Living and Working Together in Organizations: Theme Relevance—An Introduction

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Living together has always been a complex challenge. As a matter of fact, people interact, develop relationships, produce, and share spaces and time in organizations, with no chance to choose each other in the majority of cases. Different stories and professional figures intertwine highlighting that the *Other* cannot be reduced to the Self.

At present the theme also acquires a special strength and urgency: on one hand market globalization processes and the increase of migrating phenomena lead to a cultural diversity that has become more and more evident in workplaces, too; on the other hand, financial crisis leads organizations to revise consolidated practices, leave mergers and acquisitions; pushing professional cultures, roles, and organizational logics toward a strong change (which often generates contrast).

As a consequence, the need to manage the difference in its multiple meanings and, at the same time, be competitive, must be considered today as two crucial instances for organizations.

Thus, if living and working together in organizations takes place in a dimension of restriction and constriction (people cannot always choose, and relationships constrain and limit us to each other), we cannot ignore that they are also a resource and opportunity (people can support and cooperate with one another). The reference is to *binding* with the meaning of imprisoning, obligating, and, at the same time, joining and strengthening (Cigoli & Scabini, 2006).

Our relation with otherness allows us to grow up, innovate services and products, give birth to creative processes, manage complex challenges. Living and working well together can therefore be a value and an advantage for the people who live and belong to the organization, but also for the productivity of the organization itself.

The need to thoroughly study the theme becomes therefore evident, if we consider both the people's perspective and wellbeing, and the perspective of productivity and organizational innovation.

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Before getting into a detailed presentation of the articles the reader can find in this issue, two aspects must be pointed out.

Since living and working together originates in the relationships among people, we can first of all say that their analysis acquires a meaning only when we refer to a conception of organization as social system, that is "a number of associated people and groups who solve common problems and develop common planning skills with the need to establish cooperation relations" (Lévy, 2003, p. 208). This conception of organization, in fact, brings us back to the dimensions of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, where affective and relational logics are considered, unlike the conception of organization as exclusive action system, that is as pure "number of (technical, material, human) tools designed in order to achieve production purposes as efficiently as possible" (Lévy, 2003, p. 208) (Kaneklin, 2009).

A second useful introductory reflection is that living and working together represent an interesting *relational interpretation* of organizational life. It is a possibility, a way to look at the organization that allows us to understand some crucial elements, outline hypotheses to intervene in it, within a relational perspective too often sacrificed to prefer a mechanistic look at the organization which fragments it into single parts/actors. The work group, as an intermediate unit (*meso* level) between individuals and macro contexts (organization, society), represents, in this sense, the privileged entity to be considered, and takes on a crucial role in knowledge, disclosing and changing organizational life.

For this reason, variables concerning the relationship among the various organizational interlocutors (in terms of belonging, valuing, or non-valuing to the other different from me, presence or absence of confidence, different diversity and conflict cultures, a more or less chosen work purpose, participating or excluding processes), are precious indicators helping us know which way to live and work together is generated within a specific organization. It is necessary to be aware that many factors can determine and influence style and forms of living and working together in organizations, and moreover that a specific form is not "fixed" but keeps on changing over time.

The issue I am going to introduce to the reader has come about from the idea to give value to this theme, which appears today as extremely relevant, collecting reflections and experiences of a group of psychologists who belong to the Psychology Department of Università Cattolica and have been dealing with it from different (organizational-social, clinical, dynamic) perspectives.[1]

It starts from exploring the meanings given in literature to living and working together in organizations, getting to outline a theoretical proposal and a typology of its forms starting from research and consultancy experiences with many organizational realities. With regard to this, see the first article proposed by Gozzoli, titled "Living and Working Together in Organizations: Traces and Ways."

This article will be followed by others, which propose the aforementioned theoretical construction as a magnifying glass to try and better understand the complex organizational life, becoming method and lever to activate transformation processes in it and, in some cases, in the community life. We find the work proposed by Tamanza et al., titled "Revealing the Difference: Between Conflict Mediation and Law Enforcement—Living and Working Together as a Conceptual

and Methodological Turning Point to Activate Transformation in a Juvenile Criminal Mediation Service," which points out how the paradigm of living and working together in organizations, has been an important conceptual and methodological turning point to improve the proposal of a Juvenile Criminal Mediation Service.

The article titled "Trust or Distrust Toward Health Care Services: Breast Screening in the North and South of Italy," by Saita et al., explores how the dimension of confidence toward health structures is a precondition to settle a stable relationship between subjects and institutions. This creates the possibility of a generating collaboration and efficiency in health care.

Marta et al., in "When Living and Working Well Together in Organizations Changes into Good Social Coexistence: The Talent Club Case," show how accompanying and supporting work processes of a small commercial activity run by a social cooperative in a suburb area of a large city has been the chance and tool for the development of a local community and good social coexistence.

The issue closes with a presentation of some tools that have proved as precious in field research to activate and support a generative way in living and working together in organizations: The ethnographic chart, proposed by Gorli et al. in the article titled, "Change and Management of Complex Services: The Ethno-Narrative Form to Support Good Living and Working Together" and the training within a psycho-sociological approach, proposed by Frascaroli et al. in "When Training Becomes Incentive for Generative Living and Working Together in Organizations," highlighting the evolution process of two teams (one composed by healthcare workers, and another made up of Youth Team Coaches) during their training path and the consequences in terms of organizational life.

As it often happens at the end of a study, possible new ideas and in-depth analyses appear now clearer both on a conceptual level and as far as empirical research is concerned. At the same time, the special issue we propose has been trying to faithfully report an example of the relational complexity of organizational worlds, groups, and people encountered and proposes a perspective and method that respect such a treasure.

NOTE

1. Referring to the theme of social relevance of research see Scaratti et al. (2014).

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