Organization Development for Social Change
by
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February 2004
Working Paper No. 25

This paper can be downloaded without charge from the Social Science Research Network
Electronic Paper Collection: http://ssrn.com/abstract=622244

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ABSTRACT

The field of organization development (OD) has emerged from efforts to improve the performance of organizations, largely in the for-profit sector but more recently in the public and not-for-profit sectors as well. This paper examines how OD concepts and tools can be used to solve problems and foster constructive change at the societal level as well. It examines four areas in which OD can make such contributions: (1) strengthening social change-focused organizations, (2) scaling up the impacts of such agencies, (3) creating new inter-organizational systems, and (4) changing contexts that shape the action of actors strategic to social change. It discusses examples and the kinds of change agent roles and interventions that are important for each. Finally, it discusses some implications for organization development intervention, practitioners, and the field at large.

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Organization development (OD) activity has typically focused on improving internal organizational dynamics and their impacts on organizational performance. Organization theorists have for decades looked at how external contexts shape organizational dynamics and performance, and how organizations can deal effectively with those contextual forces (e.g., Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; (Nadler, Gerstein, Shaw & Associates, 1992)). But they have paid less attention to how external contexts (and for our purposes here, social problems and issues), are themselves affected by organizational activities.

This paper focuses on how OD concepts and tools can be used for purposes of solving social problems and catalyzing constructive social changes. Fifteen years ago two of us grappled with some of these issues as we worked with organizations that were committed to solving social, economic and political development problems (Brown & Covey, 1987). We found that work with those agencies called for diagnosis and interventions that varied substantially from existing OD theory and practice. This paper extends that analysis.

The external context for many organizations has shifted dramatically over the last fifteen years. Politically the world has changed from the bipolar world of the Cold War to one now teetering between a US hegemony or a more multipolar, pluralistic, regional international system (Nye & Donohue, 2000). The emergence of global markets has produced international competition, rapid growth in some countries, and mammoth increases in differences between the rich and the poor (World Bank, 2000; Stiglitz, 2002). The enormous expansion in communications and travel has encouraged both a shared global culture and increased concern with preserving local cultures (Steger, 2004). Ecological research has produced increasing recognition of the ecological limits to growth, but not much political consensus on how to deal equitably with those limits (Goodland,

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Daly & Serafy, 1992). The problems posed by technological change and expanding globalization have overwhelmed many of the organizational and institutional arrangements currently in place, creating intense demand for inventing and reinventing systems that are better equipped to cope with emerging complexities (Social Learning Group, 2001; Rischard, 2002). These events have created many opportunities for applying the insights of OD and other applied behavioral sciences to a variety of social and institutional change initiatives.

In the last two decades the authors have worked with dozens of agencies concerned with social problem-solving and social transformation, including international development agencies (like the World Bank or USAID), nonprofit, nongovernmental development agencies, environmental advocacy networks, transnational policy advocacy coalitions, and intersectoral partnerships concerned with intransigent social problems. Over that time we have been consistently engaged in work on large scale social problem solving and transformation, but our roles have varied from being external organizational development consultants, to third-party facilitators for interorganizational and intersectoral conflict management, to organizers of social learning networks, to activists in transnational advocacy coalitions. We worked together for more than a decade at the Institute for Development Research (IDR), a nonprofit, nongovernmental think tank that provided organizational research and consulting support to cause-oriented civil society organizations in North America, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and in transnational contexts. We have continued those streams of work in our current organizations, and those activities have offered unique opportunities to explore the relevance of OD work to social change initiatives.

The next section briefly offers some conceptual background for OD in the service of social change, reviewing some of the elements of OD as it is currently understood. Then we turn to discussing and illustrating four leverage points at which OD may contribute to social change initiatives: (1) strengthening organizations committed to social change, (2) scaling up the impacts of successful social change organizations, (3) creating new systems of organizations for societal purposes, and (4) changing the contexts that influence strategic

actors in social change processes. We will illustrate these leverage points with cases from our experience and briefly discuss the kinds of interventions and change agent roles that emerge as critical. The final section will articulate some emerging lessons about OD for social change.

OD and Social Change: Concepts

What is "social change"? Obviously many kinds of change fall under the general term, including the rise of international terrorism, regime changes in Iraq, economic development in Thailand, democratization in South Africa, and women's liberation in the United States. At a minimum, social changes alter the structures, processes and outcomes of domains larger than single organizations in ways that persist over time. Examples range from enhancing the capacities of a community to manage its resources, to altering national policies and practices to encourage more democratic participation in governance, or to reshaping the institutions and assumptions of international trade to level the playing field for developing country producers.

Our work has focused on organizations concerned with poverty alleviation, human rights and democratization, and ecological sustainability, so "social change" in this chapter refers particularly to sustainable improvements in the lives and prospects of impoverished and marginalized groups. We have been particularly involved in efforts to enhance the opportunities and choices facing poor populations, increase the responsiveness of government, business and civil society to citizens, and foster inclusive, sustainable, rights-based development.

Organizations are omnipresent actors in most societies today, critical to ongoing societal operations as well as pivotal actors in social problem solving and transformation. Some organizations, like Amnesty International or Friends of the Earth, are organized around social change or problem-solving missions, and we will refer to them as social change organizations. Other agencies are critical to various forms of social change, though not

focused on change by their missions. The World Trade Organization and the US Congress are strategic actors in the social changes underway in many developing countries, though those changes are relatively peripheral concerns to those agencies. Still others have missions that position them to be either catalysts for change or bulwarks for stability: The World Bank, for example, is seen as a force for alleviating poverty or a major contributor to immiserating the poor, depending on your perspective. So understanding organizations and intervening to change their behavior is potentially an important resource for social change initiatives.

How does OD become relevant to social change processes? We will focus here on four leverage points at which OD has been useful in our experience. First, we will look at OD to improve the functioning of social change organizations whose missions emphasize producing sustainable improvements for marginalized groups. OD work with such organizations resembles work with many organizations whose missions require accomplishment of complex tasks. Second, we will discuss the use of OD in increasing or "scaling up" the impacts of social change organizations. Scaling up sometimes involves organizational growth – an area to which OD may be highly relevant. Scaling up may also involve more complex initiatives, which call for substantial extensions of OD theory and practice. Third, we will consider the utility of OD for creating new systems that can solve problems or enable social changes beyond the capacities of existing organizational and institutional arrangements. Finally, we will examine how OD can influence the contexts-- and thereby the activities—of agencies that are critical to social changes. These different leverage points may pose different challenges to organization development interventions and change agents.

There is considerable agreement on general families of interventions that OD practitioners use to help organizations (See Cummings &Worley, 2001; French and Bell, 1999). Those intervention families include:
  - work on human and organizational processes (such as process consultation, teambuilding or conflict management),

- redesigning technical and structural arrangements (such as work design, business process redesign, or organization redesign),

- developing human resources (such as training, building performance appraisal systems or reward systems, or coaching leaders), and

- organization-wide interventions (e.g., future search conferences, organizational confrontation meetings, or large-group strategic planning).

We will examine examples in the next section of the kinds of interventions that appear to be critical to work with social change organizations, in part to see what families are particularly important and in part to identify interventions that are different from those common in present OD theory and practice.

There is also considerable agreement about the kinds of <u>change agent skills</u> needed for competence by current OD practitioners. Although early OD consultants tended to focus on being facilitators of OD processes rather than experts on the substance of organizational change (French & Bell, 1999: 257-259), over the last several decades OD roles have expanded from relatively non-directive facilitators and process consultants to become experts on designing and facilitating processes for teambuilding or future search conferences or substantive resources on organization design, performance appraisal systems, or business process redesign. Distilling several analyses of "core competencies" and "foundation competencies", (Cummings & Worley, 2001) concluded that OD change agents need four sets of skills:

- intrapersonal skills that enable ongoing learning and effectiveness in ambiguous situations,

- interpersonal skills that allow effective relationships and trust development with individuals and groups in organizations,

- general consultation skills that enable effective entry, diagnosis, intervention, and assessments of organizations, and

- organization development theory that allows them to identify and use a range of OD tools and interventions (Cummings & Worley, 2001: 46-50).

We will look at our examples to identify how this list may have to be amended for work with social change initiatives.

Leverage Points for OD for Social Change

This section offers brief descriptions of OD work with initiatives to catalyze social change. In each case we provide some background on the social change leverage points and briefly describe some illustrative cases. Then we explore the sorts of interventions and change agent skills that in our experience have been critical for that form of social change initiative. The leverage points, as presented here, move from focusing on internal organization dynamics, a perspective that is common to much of OD, to focusing on multiple organizations and on contextual forces that shape the actions of other agencies-- perspectives much less common to existing OD.

Strengthening Social Change Organizations

Organizations that are focused on social change missions and strategies can sometimes benefit from OD assistance, just like the businesses, government agencies, hospitals, and other agencies that use OD consultants. Our earlier work suggested that OD had much to offer social change and development organizations, even though some of their attributes might call for extensions of the existing OD paradigm. We found, for example, that their organization around social visions and their responsiveness to diverse constituencies made social change organizations particularly vulnerable to ideological conflicts (Brown & Covey, 1987; Brown & Brown, 1983).

In the last decade there has been an explosion of work on the organization and management of social change organizations (Edwards & Fowler, 2002; Fowler, 1997) (e.g., Human and Zaimann, 1995; (Ebrahim, 2003; James, 2001); (Chadha, Jagadananda & Lal, 2003), much of it emphasizing the special challenges of strengthening social change actors for carrying out their work. We focus here on the challenges of everyday operation. Two examples illustrate some of the issues that arise for international organizations committed to fostering sustainable improvements in local choices and capacities in the developing world.

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Authority and Conflict at the International Relief and Development Agency (IRDA).
IRDA mobilizes resources in the US to support grassroots development projects in the
developing world, and it is widely recognized for innovative efforts to foster local
self-reliance and democratic development. Its values and mission attract many young
activists committed to ending poverty and oppression – but those staff also resist
deviations from participatory democracy in organizational decision-making. In the late
1980s internal conflicts between IRDA departments and levels began to undermine its
operational capacity, and the Board asked an OD consulting team to help diagnose and
manage tensions over racial and ideological differences as well as the use of authority.
After a careful entry process with the Board, management, and the staff, the consulting
team developed a diagnostic report from interviews and questionnaires that linked
conflicts to values and external relations, and organized a series of feedback meetings.
Stormy discussions of the report increased understanding of the perspectives of
different parties and the impacts of conflict on mission attainment, but produced few
resolutions. In subsequent months, however, the intensity of conflicts declined. The
agency continued to work with diverse constituents to support initiatives to enhance
local self-reliance and collective action in the field.

Headquarters-Field Tensions at the International Child Sponsorship Agency (ICSA).
ICSA delivers a variety of services to enhance the welfare of children in developing
countries with support from individual sponsors in industrialized countries. For many
years it encouraged entrepreneurial leadership in field offices to develop local
programs, but the proliferation of programs and activities became very difficult to
control. A new CEO from the business sector was charged with improving
Headquarters control over resources and programs, and he instituted new accounting
and information systems. While staff agreed that controls were important, they resisted
what they saw as extreme and heavy-handed imposition of new roles. Increasing
tensions between headquarters and the field and turnover of key staff led headquarters
to commission a study of the situation. Organizational diagnosis revealed differences
between headquarters and field values that were exacerbated by the new "business-
oriented" approach. Over the next several years the OD project enabled strategy

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formulation with significant field involvement, an organization design that devolved much decision-making to regional and country offices, efforts to build a less "numbers-oriented" culture, and major shifts in leadership and leadership styles. Staff saw the changes as redressing an imbalance that favored fundraising over program development, and so enabled more field influence over strategy and operations. ICSA continued to explore expanding its resources without compromising its programs for fostering local development.

These two cases describe organizations whose missions demand that they foster local capacities and programs for changing economic, social and political contexts to benefit poor and marginalized communities. Four kinds of interventions have been helpful in working with these and other such organizations.

First, we have found that social change and development organizations often are clearer about their missions and their program activities than they are about the strategies that link them. External consultants or change agents can assist them in clarifying links between mission and organizational activities so the relevance of immediate challenges can be understood in terms of larger organizational values. It is easy in the press of carrying out high-stress, under-resourced programs for staff to lose sight of how the work of different parts of the organization contributes to shared goals. At IRDA, for example, helping all the parties to recognize how much their conflicts were counter-productive to the agency's mission, on which they largely agreed, was important to reducing tensions. Recognizing the importance of both developing programs and industrialized country fundraising and balancing local and central decision-making were central to managing tensions among headquarters and field at ISCA. Providing strategic perspective can be a critical intervention in helping committed staff transcend the tensions of value-laden conflicts over organizational changes.

In both cases, the consultants at the outset had to deal with intense internal conflicts, in which task differences were complicated by perceived differences in values and ideologies that encouraged "holy wars" among the parties. Managing conflict over

fundamental power and value differences is often critical to work with social change organizations. What appear to be small differences to outsiders become crucial when they are infused with ideological meaning. At IRDA, for example, conflicts between Board, management and staff were complicated by perceptions of arbitrary and illegitimate use of power that catalyzed intense anger and mistrust. From the outset the credibility of the consultants was constantly tested by all the parties. Building links and understanding of common values across levels was a central concern. At ISCA a diagnostic survey demonstrated that field and headquarters staff shared similar values, but perceived that headquarters policies favored accountability to donors over accountability to beneficiaries. The consultants focused particularly on creating conditions where previously unvoiced values and concerns could be heard, and the diagnostic process provided the bases for ongoing work to improve headquarters-field relations. While conflict management is an important intervention in many organizations, it is particularly central to organizations that are mobilized around values and visions and that deal with constituencies whose interests are often in conflict with each other.

Few social change organizations place a high value on organization and management, at least until the need for better use of resources becomes overwhelmingly important. A third intervention that is often important to social change organizations is designing complex organizational architectures. Once the agency is clear about its strategy, help in defining and fitting together needed organizational tasks, formal structures and systems, informal arrangements, and human resources can be a major contribution. In IRDA, for example, management needed ideas for creating organizational architecture that recognized Board and management authority while preserving staff commitments to participation. Exploration of existing assumptions and alternatives consistent with the shared mission required considerable external help. At ISCA efforts to impose more controls from headquarters had generated strong resistance from and turnover of key staff in the field. Neither the expertise nor the credibility was available inside the organization to define or implement needed design changes. So both the knowledge and the credibility to facilitate the development of new architectures may be central contributions of external OD resources.

Finally, in many social change organizations OD consultants may be asked to provide coaching to leaders who have little preparation for the organizational challenges they face. Some leaders of social change organizations have little relevant management experience or training. The chief executive of IRDA, for example, was a consultant to development projects and had little experience with managing a large dispersed organization with an activist board and a unionized staff. He used outside OD support to think about setting limits on both Board and staff interference in management decisions. The chief executive of ISCA, on the other hand, had been a senior manager in large business organizations–but was new to social change organizations with staffs accustomed to leadership based on values and collegial decision-making. Consulting to ISCA involved helping the CEO understand the challenges of managing in values-based organizations.

The problems of social change organizations may demand change agent skills that are part of the normal OD repertoire of intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and consulting skills—and others that are less common. For example, work with social change agencies often calls on change agents to have organizational strategist skills for helping the organization understand the links between its mission and day-to-day activities. While strategist skills may be included in the repertoires of many OD consultants, consultants with business or government experience may be less sophisticated about how organizational activities can catalyze social change—and such linkages are central to managing the challenges facing social change organizations.

While conflict management is important in many organizations, it is less common for OD consultants to participate (wittingly) in struggles over fundamental authority relations. In both the IRDA and ISCA cases, the change agents were hired to be third parties to escalated conflicts between management and staff. So skills as a mediator of organizational authority relations can be critical to effective work in social change organizations. In carrying out this work, strategic perspective on the mission of the organization may be crucial as a basis from which to deal with the various parties.

The challenges of dealing with architectures for social change organizations may also expand the usual OD skills for structure and technical design. In addition to the usual challenges of organizing complex activities, social change organizations must coordinate across the demands of external constituencies whose diverse interests and expectations are reflected in internal subunits of the agency. So the role of OD in social change organizations may require that the consultant be an <u>architect of external relations</u> as well as authority relations. Improving headquarters-field relations at ICSA, for example, depended on understanding the interests of donors in industrialized countries as well as developing country communities and civil society organizations. So the perspective required of OD consultants can expand beyond the organizational boundaries to take in other actors in social change processes.

In spite of these differences, many of the usual roles of OD consultants can be helpful in social change organizations. Indeed, counseling leaders in basic management approaches may draw heavily on ideas and tools developed in other kinds of organizations. So being a <u>leadership consultant</u> to social change organizations on issues that come up in the normal course of strategy implementation and program delivery is similar to OD in other settings. Of coursing coaching leaders on the social change aspects of the organization's work may be a different story. In addition, when social change agencies seek to expand their social change impacts after initial successes, they may need different kinds of support and the challenges to change agents may escalate.

Scaling Up Social Change Impacts

Social change organizations whose initiatives succeed as pilot programs often seek to scale up their impacts. Scaling up is often much more complicated that it seems, and examinations of expanding impacts suggest that success requires considerable sophistication (e.g., (Rondinelli, 1983). Experience with scaling up development initiatives suggests several approaches: expanding coverage to affect more people, expanding functions to include more services or issues, packaging changes as easily diffused and adopted approaches, training others to deliver similar services, spinning off

new organizations, or building alliances to influence government agencies to expand program impacts (Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Uvin, 1995). While the strategies involved are quite different, they all have organizational implications for the agency involved and so might benefit from OD support.

While expanding coverage and range of functions are strategies for growth and impact quite common in other sectors, often a more important strategy for social change initiatives is an indirect approach that influences other actors, through alliances, training, or policy changes, without necessarily growing the original organization in size or resources (Uvin, Jain & Brown, 2000). OD consultants could be assets in implementing such indirect strategies even when their long-term effect is to shrink the organization. Examples of OD initiatives to help social change organizations expand their impacts include:

Expanding a Support Organization Network in India. The Indian NGO Support Organization (INSO) began in the early 1980s to provide training, research, consulting and other support to nongovernmental development organizations (NGOs) in many regions of India, INSO believed that such support was critical to strengthening grassroots and community-based organizations to carry out their own social change agendas. Although such services were an innovation with no obvious market appeal at the start, within five years, demand exploded. INSO came under pressure to provide training and capacity-building programs in more languages and in more regions. After much discussion of the alternatives, INSO created a network of independent support organizations by spinning off new organizations, recruiting existing agencies with compatible philosophies and values, and acting as the center of a growing "family" of regional support organizations. INSO built network capacities by using support from international partners to provide advanced training in OD, strategic thinking, and action research to the network as well as strategic consultation to INSO itself. The resulting support organization network has been playing a catalytic role in decentralizing governance to local actors and in integrating women and marginalized groups into those governance processes. So the Support Organization Network has become a national resource for enabling wider participation in local governance and development work.

Reorganizing IRDA for Transnational Policy Influence. The International Relief and Development Agency recognized in the late 1990s that significant and sustainable poverty-alleviation would require more than success in the local self-reliance projects it had been funding for years. Many intransigent local poverty problems had deep roots, such as unfair terms of international trade, which could not be easily influenced at the local level. In cooperation with a "family" of like-minded organizations from other countries, IRDA launched international policy campaigns to change the terms of international trade, such as a multifaceted campaign to better markets for small coffee producers. This shift of strategy entails a lot of organizational change and capacity-building: IRDA has used outside help to develop its new strategy, to build its capacity for policy campaigns, and to redesign and implement the architecture needed to mount campaigns in cooperation with international allies while continuing to support the grassroots projects. IRDA is now implementing a plan developed with outside resources, and is already demonstrating initial results from global campaigns. The changes in the agency position it to play a substantially enlarged transnational role in shaping policy and regulations for fairer trade.

Scaling up often involves quite fundamental changes in organizational strategy and architecture. For example, scaling up requires clarifying social change theories that underlie organizational strategies. Decisions to scale up by expanding coverage or functions may have largely organizational consequences, but scaling up by engaging other actors – like training staff of other organizations, or advocating for policy changes, or encouraging government agencies to adopt new programs – may require sophisticated knowledge about the other actors, their interests and incentives, and the forces that will resist or support expanding impacts. INSO, for example, used consulting help to decide that a network of autonomous support organizations was more appropriate to responding to different regions that an expanded central organization. IRDA used consulting help to identify alternative approaches to expanding their impacts before opting to become a transnational campaign agency. Such consultations may provide critiques of existing

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theories of social change, alternatives to the currently dominant ideas, and suggestions about the implications of different choices.

Most strategies for scaling up impacts require <u>designing architectures for expanding impact</u>. Some scaling up approaches involve organizational growth to carry out larger and more complex operations—concerns for which OD theory and practice has a great deal to offer. Thus INSO's expansion required reorganizing the parent organization to provide resources and informational support to its emerging partners, advanced programs to enhance network capacities, and coordination of activities across the network. Other scaling up strategies may involve indirect expansion by diffusing innovations, affecting government policies, or training other agencies to undertake similar initiatives. Expanding impacts by building policy advocacy coalitions at IRDA required reorganizing to coordinate new functions like policy analysis and influence activities across regions and departments as well as learning to work within a multinational federation of allies. It also required building IRDA's capacity to participate in larger coalitions and to effectively engage policy-maker targets. So internal changes to implement scaling up strategies may require interventions to support organizational growth or enable indirect impacts.

Finally consultants involved in expanding social change initiatives by indirect means almost certainly will be called on to help with <u>conceiving and building external relations</u>. Expanding external relations may involve disseminating effective programs, spinning off new organizations, engaging with key actors in other sectors or facilitating coalition building for collective action. INSO created a series of new organizations and built training programs to be used by many other agencies, and IRDA joined global coalitions to carry out transnational campaigns. Building external alliances is an area that can draw on interventions from the conflict management, intergroup relations, and team-building technologies of OD, but their employment in the context of external alliances is much less common as an OD intervention in more traditional contexts.

These interventions in turn suggest change agent roles and skills that are not included in the personal, interpersonal, organizational and consulting skills of traditional OD. When

designing scaling up strategies, consultants may be asked to take on the role of <u>social change theorist</u> who can help the agency conceptualize alternative ways to expand its social impacts. Familiarity with organizational change theory is not the same as familiarity with social change theory. Social change theories, for example, require understanding large-scale political and social dynamics that are outside the training of many OD consultants. The social change theorist role calls on change agents to expand their horizons well beyond the viability of particular organizations.

Many OD consultants are quite familiar with the challenges of being an organization architect, and the challenges of changing organizational systems in response to strategic shifts has drawn a good deal of attention. On the other hand, they are often less familiar with the strategic and organizational challenges associated with being a dissemination designer, particularly when those challenges may involve subordinating the organization to the larger change process and the concerns of many different stakeholders. INSO's creation of the support organization network in India involved sharing resources and building the capacities of autonomous organizations, which might take advantage of INSO's resources without returning much. The implementation of IRDA's commitment to transnational policy campaigns involved surrendering organizational autonomy to transnational alliances, and diverted resources from local initiatives to transnational campaigns whose value was often very controversial.

The role of <u>facilitator of external relations</u> can create significant tensions for consultants accustomed to serving a single client. Many approaches to scaling up social impacts involve relations with external actors, and that shift is particularly important for indirect scaling up. Being an external relations facilitator calls for the change agent to be aware of and effective in working with external actors who are relevant to the social change agenda—again requiring a larger-system perspective on the organization and its work. Note that this role can dilute the change agent's relationship with the original client, since facilitating external relations often calls for the facilitator to be relatively neutral among the parties – particularly if the strategy involves creating multi-organizational systems like alliances or coalitions.

Scaling up impacts, in short, can call for change agent interventions and roles that are quite different from those demanded by "ordinary" OD with social change organizations. In such circumstances the focus of the work shifts in significant ways from dynamics and issues internal to the agency to issues encountered in interaction with key elements of the larger context that the organization seeks to transform.

Creating New Systems of Organizations

Some social change objectives require the invention of new systems that organize a variety of actors who can together amass the necessary perspectives, resources, and capacities. OD perspectives, skills and consultants can be very helpful in creating, leading and maintaining multi-actor systems for social change initiatives. Although there has been some attention to the possibilities of building interorganizational systems in the OD literature (e.g., Trist, 1983; Cummings, 1984; (Chisholm, 1998)), there has been more attention to these possibilities from students of negotiation and conflict management (e.g., (Gray, 1989; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987; Susskind, McKearnan & Thomas-Larmer, 1999)) or social development (e.g., Leach, 1995; (Brinkerhoff, 1999; Brinkerhoff, 2002; Brown & Ashman, 1996). Such initiatives can construct multi-organization agencies with resources and capacities well beyond those of single agencies—but they may also suffer from problems that transcend those of single agencies as well.

Examples of multi-organization agencies constructed across diverse and autonomous organizations to work on complex problems include:

Creating the Urban River Collaboration This alliance among city agencies, community groups, and business associations was created to foster the development and maintenance of a riverside park in a mid-sized U.S. city. Despite strong support from the current city government, decades of distrust among key actors made action on the plan unlikely without a major effort to build cooperation across the sectors. An external consultant, recommended by a national conservation nonprofit that was

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providing technical expertise on the park, conducted interviews with representatives of all the parties and then convened meetings over several months to address underlying issues such as lack of understanding the interests of parties, concerns about hidden agendas, and unwillingness to entrust any party to "be in charge." Participants permitted the neutral consultant to facilitate a series of conversations and decisions, and that process built greater trust, a shared mission and work plan, and a joint fundraising plan. Despite these successes, the parties had difficulty creating an organization that could be efficient while balancing power among stakeholders. The consultant helped them generate shared criteria for a "good structure," and they then interviewed representatives of similar collaborative ventures across the country for input to designing a well-understood and widely-accepted structure. This process temporarily required leadership from the consultant and then shifted it back to group members when adequate trust developed. The intervention helped to reshape how member organizations enacted their roles in the city, and broke down barriers to cooperation among political adversaries.

Convening the International Forum for Capacity-Building (IFCB) to Reshape Aid. This network of African, Asian and Latin American development NGOs, international development NGOs, foundations, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies was created to enable multi-party dialogues on building the capacities of civil society actors in the developing world. It was launched by a coalition of developing country NGO leaders, who perceived that the available capacity-building support was largely serving the needs of international actors rather than its local recipients. Over a five year period the IFCB created studies of capacity-building practice and needs perceived by NGOs in the three regions, international NGOs, and donor agencies; organized global, regional and national conferences to discuss issues and negotiate improved approaches to capacity-building; pioneered processes for constructive multi-party dialogue among key actors; and generated case studies of particularly successful examples. The process reshaped conceptions of capacity building among the parties, fostered more active needs assessment by recipients, and catalyzed new perspectives and policies

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among donor agencies and suppliers of capacity-building support, including an expanded commitment to civil society capacity-building at USAID and the World Bank.

Building new systems of organizations calls for interventions that bring and hold agencies together in spite of costs to their autonomy and resources. While traditional OD starts from the assumption that there is an identifiable client--usually organizational leadership--work with new systems at the outset may have to focus on a vision or problem, since no client yet exists that can mobilize the right combination of resources to work on it. So a critical intervention may be <u>convening a client system</u> that has ownership and resources to achieve the vision or solve the problem. The Urban River Collaboration, for example, could not have come together without the intervention of a third party consultant seen as relatively credible and neutral with respect to the war that had blocked progress for years. While many people were aware of the problems surrounding capacity building for Southern NGOs, the initiative by Southern NGO leaders with OD skills made action possible by a very diverse group of actors.

Convening key parties to consider social change initiatives is one thing – getting them to agree on problem definitions, let alone action strategies, can be another. Keeping the right parties engaged in a new system depends on <u>building shared problem definitions and directions for action</u> in spite of diversity in perspectives, power, and interests. While parties to the Urban River Collaboration were willing to come together initially, the consultant played a crucial role in facilitating agreement on mission, work plan, and fundraising activities across the chasms that initially separated the parties. The IFCB used the relationships among the conveners to bring many actors together, and encouraged key actors to organize studies of stakeholder views that could be synthesized into action plans at an initial international conference. In both cases a great deal of preparatory work went into setting the stage for constructive engagement among parties who might easily have destroyed opportunities for collective action at their initial meetings.

Once the parties can agree on basic definitions of objectives and strategies, change agents may play central roles in the construction of organizational arrangements that will support

further joint work. Change agents can play pivotal roles in creating formal and informal interface organizations to support multi-organization action. The consultant to the Urban River Collaboration introduced the parties to previously unknown concepts of interorganizational collaboration, helped them generate criteria for assessing alternative structures, encouraged members to review alternatives used by other collaborations, and gradually shifted responsibility for leadership to Collaboration members. The founders of the IFCB created an international Steering Committee and regional networks to carry out its activities as well as a series of meetings at which the Forum could be assessed. In the interim between international meetings members focused on regional and national activities designed to increase the relevance of capacity-building interventions to their Southern NGO clients.

For these new organizational systems, the issue of creating new understanding and expanded alternatives for action was a central concern. Another key intervention by change agents was creating systems for network learning among people from diverse perspectives and experiences. The URC consultant played a central role in helping members invent and implement a learning process, in the process increasing trust and expanding perspectives while relocating collaborative leadership within its members. The IFCB founders and resource consultants explicitly commissioned multi-regional studies of key issues, like the capacities needed to build civil society alliances, and they also commissioned consultants to develop approaches to multi-stakeholder dialogues on capacity building issues. Results of these initiatives were disseminated through the IFCB website and conferences, enabling its far-flung membership as well as its Steering Committee to use them.

Creating new organizations calls for change agents to take on a number of roles beyond those envisioned by many OD practitioners. For example, the change agents in many of these initiatives acted as conveners and system entrepreneurs rather than external resources brought by already-organized clients. The founders of the IFCB in fact brought the various parties together and created an unprecedented multi-organization initiative. The Urban River Collective consultant created the conditions for a new system to be born out of the elements warring over the project. The roles of change agents in such circumstances are

tricky in part because no widely-acknowledged client exists – so creating a credible client is part of the work.

A major challenge for such change agents is to act as <u>third party mediators and system constructors.</u> People in these roles bind conflict and hold together parties who threaten to explode, rather than open up systems whose energies are blocked and suppressed. For such organizations building trust and information sharing can be central. For the URC, for example, distrust was rampant and the change agents had to build trust between change agent and members and among members. For the IFCB, the differences in perspectives and experiences that separated many Forum stakeholders were huge. They met the challenge of spanning those differences by creating a Steering Committee that included different perspectives and that met enough to develop mutual trust and shared norms to regulate potential tensions.

The importance of dealing with novel and evolving challenges calls on change agents' skills for acting as <u>catalysts of network learning processes</u>. That role demands both awareness of how to create the organizational contexts for ongoing learning and ability to keep learning oneself. It also requires the ability to synthesize shared understandings out competing views and mental models (Leach, 1995). The evolution of the Urban River Collaborative presented continuing learning challenges, and the consultant provided considerable support in creating ways to gather and deal constructively with new information. In this process the participants developed substantive knowledge and at the same time built capacity and contacts to develop knowledge in the future, a capacity that would not have developed had the consultant acceded to their initial request to generate the information himself. The IFCB sought to catalyze learning among its stakeholders and across local, national, regional and international levels by the network as a whole and by its members. It organized studies, commissioned conferences, fostered coalitions, and shared publications in this effort.

Creating new systems of organization is particularly appropriate to emerging visions and new understandings of intransigent problems. In some circumstances, however, the

relevant organizations already exist—but do not see themselves as potential actors in social problem-solving. In these circumstances, the resources of OD may be most useful in reshaping contexts that influence those actors.

Reshaping the Context of Strategic Agencies

We are interested here in OD work on contextual forces that influence strategic actors. In the previous three sections we focused on direct interventions with the strategic actors themselves. By contrast, here we focus on interventions with organizations that are part of the context of an agency that is strategic to social change. We have moved from a focus on the internal organizational dynamics common to much of OD to a focus on the external actors and forces that shape many of those internal dynamics.

So how can OD work with some organizations to influence others directly involved in a social change issue? One example is how the civil rights movement created the public opinion context that led the U.S. government to pass and enforce revolutionary civil rights legislation (Heifetz, 1994). Social movement theory has discussed in some detail the importance of organization building and resource management (e.g., Morris & Mueller, 1992; Tarrow, 1998) and organizations like the Center for Community Change and the Industrial Areas Foundation have worked to strengthen grassroots agencies to exert pressure on government actors. When agencies have been identified as strategic actors in social change (Khandwalla, 1988), OD change agents may strengthen external actors to create contextual demand for social change.

Examples of initiatives that have used organization building to change external contexts of important social development actors include:

> Promoting Participatory Development at the World Bank. The World Bank is widely
> recognized as a strategic actor in international development, because of its financial
> resources and its credibility as a source of development theory and practice. It has
> sought to alleviate poverty through loans and technical assistance to governments, but

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the resulting projects have seldom mobilized the energies and resources of poor populations and they often had little impact on long term poverty. Within the Bank reformers argued for a more participatory approach to mobilize grassroots groups in define and implement projects intended to serve them. Those internal initiatives were stimulated and reinforced by external campaigns to promote more participatory approaches. The Participation Committee of the NGO Working Group on the World Bank, for example, organized transnational networks of nongovernmental organizations to assess participation in existing participatory Bank projects. The campaign assessed Bank participatory experiments, monitored Bank initiatives to implement pro-participation policies, recruited universities, NGOs and other development agencies interested in participatory methods, and organized conferences with other international development agencies to share experiences and distill lessons for the future (Long, 2002). The campaign maintained ties with the internal reform groups to reinforce each other's efforts. Gradually Bank policies and practices evolved, often against entrenched resistance, toward more participatory approaches and more responsive institutional arrangements. Because of the Bank's prestige, its movement has also encouraged more participatory approaches in many other development agencies as well.

Fostering Responsive Education Systems in Mali. Decades of centralized one-party state control left the educational system in Mali plagued by lack of teachers, schools, books and educational materials, especially in the rural villages. Following the election of a reformist government in early 1990's, international assistance from donor agencies and international NGOs has been directed toward organizing grassroots groups to improve their schools and secure policies responsive to rural needs. Supported by NGOs, local parent-teacher associations (PTAs) have been reorganized, members have been elected by the community and trained to manage their school. The PTA assesses needs, sets priorities and accesses resources needed to improve the accessibility and quality of education for their children. To support and extend the gains made at the community level, the NGO facilitators have organized conferences to bring together PTA representatives from different villages under ground rules that

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fostered democratic dialogue and decision-making. As a result, newly-unified regional federations of the PTAs can speak to government agencies with one voice. The NGOs have also provided basic training in policy analysis and advocacy to enable the federations to interact with the Ministry of Education in policy formulation. Contextual forces at the level of local schools have fostered increasingly effective local governance and management of schools and at the level of national Ministry of Education has increased attention to the concerns of rural village schools and increased local influence in curriculum and expenditure decisions.

Building contextual pressure for change in a strategic agency calls for interventions that may be quite different from work inside that agency. While OD in organizations is often catalyzed by decisions and goals of top management, the choice to shape domain contexts grows out of <u>articulating compelling visions</u> for which it is possible to mobilize contextual resources and support. The NGO networks pressing the World Bank to become more participatory envisioned development initiatives characterized by local ownership and resources, sustainability based on local institutional commitment, and more attention to the concerns of grassroots populations. The Mali education initiative focused on a vision of an educational system responsive to the concerns of parents and students within the context of a more decentralized and democratic governance structure. These visions become the basis for defining desired changes contextual forces that might encourage them.

A second set of interventions for shaping external contexts is identifying organizations strategic to change, recognizing contextual forces that influence those agencies, and building initiatives that mobilize those forces. Organization development experience can provide some (but not all) of the ingredients to <u>building theories of contextual influence</u>. In the campaign to influence the World Bank, for example, both insiders and outsiders recognized that the Bank could be influenced by information and research. The civil society coalition developed a series of case studies of the Bank's efforts to implement participatory development, and organized workshops and conferences at which the lessons of those experiences could be discussed by representatives of the Bank and other development agencies. This initiative built on the expectation that Bank staff could be

influenced by evidence about participatory approaches used by various agencies and by peer pressure from those agencies. In Mali the creation of effective and democratic parent teacher associations and federations presented the Education Ministry at all levels with both carrots and sticks: the local associations could strengthen the positions of schools within communities and mobilize community support for their development, and they increasingly became an articulate and influential lobbying force.

A critical activity for creating contexts that support change is mobilizing unorganized constituents for collective action. Often constituencies with large stakes in the behavior of strategic agencies have very little influence because they are not organized to speak cohesively or coherently on the issues. Interventions that help actors with shared interests build capacity for collective action can make a huge difference in the extent to which contextual voices are heard. The existence of NGO networks developing systematic data about Bank projects and organizing highly visible events for sharing results created a setting for external voices being widely heard. Organizing regional federations and building capacities for policy analysis and advocacy in networks of parent-teacher associations created previously unavailable opportunities for voicing local perspectives to the Malian government. When key constituencies cannot make their voices heard, creating more voice can have a large impact on how issues are handled in the future.

A fourth related intervention is creating alliances to support reform by target institutions. In part these alliances are reflected in the development of constituency organization – but they may also involve linkages across sectors (e.g., connecting with interested business leaders and government officials), across levels (e.g., local, regional, national and international allies), or between outsiders and insiders in the target agencies. Alliances to influence World Bank policies, for example, drew on linkages to many national governments as well as civil society actors from local, national and international arenas. Reformers inside the Bank made large contributions to assessing the shortcomings of existing models, articulating alternatives, demonstrating the potentials of participation, summarizing available research, and defining ways the Bank might implement new priorities. The initiatives to strengthen parent-teacher roles in Malian education created

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alliances among national and international NGOs as well as local and regional parent-teacher associations and sympathetic government officials. Influencing and reinforcing change at strategic agencies may involve alliances at many stages – from framing existing problems, to articulating alternatives, to testing options, to assessing impacts.

The nature of OD skills and roles also appears to shift across different leverage points for social change. Efforts to change contextual forces, for example, are often carried out by alliances of change agents with different sets of skills. Where much of OD responds to clients in organizational leadership roles, social change initiatives may not have the resources to recruit consultants, and change agents may have to take more proactive roles in defining the issues and initial strategies. In crafting visions for alternative futures and mobilizing unorganized constituents, change agents may need "activist visionary" skills, grounded in their own values and commitments rather than in allegiance to existing organization or system interests. The creation of visions that challenge social problems may require going beyond the perspectives built into existing social arrangements and resource allocations. Thus the NGO Working Group took the initiative to press the World Bank to live up to its own statements about participatory development. The democratic vision espoused by the new government of Mali was more rhetoric than reality before the NGOs initiatives to build local PTAs created pressures for better local schools and later policy campaigns for Ministry of Education responsiveness to rural concerns.

Social change theorist skills are also critical to efforts to create contexts that press strategic actors act in new ways. External actors often do not understand how key agencies are influenced by their contexts. Assessing strategic organizations is a prelude to thinking about how contexts can be altered to foster desired change. Assessing the World Bank and the contextual factors that influence its choices for and against participatory development strategies calls for sophisticated understanding of international institutions and the politics that influence them. Similarly, understanding the Malian Ministry of Education and local schools calls for detailed knowledge about how contextual factors shape their activity. Extensive experience in OD may not prepare change agents for either the conceptual or the situational analyses needed.

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The mobilization of constituencies for collective action may call for organization building skills that are common among OD consultants, but organizing contextual forces to affect strategic target organizations may call for movement-building leadership that is not so common to many OD activities. Reforming World Bank approaches to development involved creating new alliances to produce new information and discourses. Similarly the resources to the parent-teacher associations and federations in Mali often took very active roles in assessing the capacities needed and how they might be developed. It is probably not an accident that both of these context-changing initiatives involved long-term alliances among actors with diverse resources and national backgrounds, and so mobilized a great deal of information and resources relevant to their interventions.

A fourth set of important change agent resources in many of these initiatives are skills in bridge building for long-term change. The change agents in context shaping initiatives may be pivotal to connecting alliances to supporters from other sectors, or other levels, or within the target institution. In the World Bank case the NGO Working Group on the World Bank built bridges that linked outside challengers to other bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies and to reformers within the Bank. In the Mali initiative, change agents from national and international NGOs helped PTAs engage government actors in ways that supported the emerging democratic process. Creating bridges that of understanding and support for change is central to the long-term sustainability of successful initiatives.

We have explored how OD interventions and roles may contribute to social change in four different ways. We turn now to implications for the field that emerge in looking across these different patterns.

Emerging Lessons: Organization Development for Social Change.

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We have argued that organization development strategies and tools may be relevant to promoting social change at four leverage points: (1) increasing the capacity of social change agencies to cope with organizational problems, (2) helping those agencies scale up their social change impacts, (3) creating new systems of organizations to achieve social results, and (4) changing the external contexts to influence agencies directly linked to such results. The first row of Table 1 summarizes the interventions and change agent skills described as central to existing practice by major texts in the field (Cummings & Worley, 2001; French & Bell, 1999). Subsequent rows summarize our discussion of the interventions and skills that appeared to be central to OD in social change initiatives at the different leverage points.

Table 1: OD Leverage Points, Interventions and Skills for Social Change.

Social Change Leverage Points	Common Interventions	Change Agent Skills
OD practice within organizations:	▪ Improving human and organizational processes ▪ Improving technical and structural aspects of organization ▪ Developing human resources ▪ Intervening in the organization as a whole	▪ Intrapersonal skills for working in ambiguity ▪ Interpersonal skills for relationship and trust ▪ Consultation skills for entry, diagnosis, intervention, assessment ▪ OD theory for using tools and interventions
Enhance capacities of social change organizations ▪ Managing conflicts over authority at IRDA ▪ Improving headquarters field-relations at ICSA	▪ Clarifying links between mission and activities ▪ *Managing conflict over fundamental power and value differences ▪ Designing complex organizational architectures ▪ Coaching leaders to deal with complexity and unfamiliar management challenges	▪ Organizational strategist ▪ *Mediator and synthesis for authority relations ▪ Designing and implementing changes in structure, roles and culture ▪ Leadership consultant; skilled in individual level assessment and change
Scaling up impact of social change actors ▪ Expanding the reach of INSO and its network ▪ Organizing to influence transnational policy at IRDA	▪ *Clarifying social change theories ▪ Redesigning architectures for growth and external alliances ▪ *Conceiving and building external relations	▪ *Skilled in analysis of power, policy and social influence ▪ Design and implementation of intra- and inter-organizational structures & systems ▪ *Facilitator of external relationships
Creating new systems of organizations ▪ Creating the URC to build support for an urban park ▪ Convening the IFCB to catalyze learning for capacity-building	▪ *Convening and creating a new client system ▪ Building shared definitions and directions ▪ *Creating interface organization ▪ *Creating network learning systems	▪ *Temporary system leadership; System entrepreneurs ▪ *Mediator and synthesis for shared mental models and appreciations ▪ *Knowledge of collaborative and interorganizational design ▪ Catalyst for personal, organizational and interorganizational learning and perspective sharing
Reshaping the context of strategic agencies ▪ Promoting participation in World Bank projects ▪ Promoting responsive education in Mali	▪ Articulating visions of compelling future ▪ *Building theories of contextual influence ▪ *Mobilizing constituents for collective action ▪ *Creating alliances to support reform	▪ *Activist visionary ▪ *Political and social analysis; of advocacy and movement strategist ▪ *Organizer for movement building ▪ *Bridge builder for long-term change

* Indicates intervention or skill not called for in more traditions OD practice.

Some of the interventions and skills described in the first row appear in later rows as well, suggesting that much of OD theory and practice is relevant to organizations concerned with promoting social change. But there are also some important elements in lower rows (indicated with asterisks in the Table) that go beyond much of the existing theory and practice of OD. We focus briefly on some of the implications of this analysis for OD interventions, for OD skills, and for the field in general.

Implications for Intervention

The families of interventions that are staples of OD practice--improving processes, enhancing technical and structural systems, developing human resources, and fostering organization-wide diagnosis and change--appear in many of the rows of Table 1. Managing conflict is widely used as an intervention to improve organizational processes, and redesigning organizational architectures often utilizes tools from structural and system wide OD interventions. Coaching leaders is widely used as a human resource development intervention in much of OD. So many OD interventions are highly relevant to strengthening organizations that are involved in social change work.

On the other hand, some of the interventions listed in Table 1 suggest expansions of current OD theory and practice if it is to be effective in the social change arena. For example, many of the interventions described in Table 1 require that change agents <u>ground their interventions in a theory of social change as well as a theory of organizational change</u>. Interventions that strengthen the organization without contributing to larger social results are not successful from a social change point of view. Social change theories explain the underlying causes of existing social and institutional arrangements and suggest how OD interventions applied in the right places can lead to desirable and sustainable change. Without such theories OD interventions may produce irrelevant or even harmful outcomes,

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such as strengthening organizations whose activities undermine desired social changes. Understanding and influencing social change processes and potentials is no small matter, and the topic is not one treated by most OD training programs.

While much of OD assumes the existence of an organizational client, many of the interventions described in the lower rows of Table 1 are focused on influencing or even creating multi-organization systems rather than focusing on a single client. Much of the OD described here involves reorienting existing organizations to expand their impacts through alliances or creating multi-organization systems to deal with social challenges that will otherwise remain unmet. Building multi-organization systems and changing strategic contexts by definition involve more than one organization, and scaling up the impacts of social change organizations often involves expanding alliances and partnerships. We earlier noted that the internal dynamics of development organizations might be shaped by their external relations (Brown and Covey, 1987; Brown and Brown, 1983). It is increasingly apparent that external relations may themselves be shaped by the dynamics of multi-organization systems. Interorganizational relations, like those among the URC, the IFCB or the World Bank campaign, can alter institutional and social patterns of behavior. Organization development theory and practice derived from work with internal aspects of single organizations may require substantial elaboration or revision to deal with external contexts and multi-organization systems.

Most OD work at least implicitly assumes that the health and viability of the client organization is central to successful intervention, though change agents differ on how they define that health and viability. Applying OD for social change, however, can introduce different assumptions. For many actors in such initiatives, social change goals take precedence over organizational interests, and change agents may find themselves pressed to support the larger initiative instead of a single organization. Change agents that begin working with single organizations and facilitate the creation of multi-organization initiatives often find themselves torn between their obligations to the initial client and their commitment to the success of the larger alliance. OD theory and practice does not yet offer

much help for understanding or managing the dilemmas that can be posed by social change goals and multi-organization systems.

Implications for Change Agents

The descriptions of change agent interventions in Table 1 also suggest a need to expand or supplement past conceptions of OD skills if OD consultants are to be effective actors in social change settings. For example, the skills listed in Table 1 suggest that change agents in social change settings need skills for <u>conceptualizing and framing organizational roles in larger social issues</u>. Relevant capacities include conceptualizing social change initiatives, synthesizing values and articulating visions, understanding conflict over fundamental authority relations, and catalyzing ongoing learning. Conceptualizing social change problems and theories enables change agents to bring critical perspectives to key actors trapped in their own perspectives. Articulating visions that mobilize values across many constituents is often critical to sustainable change. Recognizing and mediating conflicts over power and authority can be critical to building relationships and trust in place of competition, distrust, and political exploitation. Creating and testing alternative frames to explain shifting patterns can help change agents and other stakeholders learn at both the organization and domain levels -- without which sustainable changes become unlikely.

Change agents who practice OD in the service of social change often find that <u>personal values and ideological commitments are critical to their credibility</u>. In much OD work, negotiating entry with organizational authorities establishes the legitimacy of change agents, particularly if conflict over authority is not a central issue. But in social change efforts it is often not clear who can confer legitimacy on change agents, and technical competence may be less important than skills for consensus building and working across boundaries. Concerns about values and ideologies can be particularly challenging when diverse constituencies regard quite different stances as credible. Histories of work with some parties may be grounds for dismissal by others. At a minimum understanding of the

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political implications of past work and skills for building trust across diverse perspectives are important resources for change agents in conflicted social change arenas.

Much of OD work assumes that the change agent is a relatively neutral and technical resource in building organizational capacities. While that description may be accurate about work with existing social change organizations, it is less accurate for creating new organizational systems or changing contexts of strategic agencies. In those settings change agents increasingly move <u>from technical consultants for organizations to temporary leaders for under organized systems or activists for social change, and from individual actors to members of teams or coalitions</u>. Work with organizations like IRDA and INSO may involve consulting to existing organizational leaders, but convening new systems of organizations or mobilizing contextual forces to shape the behavior of strategic organizations involve more leadership or activist stances. As the demands increase for different kinds of expertise and work with wider networks, the importance of teams of actors may increase. The single consultant model becomes less appropriate to describing the relevant actors as the work involves more multi-organization systems and more efforts to shape large-scale contextual forces. As creating organization systems and changing contexts become more common interventions, the skills of change agents may evolve away from familiar OD consulting approaches.

Implications for the Field of OD

The continuing market for OD texts, the growth and viability of professional networks like the OD Network, the emergence of many educational programs to train OD consultants, and even this <u>Handbook</u> are all evidence of a maturing professional field. It seems clear that there is continuing demand for OD resources to help organizations -- particularly business organizations -- continue to improve their capacities to deal with the challenges of global markets and international competition.

Should OD be concerned about applications to larger issues, like problems of social problem-solving and institutional transformation? It seems clear that such a path will

require significant investments in expanding and elaborating the range of OD interventions and skills. One plausible answer is that a better use of scarce resources is to focus on further professionalization of theory and practice for social actors who can afford to make good use of the field. This idea is implicit, for example, in a recent study that developed ideas about the future for the field from analysis of interviews with currently eminent practitioners (Worley & Feyerherm, 2003) in order to build better training for future practitioners. This initiative makes sense as an effort to build on best practices from the past to create standards and bodies of knowledge for the future.

An alternative, perhaps complementary, approach is to encourage OD theorists and practitioners to make forays into new domains where they will inevitably be operating at (and often over) the edge of their competence – but where new perspectives, alternatives and possibilities may be revealed by their successes and failures. The field can grow from the experiences of mavericks as well as from the work of established practitioners – indeed, the OD field was in large part founded by mavericks from better-established fields and professions who applied their insights to compelling social problems. So we would argue for both processes—codifying and professionalizing on the basis of existing experience <u>and</u> exploring and inventing in the problem domains where OD might have value to add.

OD has been an important resource to organizations facing the increased demands for organizational learning in an increasingly interdependent and competitive world. The ever-increasing gap between rich and poor, our difficulties in mobilizing action on global warming and HIV/AIDS, and the expanding concern with terrorism all reflect a growing need for innovations in "social learning" that can deal with problems beyond the grasp of individual organizations. We believe that OD for social change can play a central role in enabling more rapid and effective social learning. But developing that role will require the "spirit of inquiry" that motivated many of the field's pioneers, and a tolerance for the ambiguities and risks of supporting a wide variety of innovative social change initiatives.

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