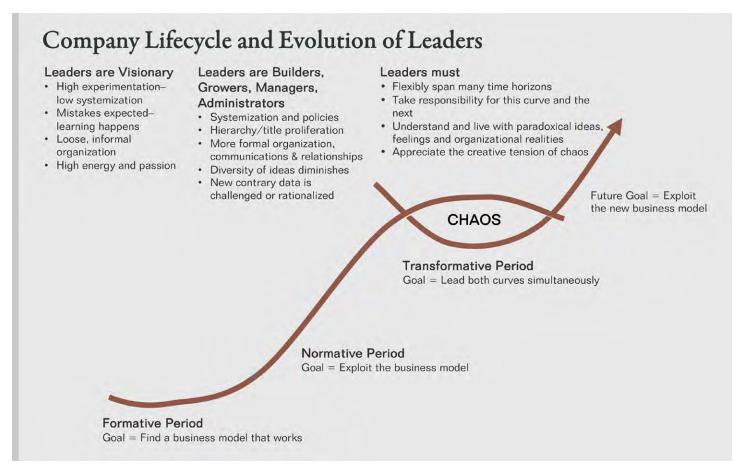Goal = Find a business model that works

Figure 3.

UV illumination, advancing dairy fleet sustainability, researching the cow of the future, advancing farm safety and animal care, reducing GHC emissions (in 2020 this turned into the US Dairy's Net Zero initiative[6]). This work gave birth to the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and has brought hundreds of millions of dollars in benefit to farmers. For example, this work led to the scaling of biodigester technology that eliminates toxic waste in waterways, enriches garden soils, and generates renewable energy. A single 750-kilowatt system can enable an annual avoided cost of $400,000 and an annual revenue addition of $695,000. Moreover, this industry-wide effort caught the attention of the White House. Secretary Tom Vilsack, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, honored the entire effort at the White House when he singled this work out as an industry model, demonstrating to other industries

how to embrace a better future systemically and collaboratively. There, too, at the White House, an awards program was launched for elevating U.S. Dairy's game changing solutions, a diffusion of learning process that continues to this day.

Again, we see that enormous business value and relationship value is hidden in the "white space" of sustainability, of the kind that individual players cannot access on their own. Systemic action, in and through institutions as *the* change maestros using their new Macro-OD tools as strategic convenors, were used repeatedly in our Walmart work. Some other examples: A magazine-industry Macro-OD summit focused on radically reducing waste to landfill; a system-in-the-room focused on driving a quick market-led transformation from inefficient (but profitable) incandescent lights to CFL bulbs and then ultimately to LED's. Then there was the creation of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, today the world's biggest industry association focused exclusively on creating a common index for measuring and

communicating the sustainability of billions of products. The takeaway:

When You Need to Change a System, Put the System in the Room

Insight 7: Love Bureaucracy… But Love Permanent Beta More.
Or "Take Big Goals and Make Them Bigger"

When something begins, there is excitement and a natural messiness. There are no systems, no processes and lots of making things up. During this early phase, OD practitioners search for results that can scale by observing success patterns in projects, processes, and methods. Once new productive patterns are recognized and replicated, then refinements naturally ensue. This is the process and role of bureaucracy. Over time, the refinement of the scaled pattern results in more rules, norms, and standardized procedures. People start to forget why the pattern was discovered in the first place and follow the rules. Legal teams move from being more about helping business leaders figure out how to

6. https://www.usdairy.com/getmedia/89d4ec9b-0944-4c1d-90d2-15e85ec75622/game-changer-net-zero-initiative.pdf?ext=.pdf

accomplish something legally and become more focused on making sure that everyone in the business does things the 'right' way. Institutionalized routines with the sustainability lens in this case allowed for standardized training, continuous improvement, and continuity across leadership successions. All good. Bureaucratization like this is a sign of success. One of the greatest signals of OD success is when the effort loses its novelty, surprise, and excitement. It's the stage where the transformation is "just the way it is around here." It's also precisely the moment to take the big goals and make them not only bigger... but *bolder, better, and braver.*

Beta mode invites collective intelligence, process knowledge, and a mindset that there is no perfect version of anything. Beta-mode means that every moment is an opportunity for learning and experimentation. More expansively, "Permanent Beta" wants it—making big goals even bigger—and it requires vulnerability. At the same time it, requires the flexibility to keep the core business running. This is a time of paradox, chaos, and dynamic tension.

Long-term Macro-OD, especially in the sustainability domain, requires a mindset designers call a perpetual beta mode. Beta refers to a stage in development where the prototype design is being tested through constant experimentation and usage. It's about releasing something to the public seemingly pre-maturely without being perfect and then constantly inviting feedback, iteration, and failing forward to succeed sooner. Think of the entrepreneurial energy found in start-up culture. The freedom to follow new ideas and innovate is unlocked. Beta mode invites collective intelligence, process knowledge, and a mindset that there is no perfect version of anything. Beta-mode means that every moment is an opportunity for learning and experimentation. More expansively, "Permanent Beta" wants it—making big goals even bigger—and it requires vulnerability. At the same time, it requires the flexibility to keep the core business running.

This is a time of paradox, chaos, and dynamic tension.

That's exactly what Walmart did. The CEO and Chief Sustainability Officer decided to elevate sustainability. They did this not through a top-down mandate, but through a grass-roots process of reconnection with why sustainability matters to everyone: associates, customers, company, communities, and world. In September 2020, Doug McMillon, the CEO, gave a speech declaring an intention to make Walmart a regenerative company that many in the field are pointing to as a model of honest humility and bold courage, as well as public commitment to the great task ahead. A couple of excerpts of the speech will do more than any of our own commentary:

Since 2005, we have made progress on sustainability and so have many other companies. But collectively, it hasn't been enough. More must be done, urgently... We must go beyond sustainability as it is understood and practiced today....

Today, I am committing Walmart to become a regenerative company, one dedicated to placing nature and humanity at the center of our business practices. Regenerating means restoring, renewing, and replenishing in addition to conserving.... This is a watershed moment in history where all of humanity is coming together, whether we realize it yet or not. The work ahead requires learning and commitment from each of us. It

doesn't mean being right in a way that makes others wrong. It means listening intently and respectfully, stitching together differences that separate us from each other. It doesn't mean either hope or despair; it is action that is courageous and fearless.

We have created an astonishing moment of truth. The crises we face are not a science problem. They are a human problem. Technologies are important, but the ultimate power to change the world does not reside in them alone. It relies first and foremost on reverence, respect, and compassion—for us, all people and the natural environment that sustains us all. *This is regeneration.*[7]

This then is our concluding OD insight:
Love Bureaucracy... But Love Permanent Beta More.
Or "Take the Big Goals and Make Them Bigger—This is Regeneration"

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> "System change and quantum theory involve recognizing that you are, and I am, part of the system to be transformed and that the transformation is as much personal as organizational or institutional…"

Putting Nature, People & Planet at the Heart of OD's Purpose

A Systems Transformation Perspective

By Steve Waddell and
Sandra Waddock

Abstract

Environmental disaster and social division are existential threats that demand transformation of our societies, their economies, and various communities to find alignment with human needs and nature's regenerative capacities. Transformation is required to move from the exploitive and extractive logic of our current structures, to ways that understand humans as part of nature, not separate from it; that value all people; and that aim for social justice and ecological flourishing. Support for this transformation in organizing logic is urgently needed by the practice of Organization Development (OD). This article looks at this challenge through the experience of two people engaged in this transformation challenge who have been colleagues for nearly 30 years. One is an academic, one a practitioner, and they both consider themselves "pracademics." They draw from their experiences, with a particular focus on the last couple of years with an initiative supporting economic transformation. They present five propositions from their work, in support of those working for transformation through an OD lens.

Keywords: Systems Transformation, Spheres of Transformational Change, Change Strategies for System Transformation

Introduction and Overview

With their particular skills and knowledge base, Organization Development (OD) practitioners are perfectly placed to help bring about the system transformation that is urgently needed. This shift, however, requires change in the practice of OD itself, to focus much more categorically on questions about transitioning to, and organizing with, a new set of values and principles. Transformation needs to happen purposefully and with the specific ends of equitable social and ecological flourishing in mind (Cooperrider, 2001; Laszlo & Brown, 2014) using what Laszlo (Laszlo et al., 2021a) calls "prospection" or creating potential futures based on clearly understanding their values and linkages. No one fully understands how to accomplish such purposeful system transformation, yet the imperatives of multiple crises in our world cry out for such change.

We draw from our journey exploring this transformation challenge through an initiative called Bounce Beyond (BB) that the lead author founded and in which we are both deeply involved (*https://www.bouncebeyond.global*). This article approaches the BB story as one of action research: our team has significant transformation knowledge and tools, but certainly not sufficient to address its aspirations without a focus on developing substantially more. The story is also one of initial experimentation with application of core concepts of "transformations systems" (T-systems) and the institutional innovation

of "transformation catalysts" (TCs) as pathways to system transformation. We are at a very early stage, and "success" in conventional terms is still far from certain, yet there are impactful lessons to be harvested for OD practice even now.

To highlight the multiple levels of change activity involved, we will tell this story through the lens of five propositions that have surfaced as central to our work with Bounce Beyond. We highlight the implications of tackling systemic change challenges towards an equitable and flourishing world for all in which humans recognize their integral participation in and of nature—not separate from it and where all beings are seen to have intrinsic value. Each of us shares thoughts from a 'pracademic' perspective—but from different sides of that label.

The Genesis of Bounce Beyond

The story of Bounce Beyond is about a group of people—a core of eight to ten with numerous others engaged—trying to address the "how" of economic paradigm shift. Others with leading roles in Bounce Beyond include one academic and several practitioners, and all are thought and action leaders in transformation. In an (unsuccessful) funding proposal in November, 2021, BB was described as:

> "… a non-profit organization that is accelerating the emergence of life-centered, regenerative, equitable economies. We are doing this as an exceptional global community of three types of actively collaborating stakeholder members: (1) committed and audacious thought and practice leaders, (2) powerful Strategic Partners, and (3) high performance economic transformation initiatives that enable economies that help nature, people, and communities flourish."

Steve: When it became obvious to me in February 2019 that Covid-19 was going to be a major trauma event globally and across society, I was almost relieved. For the previous five and more years, I had worked with the conviction our societal

dysfunctions were so great that we were going over the abyss of collapse environmentally and in terms of our civilization. That conviction arose with nearly 35 years in what I think of as transformational change work in many roles, particularly with the identity as community organizer, where 'community' ranges from local levels, to a couple of decades of global work. With that conviction, I was working to bring together a community of highly skillful transformation thought and practice leaders to—in my mind, in theirs it was of course somewhat different—support development of islands of successful transformation with five key design features: resilience, global-local connection, entrepreneurship, networked structure, and high aspirations. These islands could provide the seeds for broader transformation in a collapsing world.

Covid energized me with the perception it would weaken the traditional power structures that were holding the old system in place. It would enhance the enabling environment, and that would allow advancing a new global agenda more rapidly and avoid the abyss. Rather than investing in ways to support continuation of the current paradigm, investment could be shifted to a future one.

Sandra: As Steve indicated, there is nothing like a good crisis to focus the mind—and the attention of change agents. After working for many years on issues of corporate (social) responsibility (CSR) and business in society to attempt to get companies to act in the public interest not just with profits in mind, I had turned my attention to thinking about systemic change. One of the triggers for that shift was the recognition that CSR was and is not going to bring about needed changes in companies to deal with the major issues of our day because their major impacts come from their business models (not their CSR activities). Another spur was a recognition that came from an invitation to write a reflections piece for a change management journal. The insight was that the underlying narrative or story of an entity, supported by the memes—core units of culture (Blackmore, 2000)—of which it is constituted

either guides transformative change—or, when it does not change—holds the system in place (Waddock, 2015, 2018). The combination of the pandemic, climate change, the havoc wrought by political divisiveness, and other crises made the opportunity presented by Bounce Beyond's formation attractive because of its focus on broad systemic change, particularly around emerging what we call next economies. How we understand economics and economies in my view is central to many of our systemic issues.

Principles Behind Bounce Beyond's Approach to System Transformation

In outlining the five propositions below, we hope to illustrate how our journeys and writings (please forgive self-citations) might be helpful to OD practitioners as they think about the big picture challenges of tackling system transformation. In developing these ideas, we also highlight the very different values and understandings from current thinking on which we believe 'next economies' need to be based.

THE PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1: The Transformations Challenge is about Values and Intent

System transformation is integrally about shifting how people understand their world, their organization(s), and their place in it so they can begin to act differently. Old understandings—stories and narratives that shape values—hold the system in place. Hence these stories and the underlying memes (core ideas, phrases, understandings, images) (Blackmore, 2000) that support those narratives need to change, sometimes radically, to bring transformation about (Waddock, 2016) if the system is to change in foundational ways. That is, system change is about bringing forward values that support the aspirations of transformation and inspire people to adopt them—and associated practices to envision a better world (Laszlo et al., 2021a). Values and the aspirations they generate create shared narratives and stories that people can buy into and can guide their actions,

Table 1: *Three Types of Change*

	Incremental	Reform	Transformation
Core Questions	How can we do more of the same? Are we doing things right?	What rules shall we create? What structures and processes do we need?	How do I make sense of this? What is the purpose? How do we know what is best?
Purpose	To improve performance	To understand and change the system and its parts	To innovate and create previously unimagined possibilities
Power and Relationships	Confirms existing rules	Opens rules to revision	Opens issue to creation of new ways of thinking about power
Action Logic	Project implementation Sense–Categorize–Respond	Piloting Sense–Analyze–Respond	Experimenting Probe–Sense–Respond
Archetypical Actions	Copying, duplicating, mimicking	Changing policy, adjusting, adapting	Visioning, experimenting, inventing
Tools Logic	Negotiation logic	Mediation logic	Envisioning logic

Adapted from: Waddell, S. (2007). p. 80.

which is what is needed in the complexly wicked context of socio-ecological systems. The importance of co-creating these shared narratives has become a central tenant in the dialogic-informed trajectory of the OD field (Marshak and Bushe, 2009).

In discussions about the economic paradigm, the question of what we are shifting to and from was core. With Beyond Bounce, we talked about shifting structures, purpose, systems, and mental models, but we kept on coming back to values underlying these elements. Values that support life are at the core of the type of system transformation that we and many others are working for (Cooperrider, 2001; Cooperrider and Laszlo, 2012). Many of today's systems are oriented towards a set of economic values that have led to the many crises we are now facing: money as the sole goal of enterprise, continual growth, and selfish individualism, along with market primacy. Thus, as Kuhn (1962) might argue, a significant paradigm shift is needed away from monetary/financial values towards values that affirm life in all its aspects. An ecological perspective provides

quite different understandings of social systems, acknowledging that they can flourish only when the ecological systems with which they are interdependent and that support life also flourish.

In the economics realm, where Bounce Beyond works, we adopted a set of six aspirational core values supportive of this life-giving frame. They include: 1) stewardship of the whole to support the common good; 2) co-creating collective value (Donaldson and Walsh, 2015); 3) governance through cosmopolitan localism (Kossoff, 2019); 4) regenerativity, reciprocity, and circularity as operating principles for economic activity; 5) relationality and connectedness; and 6) equitable markets and trade framing market activity (Waddock, 2020). These values link to ten principles derived from the growing "heterodox" economics literature. Together, they provide a holistic understanding of the embeddedness of economies in societies, humans' reliance on natural systems for all productive processes and hence the attendant need for regenerativity and circularity, and the social and political needs for a system

that produces greater dignity, equity, inclusiveness, and voice for all people (Kenter et al., 2021).

The values and principles create the basis for bringing people together, which is work that the field of OD is primed to support. On the one hand, people may be divided around labels—such as circular versus regenerative versus doughnut economics—but share a value system and principles. On the other hand, people may describe "sustainability" as their goal, but when they try to work together, they discover that different values and principles underlay their uses of the term. When working with the multiplicity of options about how a desired future might manifest, value and principles alignment trumps distinctive labels and simple theoretical outcome alignment. They also form the basis of further *intent*.

Implication of Proposition 1 for Practitioners: Conduct an analysis of values of people for their desired future and agreement about them, even before you get to vision statements. Differences about the latter can be much easier addressed if there are agreed on values.

Proposition 2: Transformation requires a comprehensive approach to change

The word "transformation" is commonly used, but effective action requires understanding it as a distinctive type of change. It also requires putting our arms around change as something happening in different dimensions simultaneously, with people undertaking very different, but complementary change strategies.

Transformational change in BB is defined as one of three types of change. Understanding transformation as a distinct type of change arises with organizational development work associated with single-, double-, and triple-loop learning (Argyris, 1976; Flood & Romm, 1996; Tosey, Visser, & Saunders, 2012); and first-, second-, and third-order learning and change (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). This thinking has evolved into *Table 1*, which looks at the types of change from several dimensions. In an interesting form of validation, a very similar typology arose in the biological sciences

among people working on resilience, with the types being adaptation-resilience-transformation (Pelling, 2010).

Table 1 helps change agents assess whether transformational action is necessary. Incremental change is achieved by doing more of the same—a classic business strategy such as with Starbuck's opening a new store, or increasing carbon fuel efficiency. Reform is an appropriate response when new ways are identified for reaching goals, such as with welfare reform or improved profitability through processes like management by objectives a half-century ago.

Transformation is categorically about Kuhn's (1962) and Wieck's (2005) domains of sensemaking, i.e., shifting purposes and goals, values, power structures, and metrics (Waddock & Waddell, 2021a). Shifting goals may seem modest, such as with the shift from the goal of energy production to *sustainable* energy; however, such shifts mean generating a different relationship with nature (values) and displacement of powerful incumbents. This type of change is at the heart of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined with the United Nations' leadership.

Table 1 also helps people align tools and interventions with the actual type of change they believe is necessary. It distinguishes the action logics defined by the cynefin framework (Snowden, 2005) and emphasizes the experimental nature of transformational action. That framework describes action logics as being of four types: simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic. Transformation is a *complex* process with poorly defined outcomes dependent on evolving human potential, rather than predictable but complicated physical science interactions. Transformation is not a negotiation or mediation process; it requires a whole suite of future tools and processes where people can imagine possible futures and how to get there. BB has found particularly useful the Three Horizons process (Sharpe et al., 2016), which describes the (problematic) present with respect to an issue or region (H1: Horizon 1), a desired future
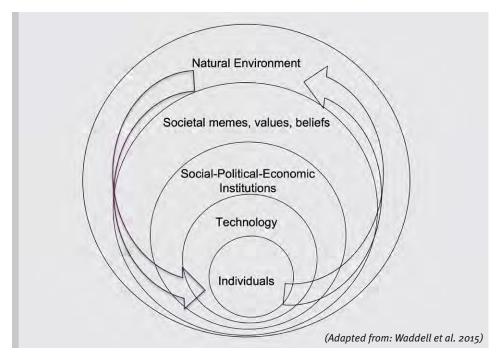

Figure 1. The Spheres of Transformational Change

(H3: Horizon 3), and emerging pathways to it (H2: Horizon 2).

Transformation, as a whole systems process, crosses what we describe as the "spheres of change" shown in *Figure 1*. Many transformation agents focus on one or two spheres. Otto Scharmer, for example, emphasizes individual change from an "ego" to "eco-system" focus of awareness (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Scharmer's approach describes a specific theory of change, arguing that the desired change requires individual awareness development first. There are many examples of transformational outcomes, however, that have been driven by other spheres, such as information technologies that have transformed relationships and sense of distance. Particularly important is the interplay among the spheres. For example, the marriage equality transformation case demonstrates movement from an individual assertion of the right to marry, to broader cultural support, to change in institutions (corporate policies/government rules/religious organizations stance) (Waddock, Waddell, & Gray, 2020). Developing strategies with this type of framing is useful.

Coping with the complexity of system change requires understanding the important aspects of systems that need to change—the *what* of system change. Five core dimensions help define that *what* (Waddock & Waddell, 2021a), with three

aspects overarching the others. Predominant is purposes (goals, visions, aspirations, strategies, and the like), which influence peoples' understanding of the *what* and *why* of the system. Redefining purpose, in turn, shifts the paradigms or mindsets of people in and about the system, which Meadows (2008) claimed were the most powerful leverage points for change. The third overarching dimension is that of performance metrics, because of the importance of the principle that "you get what you measure". The behavior that is assessed and rewarded is what will get done, so paying attention to metrics is vital to transformation. These three overarching dimensions influence two other aspects of the system, the flow of power and attendant structural relations and, ultimately and importantly, the operating practices by which its work gets done.

A holistic strategic perspective on transformation also informs the development of powerful *transformation systems* (T-systems). **T-systems comprise all those initiatives that aim to move the status quo in the direction of a new shared set of values.** T-systems transcend and include other large framings such as "movements" and "networks." This framing first arose in research looking at efforts to shift the global operating environment to support sustainable electricity generation. This research identified nearly
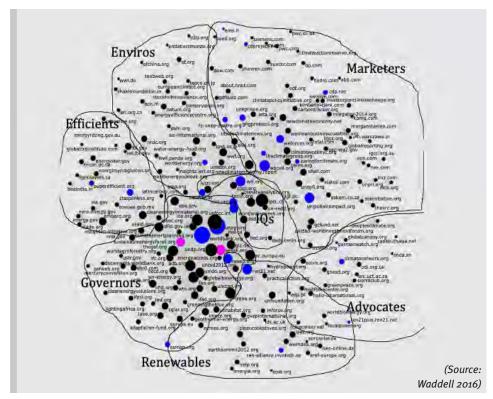
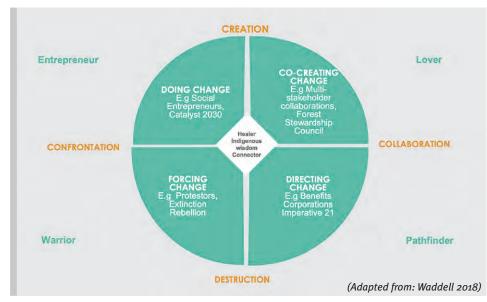*Figure 2.* Webcrawl of Renewable Electricity T-system

Figure 3. Change Strategies for System Transformation

around the question of how powerful T-systems can be developed to greatly accelerate transformation efforts (Waddock et al., 2020).

Another useful whole-system framing is around the change strategies different actors use (see *Figure 2*) (Waddell, 2018). Some emphasize collaboration, some confrontation, some destruction of the old, others creation of the new. This matrix produces four strategies, illustrated with marriage equality although found to be relevant across transformation issues:

» The lover strategy: collaboration among stakeholders (e.g., gay rights—religious leader collaborations)
» The entrepreneur strategy: simply demonstrating an example of the transformation (e.g., community commitment marriage ceremonies before religious or legal options existed)
» The warrior strategy: pressuring for change (e.g., demonstrations and lobbying for marriage equality)
» The pathfinder strategy: changing traditional organizations internally (e.g., employees pressuring employers to adopt same-sex spousal benefit policies)

We understand all of these strategies to be important. That suggests a meta-level strategy or organizing approach is needed to support synergistic interactions among them to create a dynamic whole change system approach, which leads to the emergence of new entities we call transformation catalysts, explained below. Just as business-government-civil society collaborations were an OD research focus arising in the 1980s–90s, today how to develop multi-strategy transformation approaches deserves a similar research focus.

The scale, complexity, and time horizons of transformational work require particular structures to support them. Multi-stakeholder global change networks organized around issues they aim to transform, called Global Action Networks (Waddell, 2009; Waddell, 2011), are examples of organizational innovations aiming to address these challenges. They have particular core tools they are developing. Examples are the Forest Stewardship Council (forest certification), Transparency

300 initiatives, of which 65 were assessed in detail, and 19 in greater detail. (Waddell, 2016) *Figure 2* presents a "webcrawl" mapping of 300 hyperlinks among major initiatives in this system (i.e., the links on one initiative's website that points to another's), and represents the first "map" of a T-system (originally called "societal change systems"). With the map, the T-system becomes much more tangible, enabling participants to see themselves in a bigger system of transformative action. Each node is a website; larger nodes have more connections. The software places nodes in close connection together to give insight about core themes: enviros are driven by environmental concerns, marketers are focused on market solutions, efficiency on energy efficiency, renewables on renewable energy, governors are governmental organizations, advocates are pressure groups, and IQs are research institutions. Being able to "see" the map had a profound impact that produced on-going work on T-systems,

International (transparency index, NGO-led collaborations), and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (funding; multi-stakeholder governance). Looking into responses to the question about how to organize the much broader concept of powerful T-systems (comprising *all* tools, *all* strategies, *all* initiatives) has led to the concept of "transformation catalyst" (TCs). TCs represent a relatively new way of organizing explicitly focused on transformational change (Lee & Waddock, 2021; Waddock & Waddell, 2021b). TCs organize T-systems or the set of change

Proposition 3: Transformation system development requires committed entrepreneurial community development

Bounce Beyond's fundamental work is to accelerate development of powerful TCs and T-systems. This is fundamentally a community development activity to develop deep collaboration among a T-system's people and initiatives. BB also serves as a kind of meta-TC, connecting such T-systems working on economic transformation. BB has put a stake in the ground that the initiatives it works with must have that

interviews and to develop relationships in what is known as network weaving (Holley, 2018; Monitor Institute and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2008). As in traditional OD processes, a good next step is convening key actors to bring them into interaction. The maps provide a good basis to help actors develop a system orientation, which supports discussions about the benefits of developing a powerful transformation system and identifying as actors in that system. Then they can see the T-systems as comprising different skills, orientations, relationships, strategies, and expertise that can be tapped for the greater effectiveness of the whole system. At convenings, people can identify ways for important transformative actions, including:

1. Creating synergies (e.g., working across initiative boundaries to create actions where 1+1>2)
2. Addressing redundancies (e.g., reducing duplications of effort)
3. Reducing conflicts (e.g., working collaboratively rather than counterproductively or independently; agreeing upon a common set of measures rather than competing ones)
4. Taking collaborative actions vis-a-vis common challenges that require effort beyond the capacity of one initiative (e.g., co-creating a collective information system and an evaluation system for the transformation system or co-developing needed innovations)
5. Identifying and addressing gaps in current efforts (e.g., identifying the need to address the financing the transformation efforts)
6. Acting on shifting transformation system priorities (e.g., reallocating funding for a particular priority that continues through inertia, often even after the original issue has been addressed)

> On this transformational path, assessing people's commitment to, and knowledge of, transformation is important. Without clear commitment, transformational intent can be easily co-opted, particularly when there are financial pressures or a quick growth strategy which results in compromises. Financiers may not support the need for inner as well as outer work (Proposition 5), and act to reinforce the hugely disproportionate power and reward for those with money. This insight was something that led us to distinguish between "progressive finance" versus "transformational finance."

initiatives working towards similar goals by aggregating or connecting, cohering, and amplifying their work. The goal is to bring different change actors into coherence and alignment (the catalytic actions) in new ways that enable them to be more impactful and effective because they understand themselves collectively as a T-system and begin to act in new ways oriented towards effective change. A TC may take the form of an identifiable entity organized around a particular issue like transformation of land use practices (e.g., 1000 Landscapes for One Billion People), the role of a particular stakeholder group in transformation like social entrepreneurs (e.g., Catalyst 2030), or efforts around transforming a particular geography (e.g., Costa Rica Regenerativa).

Implications of Proposition 2 for Practitioners: Take a Transformations System perspective.

transformational intent. But it must do so without a traditional expert approach—rather, the expertise is one of co-creating, co-exploring without "knowing" the "solution" and yet being willing to take on the scale, complexity, and time-horizons associated with transformation.

The first step to organizing T-systems is to explore who is in the system, who is connected to whom, and the dynamics of the system. Mapping tools are good ways to both identify people and initiatives; BB has identified 17 useful mapping methods.[1] In addition to web crawl mapping, particularly useful are social network analysis describing links between people and organizations, and value network analysis (Allee, 2015) describing systems in terms of roles and exchanges.

Mapping helps identify key people and a range of stakeholders, for conversational

These convenings might be organized by a potential or current TC, or a collection of organizations fulfilling TC functions. Or, a convening might spur the development of such entities.

On this transformational path, assessing people's commitment to, and knowledge of, transformation is important. Without clear commitment,

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1. *https://bit.ly/mappingmethods*

transformational intent can be easily co-opted, particularly when there are financial pressures or a quick growth strategy which results in compromises. Financiers may not support the need for inner as well as outer work (Proposition 5), and act to reinforce the hugely disproportionate power and reward for those with money. This insight was something that led us to distinguish between "progressive finance" versus "transformational finance" (Waddell, 2021). Co-optation can also occur by growth paths that result in partnering with

and empirically based knowledge systems, which tend to atomize or fragment knowledge into its parts. That understanding affects both our scholarship and our practice in the context of Bounce Beyond. Indigenous, feminist, humanistic, qualitative, complex, systems theoretic, and quantum understandings, among others, inform systemic change, and helped us frame the values that underlie what we call flourishing next economies. Learning involves various forms of action learning and experimentation, since outcomes

Wendt 2015). Transformational change also requires a grounding in systems thinking and dynamics (Ackoff, 1974; Capra and Luisi, 2014; Senge, 2006), as well as a need to understand the nature of complex adaptive systems (Anderson, 1999; Conklin, 2006; Grobman, 2005; Loorbach, 2010; Van Tulder & Keen, 2018), which all socio-ecological systems are. Further, different understandings of the nature of economic and social systems—understandings that incorporate care for both other human beings and the planet, and sometimes what might be viewed as spiritual practices (Eisler, 2008; Francis, 2015; Laszlo et al., 2021b) need to inform the values and goals of transformation as we envision it.

> **Indigenous, feminist, humanistic, qualitative, complex, systems theoretic, and quantum understandings, among others, inform systemic change, and helped us frame the values that underlie what we call flourishing next economies. Learning involves various forms of action learning and experimentation, since outcomes cannot be predicted and system elements are interrelated. That can mean approaches including narrative development, storytelling, and a more relational approach to the world and other beings, common in Indigenous perspectives, can be usefully added to traditional Western approaches to learning and understanding.**

traditional organizations and without sufficient vigilance to ensure that mechanisms like MOUs are structured with clear transformational intent.

Implications of Proposition 3 for Practitioners: Ensure that you and those you are working with have appropriate appreciation of stakeholders, their connections, their strategies, and how change spheres play with their issue. Be vigilant about maintaining transformational intent.

Proposition 4: Acknowledge complexity in system change and hence the need for multiple ways of knowing, acting, and learning

Systemic change is an emergent process that evolves from the interactions of people, institutions, natural forces, and other beings in complex adaptive systems. It requires being open to multiple ways of learning and knowing that go well beyond Western-dominated positivist

cannot be predicted and system elements are interrelated. That can mean approaches including narrative development, storytelling, and a more relational approach to the world and other beings, common in Indigenous perspectives (Arrows, 2016; Harris & Wasilewski, 2004; Kimmerer 2013), can be usefully added to traditional Western approaches to learning and understanding. Science-based ways of knowing that incorporate a quantum and consciousness-driven understanding of the world may be needed, too (Boje, 2012; Laszlo et al., 2021b; Wendt, 2015).

Such perspectives offer different views of reality than the typical positivist/empiricist approaches do. They are more holistic, recognize the importance of interrelationships, connectedness, and systemic approaches, as well as acknowledging the role that consciousness and awareness play in bringing about transformation (O'Brien 2021; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013;

In the context of Bounce Beyond, we have struggled with differing definitions of and ways to bring the feminine perspective into our work as a team and into the initiatives that we are working with. As well, we recognize our core team is dominated by a Western approach, and that expansion of perspectives and ways of knowing is a critical evolutionary task. Acknowledging and working with these different ways of knowing and learning is part of our—and any—transformation journey.

Implications of Proposition 4 for Practitioners: Actively solicit different ways of knowing and experiencing the change topic, and continually bring them up in the change processes.

Proposition 5: Transformation is Personal

The scale, complexity and time horizons of transformation work, in the face of great urgency, mean that becoming discouraged and feeling helpless is almost inevitable. Returning to the T-system perspective is a valuable way to regain a productive orientation.

Transformation agents, however, have to deal with the fact that transformation involves not only birthing the new, but categorically destroying the old. It is hard work and creates deep conflict. Each of us are objects and subjects, participants and observers of the transformation. We are changing the way that we see the world and make sense of it, including our long-held paradigms and mindsets. Of course, this

change includes the field of Organization Development, as this special issue attests.

Along with the energy that comes with creating the future, we are experiencing loss of parts of the present that we cherish. An incredible sense of grief and sadness accompanies the experience of diminishing numbers of birds, the decline of honeybees and insects, and the extinction of whole species. And incredible anguish accompanies the rise of strong men in opposition to power distribution, the continual attempts to prop up the old world consumerism and GNP growth, and violence as peoples rise to throw off historic oppressions.

new cycle of existence. Fire is closely associated with Shiva, symbolizing disintegration, light and purification as part of the cycle. Also known as "Lord of the Dance," Shiva is typically portrayed with one foot on the head of a demon of ignorance and the other foot raised in calm balance. The face is tranquil and faces directly ahead with a third eye of knowledge and wisdom. How can we develop this stance to guide our actions?

Continual affirmation of our highest aspirations and greatest potential—individually, collectively—is core to our work as purposeful transformation agents.

Continual affirmation of our highest aspirations and greatest potential—individually, collectively—is core to our work as purposeful transformation agents. A holistic approach that fully involves self and internal evolution, as well as the other and external, is a necessary part of transformation agents' lives. We must continually connect with the many aspects of nature and search deeply for interpersonal emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual resonance in order to live into our highest potential.

What Kubler-Ross (2009) described for individuals on a personal level as the five stages of death and dying, is what we are experiencing on a civilization level. Different people, organizations, communities and even industries can be seen in various stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance of our great transformation. The 26 COPs of climate change negotiations can be seen as stages of this process. However, the acceptance of death raises the ultimate question about rebirth. *Can our transformation be seen as a process of joyous recreation?*

We might hold the Hindu deity Shiva as the quintessential transformation agent. Known as "The Destroyer," Shiva extinguishes ignorance, desires, evil, negative natures and relationships, attachments, and impurities. Shiva is also known as "The Creator," opening the world to rebirth, since the destruction creates the possibility of evolution into a

A holistic approach that fully involves self and internal evolution, as well as the other and external, is a necessary part of transformation agents' lives. We must continually connect with the many aspects of nature and search deeply for interpersonal emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual resonance in order to live into our highest potential.

Implications of Proposition 5 for Practitioners: Actively attend to the emotional-mental-spiritual health of yourself and those you work with. Acknowledge the difficulty and pain that is associated with transformation. Recognize the scale and complexity with patience and persistence. Keep your highest aspirations central, and continually renew the spirit of joyous recreation! You will find your own paths to this; ours include connecting with nature, music, Buddhism, chanting, and meditation.

Conclusion

The processes of transformation that we are speaking about here and in Bounce Beyond take place on multiple levels and in many ways. We certainly are oriented to bringing about systemic changes at the community and global levels, particularly around how economics is understood and practiced. What is less obvious are the personal changes that are needed. System change and quantum theory involve recognizing that you are, and I am, part of the system to be transformed, and that the transformation is as much personal as organizational or institutional and that, as O'Brien (2020) says "we matter more than we think." Learning to work collaboratively in teams with others around complex and sometimes conflictual issues is critical. The world humans have constructed, particularly in the so-called developed nations, has clearly exposed perversities and the Covid-19 pandemic only highlighted the urgency of change. We must audaciously, yet humbly, strive for our much higher potential through both personal and system transformation.

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Steve Waddell: Responding to the 21st century's enormous global challenges and realizing its unsurpassed opportunities require *transformation* in ways of acting and organizing. For the past 35 years Steve has been supporting this through community organizing, consultations, education, research, and personal leadership. He is currently Lead Steward of *Bounce Beyond*, supporting initiatives developing a new, emerging economic paradigm. Dozens of publications include the books *Societal Learning and Change: Innovation with Multi-Stakeholder Strategies* (2005); *Global Action Networks: Creating our future together* (2011); *Change for the Audacious: A doers' guide to large systems change for a flourishing future* (2016). Steve has a PhD in sociology and an MBA, and is a Canadian-American living in Boston with his husband. He can be reached at *swaddell@bouncebeyond.global*.

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Putting Life-Centered Design into the Heart of Organizational Development

24 Principles to Inform OD Practice

By Bruce Mau

Abstract

In our era of The Crisis Stack, where our global community faces a confluence of interconnected problems that are taking place simultaneously, we have a great opportunity before us to change practically everything we do.

Building upon my past 30 years of work with businesses and organizations on a broad spectrum of transformation projects, I offer 24 design-inspired principles that can inform the field of Organization Development. I invite every OD practitioner to reimagine their role as co-designers of life-centric organizational systems such that we might create a world of abundance and equity for all.

Keywords: Design OD, Crisis Stack, Designing Massive Change

"Every thing, and every individual, emerges, evolves and passes away by incorporating, and being incorporated into other emerging, evolving or disintegrating structures that surround and suffuse it. Indeed, incorporation might be the name of the new primary logic of creation and innovation in our late modern world."
—*Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter*
ZONE 6: Incorporations, 1992

Today we are experiencing a global climate and environmental crisis, and according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we have about ten years to fundamentally change our behavior, which is really an unprecedented challenge. On top of that, we have a crisis of racial justice, and on top of that we still have the global pandemic. At the same time, we also have a food insecurity crisis and a crisis of governance, as well as untold local conflicts and challenges.

These problems add up to what I call The Crisis Stack—a confluence of interconnected problems that are taking place simultaneously. For most of history, we had the luxury to solve one problem at a time. We isolated problems as discrete objects and then designed solutions that perfectly met a singular need, while ignoring the consequences of our inventions. If we didn't ignore the consequences, we called them "externalities" and pushed them aside. *"That is not our problem and not our business,"* we said, *"so, we don't have to solve it."*

The simultaneity of our current challenges is a new condition that brings a new set of higher order problems. The old method of responding to a singular threat won't work with the current Crisis Stack. A solution that addresses just one of the many challenges we face and pushes aside the implications for the other challenges, will fail. As we've learned from the legacy of more than a century's worth

of human inventiveness, that approach may actually make things much worse in the long run.

The End of Externalities

Human-centered design has been the dominant, practically unchallenged, innovation process of our era. It's how we respond to the world's problems, needs and opportunities, and it's based on a narrative that humans are at the center of the universe and that we have control— "dominion"—over the natural world. In this world view, our highest purpose is to make life better for humans. This thinking is not only unsustainable, it's false. Humans are a part of an ecosystem that sustains all life on the planet; we're just one of many forms of life.

To design our collective future for the benefit of the living world, we must replace a short-term, human-centered design approach with ways of thinking and doing that put all of life at the center. What if this focus became the overarching frame for all of Organization Development (OD)? Imagine how your work as an OD practitioner might evolve if you embraced a life-centered approach that focused on the designing of systems, not discrete objects, where everything is connected to our planet's ecosystem, everything communicates openly and transparently. Such an approach takes into consideration the context of our problems and the impact of our solutions on the ecosystems that sustain us. In the living world—in reality—there

are no externalities. There is nothing outside of our ecology. Everything counts.

A shift to life-centric designing may feel like a new radical paradigm for the OD field, however it is far from new. Indigenous peoples use life-centered thinking and they have been doing it for thousands of years. Their cosmologies put humans in the context of all of life. I discovered this when I began working with a group in my hometown of Sudbury, Ontario, at the McEwen School of Architecture, the first new architecture school in Canada in over 40 years. It's a tri-cultural project with English, French, and Indigenous leaders. The school has its own forest as part of the campus, and in every studio class, students work with an Indigenous elder. One of the most beautiful projects the students take on is to build a birch bark canoe, under the direction of the Indigenous leader, in the way canoes have been built for thousands of years.

The students go into the forest and the elder helps them identify a birch tree that, in their words, is ready to give up its bark. They remove the bark in one piece and proceed to build their canoe. The genius is in the process, not just the object itself or its utility. When their canoe is complete, they have a smudging and naming ceremony and launch their canoe and experience the beauty of what they have crafted together. Most importantly, when their canoe is no longer fit for use, if it is broken or simply wears out, they need only return it to the forest floor, where it will take its place in the ecosystem and become fuel to support

the next generation of life. That brilliant, cyclical, perpetual movement is the promise of life-centered design. Imagine all OD practitioners thinking this way and supporting organizations to do the same. From encouraging closed-loop manufacturing processes, to designing buildings and even organizational systems with biomimicry principles (Benyus, 1997) in mind, OD can facilitate organizations aligning in harmony with the broader ecosystems within which they operate instead of trying to dominate them.

One of the things that holds us back from adopting a life-centered perspective is we disagree on what comprises the ecosystem, but it's actually very simple: everything is part of the ecosystem. For most businesses today, profit is at the center of their ecosystem. Profit is the primary indicator that the business is successful, that the corporation is doing things the right way, that everything is working as intended. Businesses don't typically consider, let alone plan, how they can work towards improving the welfare of the rest of life.

This singular focus on the bottom line fuels competitiveness around innovation. Short-term profits depend on individual companies protecting their proprietary IP: *"My strategic defense against my competitors is keeping my knowledge internal. I create a walled garden, and to the extent I keep others out, my business will thrive in the marketplace."* In this regard, the current business economy supports an innovation process disconnected from the ecosystem that sustains it. As a designer, I like to say where we fail to design, we design for failure. All over the world, we see evidence that by failing to design for our ecosystems, we are designing our ecosystems to fail.

Solving the complex challenges of the Crisis Stack demands changing old ways of thinking about and doing business. The private sector shares a common destiny with the rest of the planet. We need systems, not discrete objects. We need circular economies that connect businesses to the ecosystem and by implication to each other. We need collective action, and we need it urgently.

Business and industry are engines of innovation, drivers of change. These

> To design our collective future for the benefit of the living world, we must replace a short-term, human-centered design approach with ways of thinking and doing that put all of life at the center. What if this focus became the overarching frame for all of Organization Development (OD)? Imagine how your work as an OD practitioner might evolve if you embraced a life-centered approach that focused on the designing of systems, not discrete objects, where everything is connected to our planet's ecosystem, everything communicates openly and transparently.

enterprises and organizations are uniquely qualified and positioned to lead the movement to save the planet. They have the people, resources, organization, innovation cultures, and marketing expertise to drive change on a global scale. But one company going it alone, doing it their own way, speaking their own language won't be the answer to getting out of this alive.

Through collective action, business leaders can share knowledge with their competitors and accelerate progress. They can form alliances and partnerships across industries and with academic institutions and nonprofits to expand our collective IP towards developing innovative solutions to the Crisis Stack of global challenges. And fortunately, the field of OD is positioned perfectly to support businesses in doing this work. As a field that "works collaboratively with organizations and communities to develop their system-wide capacity for effectiveness and vitality"—what could be more effective and vital than helping organizations redesign themselves to work within vs. against our ecosystems (Smendzuik-O'Brien & Gilpin-Jackson, 2021)? With its core principles and fundamental values[1] of holding a systems-orientation coupled with inquiry-based collaboration, the field of OD is primed to lead businesses in asking, "How might we reimagine and redesign our businesses not just within our own walls, but across our industries and sectors in such a way that we all collectively flourish?"

I don't underestimate how profound a change this is, nor how hard this transition will be. It's on a scale and at a speed never attempted or accomplished. Businesses won't be able to snap their fingers and announce, "Okay, we will remain a profitable enterprise by doing only what will benefit the planet and nothing that harms it." Some global, network changes in commerce, infrastructure and governance will take years, maybe decades. Years and decades that we don't have.

Understandably, people are skeptical. Do businesses and industries that have been doing damage to people and the planet for over a hundred years have the ambition or capacity to change how they do things? What will motivate them to take responsibility for our shared world? And how can they motivate others to follow their lead and change, because it will take everyone moving in the same direction to get where we have to go.

The Greatest Economic Opportunity in History

We're going to have to change practically everything we do: design new products, new manufacturing processes, new technologies, new jobs, and new ways of living and being in the world. The businesses and institutions that develop these innovations to benefit the world will be the ones that will thrive in the coming years.

The economic opportunities and profits are the key to inspiring and aligning the world's enterprises around working towards a better future for all of life. A networked approach that enables organizations to share IP, knowledge, data, and testing results will accelerate advances that individual organizations can leverage for profit.

There are already examples of businesses profitably engaging in the "mission economy." The unprecedented speed of the development of the Covid vaccine shows us what happens when IP is shared freely. When the coronavirus DNA was sequenced, the information was freely shared. In all, over 100 teams around the world took up the challenge and produced several different types of vaccine in record time.[2] Multiple pharmaceutical companies, institutions and alliances, not just one, are benefiting from the scientists' collective discoveries.

In the world of commerce, Elon Musk has made the biggest impact to date by demonstrating that the automotive industry can do well economically by doing good for the planet. Musk made electric vehicles appealing by designing something beautiful and in the process changed widespread, longstanding cultural biases. He didn't create the world's most valuable automotive brand (2021) by introducing an electric car with awesome technology that was clunky but affordable, or by scolding consumers to be more environmentally conscious; he introduced a car that was irresistible.

The rapid and explosive popularity of Tesla vehicles was all the proof that the industry needed. As other manufacturers bring new electric car concepts to market, prices drop and styles proliferate, assuring electric vehicles are appealing—and accessible—to growing numbers of consumers.

Other entrepreneurs and start-ups have achieved business success and positive impact by disrupting established companies and industries that damage the ecosystem, but global giants also have made enormous strides in creating positive change. Few brands have a global presence as pervasive as Coca-Cola's, but the fact that Coca-Cola is an Atlanta-based corporation with thousands of bottling partners, wholesalers and retailers in every country in the world makes transforming their entire business challenging.

Coca-Cola wanted to address the urgent problem of the billions of plastic bottles bearing their corporate logo that are dumped into the ecosystem every year, but the corporation couldn't mandate recycling to their franchised distributors. Coca-Cola engaged my studio to collaborate with them to create and activate a branded solution. Our "Live Positively"[3] platform was designed to spark collective action towards sustainability around the world. Through the Live Positively platform, we helped inspire and empower local distributors to join a powerful social movement. Coca-Cola were early innovators in systems design, so Live Positively quickly became about more than just recycling bottles, encompassing causes from water stewardship to women's entrepreneurship.

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1. https://www.odnetwork.org/page/what-is-od

2. More than 100 research teams around the world are taking aim at the virus from multiple angles." New York Times, *"A New Entry in the Race for a Coronavirus Vaccine: Hope, "May 1, 2020; Updated June 1, 2020*

3. For more details see: https://www.livepositively.com/coca-cola-recycling-a-second-life-for-each-bottle/

Figure 1. Bruce Mau's 24 Massive Change Design Principles (MC24)

One of the reasons I was inspired to work with Coca-Cola was that they are a truly global organization. For Coca-Cola, there are no externalities—everywhere is part of the Coca-Cola system. So I knew that they would need to solve the problems they were facing, and not simply dump them into some imaginary externality. And secondly, I knew that they were such global leaders that if they were part of a movement for a new positive, holistic definition of sustainable business, thousands of businesses would follow, which is exactly what has happened.

Design Can Help Save the World

Over the past 30 years, I've worked with businesses and organizations on a broad spectrum of transformation projects, ranging from designing sustainable carpets and organizing a university around purpose, from instilling a sense of pride in an entire nation to creating the world's first museum of biodiversity. People often ask me, how can we do this? How can we create change on this scale?

My studio developed an innovative process, so I knew we had guiding principles that informed our work. I realized

that if I could articulate those design principles and provide a way for people, especially non-designers, to understand and apply them, I could help anyone learn to design in this way and most importantly, advance the movement to sustainable life on the planet.

Over ten years, I reviewed and analyzed our studio's work and came up with 24 massive change principles that provide a mindset and toolkit that anyone can use to solve problems and create a positive impact on the world. And while the 24 principles (illustrated in *Figure 1*) are not designed to be applied as a linear system, the first one in my book, *MAU: MC24, Bruce Mau's 24 Principles for Designing Massive Change in your Life and Work* (2020), serves as the starting point for everything that comes afterward. It's simply: "First Inspire, Design is Leadership, Lead by Design."

This principle is based on the insight that inspiration drives change. We can't force people to change, but we can show them a future that's better than their past and inspire them to work together on the journey towards achieving our common goal. Inspiration is the primary way designers work: they have an ability to envision a

better future, show others what that future looks like, and inspire them to embrace the vision and engage in the movement to make the vision a reality.

How might these design principles inform your own work as a change leader with organizations?

We Can't Afford the Luxury of Cynicism

I believe the real story of our time is optimism. People working together, doing things to help others, giving the world the gift of invention and creativity and culture. We have evolved amazing ways to collaborate across continents and oceans, across cultures, language, and religions, and can apply our collective knowledge in ways that weren't possible in previous generations.

If you only read the news, it probably scares the living daylights out of you, and you might be right to conclude that we're past hope. But through my work on the Massive Change exhibit[4] and book (2004), a project that explored innovations and innovators around the world, I found fact-based evidence that people are working

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4. See: *https://www.massivechangenetwork.com*

together to make the world a better place, and by the most important indicators, life is better for more people now than it ever has been.

As designers—and I consider you as OD practitioners to be in part, organizational designers—we have the responsibility to bring optimism to the challenges we face. We cannot afford the luxury of cynicism. Cynicism is for others. Our job is to find possibility where others see only constraint. To find potential where others are blocked by conflict and crisis.

In fact, the most powerful argument for what the World Economic Forum calls the Great Reset[5] that is needed, and our ability to make the changes that we must and will make, is that everything we do today was designed to be this way. We designed everything. So, we can redesign everything. Today's Dialogic OD approaches remind us of this reality, that our human systems are socially constructed, that every interaction and conversation is an opportunity to create change (Bushe & Marshak, 2015).

Look around you. You live a designed life. The organizations with which you work are designed organizations. They may be poorly designed. They may be haphazardly designed. They may still be based on all sorts of false externalities. They may be destroying the very ecosystems that sustain you. But make no mistake—they are designed to be that way. If they are leaving a trail of ecological carnage, social wreckage, or toxic legacy in the name of short-term profits, that is the design that we collectively said yes to. Sometimes deliberately and cynically, but in many cases

Bruce Mau: For over 30 years, designer, author, educator and artist Bruce Mau has collaborated on a broad spectrum of innovative projects with global brands and companies, leading organizations, heads of state, and renowned artists. Among the awards he's been honored to receive are the Cooper Hewitt Design Mind Award; Philadelphia Museum of Art Collab Design Excellence Award; and AIGA Gold Medal in communication design. Mau became an international figure with the publication of his landmark *S, M, L, XL,* designed and co-authored with Rem Koolhaas. He founded the Institute without Boundaries, a purpose-driven postgraduate design program at George Brown College in Toronto, and it is there that he and his students co-created the groundbreaking exhibition and best-selling book, *Massive Change*. In his most recent book, *Mau: MC24—Bruce's Mau's 24 Principles for Designing Massive Change in Your Life and Work,* he offers a mindset and toolkit that anyone can use to create positive impact and sustainable change at any scale. He is co-founder and CEO of Massive Change Network, a holistic design collective based in Chicago, and Innovator in Residence at Freeman Company, the global leader in events services. He can be reached at *bmau@ massivechangenetwork.com.*

unconsciously, incrementally, mindlessly, as "we biggered our business and biggered our loads," in the words of Theodor Geisel.

To confront and overcome the Crisis Stack, to redesign our businesses and institutions, we need to rethink and redesign everything—mindfully, deliberately, holistically—in the context of the ecosystems that sustain us, at a higher order of complexity so that the outcomes are not only profits, but a thriving, living world of abundance and equity. Fortunately, we have the design method to do it.

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