

**No Limits To Cooperation:**  
***An Introduction To the Organization Dimensions of Global Change***

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**Sometimes a short anecdote can express more** than many words, especially when the anecdote is true. Ours is actually very simple. Its about a letter we received several years ago, the content of which became the focus of *our* very first conversation and the starting point of our first collaboration, culminating in contributions to Advances in Strategic Management, volume 9, 1993.

At the outset it must be said that the letter's query was surprising, formidable, disconcerting—and totally compelling. It signaled the lack of input from organizational scholars into the policy relevant conversation about global change. It was written by members of the UN's International Facilitating Committee (IFC) for the "Earth Summit" (recall the conference was the largest, meeting on environment and development in history). In essence 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 on football feild-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 chlorofluorocabons 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 oasis of human development surrounded by deserts of human deprivation?

*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 100s 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 and 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?*

There are at least three ways to make meaning of this call. The first is to raise questions about the appropriateness of the recipients of the letter. Would not the IFC do better writing for help from schools of international relations, political science, geo-strategic studies or others? Second, maybe the anecdote's importance resides in its metaphorical contribution, i.e. that organizing, in all domains of endeavor, is beginning more and more to resemble a *global meeting* : i.e., saturated in temporary relationships, information overload, metaproblem complexity, nonroutine tasks, structural dispersion, backlash from the crises mentality, diversities of every kind, and others. Or third, perhaps, the anecdote is best understood at face value—simply as an urgent invitation *to an increasingly important field of scholarship and knowledge whereby organization and management studies are now viewed on a much broader scale than ever before, indeed as a matter of world affairs.*

This volume is offered in anticipation of a new and expanding role for the students, scholars, and educators in organization and management studies. It takes as its challenge to address how organizational scholarship and thinking can inform understanding issues of global change. Its mandate is broad, its theoretical boundaries are open-ended, it is inspired by a conviction that organizational studies has a pivotal role to play both in defining an agenda of relevant research on global change and providing theoretical lenses for understanding these research questions. While it is risky business to herald an “advance” or bold new agenda without much evidence that it is already happening, we hope in this introductory chapter to at least begin making the case, considering developments like these:

- Something quite extraordinary has been occurring on the on the world scene over the past seven short years *across the physical and social science disciplines*. Around the world an unprecedented interdisciplinary program of research has been envisioned, it has been mobilized financially and programatically, and it is organized almost like a global social movement organization. Its purpose, its vision, and its name have combined to galvanize levels of cooperation like few other initiatives in the history of social science—it is called” the human dimensions of global change research program”.
- The more productive the global change research domain has become (the 1996 Encyclopedia of World Problems now, sadly, catalogues some 15,000 transboundary problems) the more people are recognizing, or rediscovering, the role of organizations: growing throughout the domain of global change science is the recognition and conviction that *there is not one single item on the global agenda for change that can be understood outside of the role and functioning of organizations. Any effort to understand, much less come to terms with global change that does not include a sustained commitment to improving our knowledge of the organizational dimensions cannot succeed.*
- More positively, the logic of rediscovering institutions can be taken one important step further. While there may be “limits to growth” as far as the world’s ecosystems are understood, *there are no necessary limits to cooperation as human beings seek to constructively organize and respond.* To an extent unimaginable a decade ago, the ideals of building a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable world future are taking on form and substance. Obstacles to cooperation and human enterprise that long seemed immovable have collapsed in humanity’s path. In their classic volume Our Common Future (1985), the world commission on environment and development in fact suggested that virtually every item on the global agenda for change can be addressed (at least technically *and* economically)-- “providing that *institutional arrangements* permit the constructive interrelations of many intellectual resources and insights involving people from many countries with a myriad of cultures, traditions, languages, aspirations, and so on” (p.8, italics ours).

The book explores the potential of cooperation as a practice, an organizing accomplishment, and as a value for understanding issues of global change. It opens up conversations, research paths and opportunities for dialogue around global change research. It addresses basic questions such as: what do we mean by global change research? What can organizational scholarship contribute to understanding the human dimensions of global change? If we were to offer a priority agenda for research and inquiry, what questions would we be asking and what kinds of research would have a high probability of making a large contribution to knowledge as well as timely relevance for action? Is the global change domain likely to grow in future importance? And what would such inquiry do for organization scholarship? Will an expanded focus to include “the organization dimensions of global change” open our field to broad vistas of learning and compel changes in our current theories of human organization, management, and processes of change? Where are the exemplars?

In the rest of this chapter we will begin exploring this new call, the opportunities raised, and the implications for both organization theory and society.

The chapter unfolds in three sections. The first provides brief account of what has been internationally formulated as the domain of “global change research” and it seeks to do so in ways that make these developments come alive for our own discipline. The second section, more importantly, previews the original pieces of work written for this volume. They are offered in the three parts of the book: **Sensemaking and Global Change; Collaboration and Partnerships as the Structures of Global Change; and Social Constructionism and Global Change.** We then conclude with a hope we have for the future. It begins in a speculative way to envision broad reconsideration of the field’s priorities focused on research, education, and innovation that is deliberately “opportunity focused” (Dutton, 1993) and “appreciative” (Cooperrider, 1990)-- where inquiry itself is constructed as an intervention for the better and where the very framing of questions is recognized as a crucial choice-point for the kind of world the “scientific construction of social reality” helps bring to focus, and perhaps fruition.

Global Change Research Domain:  
A Brief Review

*The dominant changes that affect the environment and the course of life on Earth are natural ones, induced by such inexorable forces as natural selection, the shifting of winds and rivers, changing inputs from the Sun, the turbulent dynamics of the atmosphere and oceans, the drifting of the continental plates, the building of mountains, and the expansion and contraction of ice masses. But imposed on these is now another set of changes, more recent and immediate in consequence, that are the clear result of human activities. Our uses of energy and practices of intensive farming and technology have altered the albedo of the Earth, the composition of soil and waters, the chemistry for the air, the areas of forests, the diversity of plant and animal species, and the balance of global ecosystem.*

--A Study of Global Change (Paris:ICSU, 1986)

*Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?*

--Lao-tzu

As used throughout this volume the term global change is meant broadly to refer to alterations (positive or negative) in human or environmental systems whose effects are not and cannot be localized and for which appropriate human response is likely to require transboundary thought, organizing, and action (e.g. depletion of ozone; the transboundary movement of HIV/aids; species loss; emergence of global civil society; the global eradication of smallpox). As a research domain global change science, especially that which is focused on the human dimensions, is young, dynamic, and emerging so rapidly that there is some risk of trying to say anything definitive about it. But there can be no mistake. Something quite extraordinary is occurring—and it has escaped the view of all but a relative handful of close observers, or those that are in the midst of creating the new directions. Place this in conjunction with the domain of actual practice—where social inventions across the local-global nexus are far outpacing our theories—and the

potentials of something like “the organization dimensions of global change” begin to expand in many exciting directions. Lets start with brief review of the domain, the call to research in the area of global change.

### ***The United States and International Global Change Research Program (GCRP)***

The USGCRP was created as a Presidential Initiative in 1989 and was formalized in 1990 by the Global Change Research Act of 1990. At about the very same time, the phrase “human dimensions” was added to the vocabulary of global change and in programmatic terms gave birth to The International Human Dimensions on Global Change Research Program (IHDGC), again in 1990. The major piece of writing giving direction internationally is generally taken as B.L. Turner’s (1991) edited volume on The Earth as Transformed by Human Action ; in the US there was, most notably, the framework creating volume by Paul Stern, Oran Young, and Daniel Druckman (1992) Global Environmental Change: Understanding the Human Dimensions. Both had their roots in an invitation, a call, perhaps even a plea that can only be described as something of a *scientific social movement*, led by people like Harold Jacobson at University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research as well as many others like Ian Burton (Director of the International Federation of Institutes for Advanced Study) and Roland Fuchs (United Nations University) and Luis Ramallo (International Social Science Council). What brought these people to work tirelessly around the world over a several year stretch was the conviction that the physical sciences (which had been defining the global change research agenda since the 1950s in the form of the international Geosphere-Biosphere Program) could only go so far without understanding the anthropogenic (1) sources of global change; (2) consequences of global change, both through other components of the geosphere-biosphere, as well as directly to the human use systems; and (3) to the management of global change, that is the prevention of harm, adaptation to change, and the rehabilitation and restoration of systems where changes of a deleterious nature are occurring. Speaking with conviction and passion to the entire social science community—disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and organization studies—the challenge was articulated rhetorically with a simple question:

*Why does leadership come from the natural sciences, when the problems of global change are so much a function of human action? Should not the human sciences be expected to provide the lead, to set the agenda, and determine the priorities? (Burton and Timmerman, 1989,p. 304)*

Momentum to address the question was generated. It was especially visible at the Sixteenth General Assembly of the International Social Sciences Council in December of 1986, and then skillfully used to build a consensus at the next major gathering in Tokyo two years later. The world’s most ambitious social science cooperative endeavor was about to be inaugurated. For the catalysts the obstacles, of course were immense, including the challenges to science’s claims to value neutrality, detached objectivity, tendencies toward ethnocentric knowledge, and limited methodological tools for dealing with truly global data sets. Even the design of the Tokyo event itself called for an extraordinary level of technical communication and mutual cooperation by the main sponsors, the International Foundation of Institutes of Advanced Study, the United Nations University, the International Social Sciences Council, and others. The myriad of

geographically dispersed parties needed to overcome disciplinary, political, cultural, and language difficulties across all time zones. The Tokyo meeting, in particular, was a roller coaster session but people stayed in dialogue with the clear intuition that the outcomes of the deliberations might well be historic. While no scientific or social consensus existed (or yet exists) about the scope and significance of issues like climate warming, ozone depletion, acid precipitation, and the linkages between economy and ecology (e.g. the consequences of extreme poverty and/or overconsuming societies) something even more basic, according to the catalysts, was at stake: “perhaps more importantly, there is no truly *global context* within which to *think* about these problems, let alone to begin to manage the problems themselves. This is the driving force behind HDGCP” (Burton and Timmerman, 1989,p. 298). In Kuhnian terms, fortunate observers at the meeting were witness to a paradigmatic revolution in the making. Lest one has any doubts just type the words “global change” into a web search. The expedition will go on for hours (more on this later).

The Tokyo meeting resulted in an “extraordinary” and “urgent consensus” (Burton and Timmerman, 1989,p. 297). There were moments where differences of theoretical backgrounds and culture seemed unbridgeable. What emerged, however, was a unanimous conviction: “Response to global change by one nation acting alone, or even by a few of the more powerful acting in concert will not suffice. The global community must become involved. The common welfare and moral solidarity of humankind being at stake... a new relationship has to be forged between human society and environment, which will be morally, economically, and ecologically sustainable” (Burton and Timmerman, p.299-300). Visions of the new domain were given voice, one after the other. However, just as quickly as convictions and commitments were made there were voices of caution, even fear, about setting sail on a course that the human science community was scarcely prepared to undertake:

*“Given the magnitude of the task proposal—to create an international program that can contribute effectively to the understanding and management of global change—it has been asked whether the international community of scholars and human scientists is fully prepared to undertake it. Our own judgment is unequivocal: we are not fully prepared, and that is part of the problem. Were we more ready in intellectual and organizational terms, the world might not face quite a daunting prospect...A great opportunity lies before us, and a great responsibility”*( Burton and Timmerman, 1989,p. 303).

These words were written at precisely the same time the Berlin Wall was falling and events in Moscow signaled the end of the cold war. Signal events like these marked an opportunity to approach the human sciences in a more integrated and whole system way.

It is probably safe to say also that participants had precious *little* idea that within a few short years there would be a mass mobilization of human dimensions conferences on every continent, dozens of new and related journals, the birth of literally 100s of centers worldwide devoted to the human dimensions of global change, and not incidentally, dedicated funding. As just one example, the piece of the US Global Change Research Program budget devoted to the human dimensions (which also includes separate research budgets on climate and hydraulic systems, human interactions, biochemical dynamics, ecological systems, earth systems history, solid earth processes, and solar influences) has surged from \$20.1 million in 1990 to over \$200 million in 1997 ( see, Our Changing

Planet: The FY 1997 Research Plan. Washington DC: Office of Science and Technology Policy). This development in the US has parallels across all continents and is all the more striking, moreover, in view of the decline that was simultaneously under way in many other more traditional areas of support in the humanities and social science research in general. In a recent article titled “A Future History of Research on the Human Dimensions of Global Change” Daniels asks: “How will future historians of science account for this rapid progress in only five years?” (1996, p. 18).

The upshot of this brief review, of course, is not the dollars. What is important is the fact that a stage has been set. The phrase “human dimensions of global change” has and will increasingly become a powerful integrative theme bringing people together internationally across disciplines. The invitation :

- To improve understanding and increase awareness of the complex interactions of environmental systems, including the atmosphere, the biosphere, the geosphere, and the hydrosphere, and human systems, including economic, political, cultural, and sociotechnical systems;
- To strengthen efforts to study explore, and anticipate social change—attitudes and beliefs, population growth, markets, sociocultural systems, organizations and institutions, international structures of cooperation—affecting the global environment;
- To identify broad strategies to prevent, or mitigate undesirable impacts of global change, or to adapt to changes that are already unavoidable; and
- To expand strategic options for dealing with global change and promoting the goal of sustainable development.

Few developments have conveyed the sense of globality—and the need for global, transboundary methods for understanding and acting—as strongly as the growing realization that all depend on the earth’s ecological resources and are vulnerable in the face of their degradation. For years people have been talking about how globalization will set in motion a revolution in the intellectual world and compel refiguration in disciplinary boundaries, identities, methods, commitments, and agendas. Now it is beyond talk—many are doing it. *The domain of global change research, we believe, will burgeon in the next several years as issues of global concern will increasingly be identified through advances in theory and method and through advances in the world’s communication capacity.* How will organization theory respond? What can the organization and management sciences contribute to understanding the human dimensions of global change?

We now consider how the empirical forms of organizational life create additional urgency and possibility for the development of understanding of the organizational dimensions of global change.

## ***From the Abstract to the Concrete:***

### ***New Organizing Forms for Global Change***

Until very recently in history, people have responded to global phenomena as if they were local, have not effectively institutionalized their responses across sectors or societies, and have not been able in *organizational* terms to respond by deliberately altering the course of global changes themselves. But things are different now from what they have been for millennia. One example (for elaboration see Cooperrider and Bilimoria, 1993) can be used to quickly illustrate the point:

*Future historians of global change will surely rank May 8, 1980 among the big dates. For on May 8 when the World Health Assembly declared that smallpox had been eradicated from the planet, it became the first, and as yet, only global problem in history to have been “eradicated” or solved by organized action on a local-global world scale. The achievement can scarcely be overstated. Involving nearly a quarter million staff from 69 countries including a multidisciplinary, multicultural group of 700 leaders, this global change response successfully addressed, in ten years, a dreaded world boundary-crossing disease that had deadly effects on the human population since the time of the Neolithic age. Citation of this effort has happened over a thousand times in the medical literature’s. This is scarcely surprising given the life saving import of such an achievement, as well as the implications for other global health concerns, e.g. HIV/Aids, and many other childhood diseases. But to this day there has yet to emerge one theoretical or empirical study of this organizational breakthrough—from the perspective of leadership, decision making, organization design, management, strategic alliances, human motivation, managing change, Multicultural management or others.*

We bring attention to this illustration for several reasons. The first is to underscore the point that it really is no longer utopian *or* romantically idealistic to be using the language of global change. The development of global cooperative capacity, across boundaries of all kinds, is part of the evolution of human efforts to organize life in response to transboundary problems and opportunities. We believe that these processes will accelerate in coming years.

The second is to bring attention to what we feel is a vast opportunity for organization theory. Indeed the observable fact is this: since World War II more than 30,000 transnational nongovernmental (NGO) and intergovernmental (IGO) organizations have emerged to manage concerns related to issues of ecology and development (Encyclopedia of International Organization, 1997). Many of the organizations we are referring to are now familiar names: World Wildlife, Nature Conservancy, The Body Shop, Merck, Save the Children, United Nations, World Business Academy, Stonybrooke Farms, Sarvodaya Shramadama, and on.

And this may be the tip of the iceberg. A study by the Club of Rome has called it a global “barefoot revolution”(Schnieder, 1988); sociologists describe the axial age we are in as “the building of the global civic culture” (Boulding, 1988; Civicus, 1997); Worldwatch Institute simply refers to new worldwide “people power”—with grassroots groups fighting poverty and environmental decline now numbering in the millions (Durning, 1989). Likewise in other related spheres political scientists are describing the accelerating

formation “institutions for the earth” (Haas, Keohane, and Levy, 1993) of “global regimes” (Young, 1989) ; and at the same time business thinkers at The World Business Academy are now even talking about the leading edge “corporations as agents of positive global change” (Harman, 1990) or the new “eccentric organization” (Shrivastva, 1996).

So what ties these organizations conceptually? In connection with the language of the human dimensions of global change research program, we would like to refer to the “type” simply as *global change organizations*. The bridge is a useful one, we believe, because the language of “the human dimensions of global change” will continue to enlarge the boundary crossing dialogue across disciplines—included in this rapidly growing dialogue are fields like earth systems science, as well as the disciplines of sociology, economics, political science, international relations, anthropology, psychology, and management studies. Likewise it is increasingly clear that what is happening and what the world is calling for is the birth of new organizational arrangements that allow for the closing of what some have called the *institutional gap*—the dichotomy between organizations born of the modern bureaucratic eras of the last several centuries and the new demands of a postmodern, supranational, globally linked world system of change ( see, Cooperrider and Bilimoria, 1993). As the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) put it in clear and practical terms “The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; but the policies and institutions concerned must” (p. 9). In this spirit the term global change organization is useful also to avoid the tired and outworn distinctions of profit, not for profit, public and private, governmental and nongovernmental and so on. Global change organizations, as proposed below, have several minimal but important characteristics that can be used to help support interdisciplinary inquiry:

- Global change organizations assert, as their primary task, a commitment to serve as an *agent of change in the creation of environmentally and socially sustainable* world futures—their transformational missions are articulated around the real needs of people *and* the Earth.
- They have discovered and mobilized innovative social-organizational architectures that make possible *human cooperation across previously polarizing or arbitrarily constraining boundaries*.
- They hold *values of empowerment*, or people-centered forms of action, in the accomplishment of their global change mission, emphasizing the central role of people as both means and ends in any development process.
- They are *globally-locally linked* either in structure, membership or partnership and thereby exist, at least in identity and practice, (maybe not yet legally) as entities beyond the nation state.
- They are multi-organizational and often cross-sectoral. They *can be business, governmental, or not-for profit*. Indeed many of the *most* significant global change organizing innovations involve multi-organization partnerships bridging sectoral boundaries in new hybrid forms of business, intergovernmental, and private voluntary sectors.

From here many interesting questions surge to the fore. How many global change organizations are there? Can we create a mapping of this largely non-territorial “invisible

continent” where people are organizing to bridge barriers between nations, races, religions, sectors, professions, cultures, and distances in the service of a global imperative? What are their linkages and interactions? How do the designs and dynamics of complex organizations mediate humanity’s sensemaking ability—its capacity to understand and respond to global change? How is the world’s cooperative capacity enlarged or diminished in and through the evolution of organization structures that are locally and globally linked, multi-sectoral, cross cultural, and multi-institutional? What is the effect of “chronic disaster” on people’s sense of hope that constructive response to global change is possible? On a more micro level, can we create typologies or modes of enacting global change? What about transitions from old to new organizational forms? How do companies, for example, make rapid transition from being harmful agents of global change to active and constructive agents of global conservation, restoration, or renewal? What about questions of global change leadership? Gender relations? Oppression? How can we frame human response to global change so that all voices from *different and unequal positions* can be heard in organizational settings with equivalent seats? Equally important, how can global change partnerships be formed and guided effectively in the absence of authority? Will the people of the world *ever* evolve a shared global ethic, and what role will global change organizations play in this arena? What is the relationship between international regimes and transnational social movement organizations? Do global change organizations provide a powerful counterpoint to the dominant cost-minimization, benefit-maximization paradigm in the management sciences—where, at best, organizations are seen as utilitarian inducement/contribution (contract) systems, where hierarchy and control are designed to minimize shirking and agency costs, and where self-interested opportunism is assumed to prevail? Will organization theory rise to the positive challenge of building concepts whereby the self-sacrificing quality of the people and organizations—a “public goods” orientation--- is in fact noticed and thus becomes a central, as opposed to a peripheral or tangential focus?

### Overview of the Contents

The remaining twelve chapters making up this book were originally written in response to a worldwide call from the Academy of Management to begin a new dialogue on questions exactly like these. The authors, leading thinkers in the fields of organization studies, were invited in the context of discovery:

*...to open new doors to understanding and action...to view this as opportunity to accept Toynbee’s well known challenge ‘to dare in scholarship’ and to generate systematic propositions that will give vision and direction to an enterprise that will count, and count affirmatively, as it relates to the complex and growing global change agenda of our time.*

The chapters, selected from over 90 submissions, are expansive, vibrant, and thought provoking. Conceptually, they are grouped into three theoretical configurations beginning with questions of **sensemaking** (how do complex human organization dynamics mediate humanity’s ability to understand and respond to global change?), secondly, there are priority questions of new **collaborative and partnership structures** (how is the world’s cooperative capacity enlarged or diminished in and through the evolution of organization structures that are locally and globally linked, multi-sectoral, cross cultural, and multi-institutional?), and finally, part three deals with broad questions related to promising

paradigmatic approaches that take into account the **socially constructed nature of reality** in a pluralistic global change arenas of multiple voices, diverse value systems, reflexive knowledge systems, and a world of thoroughgoing interdependence. We now turn to an overview of each of the contributions.

### *Part One: Sensemaking and Global Change*

Research on the human dimensions of global change strives to understand the interactions among and between human systems and environmental systems, including the atmosphere, the biosphere, the geosphere, and the hydrosphere, and human systems, including economic, political, cultural, and institutional arrangements that make choices, take action, and so forth (see Stern, et. al. 1992). The question that concerns the authors of part one is related to the latter emphasis: How do the workings of complex organizations mediate humanity's sensemaking ability—its capacity to understand and constructively respond to global change?

A sensemaking lens on the organizational dimensions of global change is rooted in the recognition that the global change domain is made up of issues that have unclear cause-effect structures, unintended side effects, are linked as *meta*-problems that are multilayered (cutting across entire societies), are essentially contested phenomena, have consequences that are often irreversible—and simultaneously, *because of the reverberations into the future, create an imperative to act regardless of the endless uncertainties*. In short, to organize for global change is an act of sensemaking. Sensemaking, we contend, is the birthplace for human response to global change because sensemaking sets the frame for decision making, becomes the basis for envisioning possible futures, creates the communication context for linking with others, and is itself transformed in the designs and processes of organizing. The chapters that fit in this section all locate the possibilities for accomplishing global change in the processes by which knowledge is created, shared and acted upon. They share with each other a belief that small actions are consequential in the generation of meaning, that organizing with consequences for global change is an ongoing accomplishment, and that making sense is a critical part of the process. All four chapters are rich with example, helping us see how a sensemaking lens identifies important new ways to both think about and organize for global change.

Karl Weick's chapter on "Sensemaking as an Organizational Dimensions of Global Change" opens part one and unpacks the core premise that different organizational forms shape how people make sense by affecting the sensemaking resources available. He elaborates seven properties of sensemaking that afford different capacities for individuals to act in different situations. As a prolific writer about the importance of sensemaking in all of organizational life, Weick is well suited to extend his analysis to implications for global social change. He does this in a surprising way, by using examples to bring alive the connection between form (design), sensemaking resources, and outcomes.

As a starting point, Weick asserts that individual sensemaking in different organizational designs has critical consequences. The consequences from inadequate and adequate sensemaking are dramatically conveyed by Weick through the contrasting stories of

firefighters in the Mann Gulch and the sensemaking by members of members of the Worker's Defense Committee in Poland. In the former case, 13 men die in a tragic fire. In the latter case, a small group of an opposition movement members create a nearly miraculous large scale change toward achievement of democracy. Sensemaking fails in the first, and triumphs in the second.

The stories that Weick contrasts are powerful in their own right. However, they are especially compelling as reminders of the challenge in global social organizing: "that strangers come together with diverse experience, only having face to face contact for limited periods, with leaders unknown or by chance, in temporary systems, facing solutions that make no sense, with limited on nonexistent ways of communicating and sharing experience, in unfamiliar terrain, with strong consequences implied" (p. 26). Yet, despite this challenge, by thinking systematically about the sensemaking resources available in an organizational form, one acquires a way of seeing the possibilities for enhancing global organizing. The window that Weick opens helps us to see that answering 7 design (organizational form) questions in the affirmative enable global social change: "Does the form encourage conversation, give people a distinct, stable sense of who they are and what they represent? Does the form preserve elapsed data and legitimate the use of those data: Does it enhance the visibility of cues, enable people to be resilient in the face of interruptions, encourage people to accumulate and exchange plausible accounts and encourage action of hesitations (P. 12). According to Weick, the more affirmative the answers are to these questions, the better suited the form is for global social change.

The next chapter by Kathryn Kaczmarek and David Cooperrider provides a different window into the possibilities for global organizing that arise from a focus on leadership. Like Weick, these authors locate the possibility for global organizing in the social processes that different structures afford. Rather than call these social processes sensemaking resources, these authors call the organizing potential, constructionist leadership. They breathe new life into the concept of leadership by example and by contrast.

The example is a powerful one. The chapter traces the emergence of leadership during the creation of the Mountain Forum, a global level alliance that over the course of 11 years brought together mountain-centered organizations, NGOs, international agencies such as the World Bank, mountain researchers and land managers, various national governmental representatives, donors, policy maker, academics, intergovernmental organizations (IGOSs) with a shared interest in increasing global interest in the conservation of the world's mountains. The story of the alliance's evolution documents the enormous challenges of scale and diversity that make the alliance's creation as so remarkable. It also illustrates the pushes and pulls, planned and unplanned events, large and small-scale meetings that jointly enabled the emergence of this alliance. While formalized by name in 1995 as the Mountain Forum, the alliance organized itself using a form that resisted bureaucracy, hierarchy and formalization. As the authors put it: "...a pioneering image of the Mountain Forum emerged...visualized by the participants was a coalition of organizations strung together by geographic region, but with no identifiable center and no formal secretariat.... Within this coalition, boundaries would fade and no hierarchy of organizations or positions would exist, consistent with the consensus that a

relational network of mountain NGOs and agencies would be necessary to function successfully at the global level... reflective of the basic values of the Mountain Forum: open, democratic, decentralized, accessible, transparent, accountable and flexible.”

Kaczmariski and Cooperrider help us to see the power of constructionist leadership in helping this Forum come to life. They distinguish the leadership task as one of organizing by bridging across diverse cultures of inquiry. “Constructionist leadership enables productive connections at the deepest level of belief and method”.... Such a leader “works at a nonmaterial, epistemic level of promoting appreciation of the ‘intelligibility nuclei’ across often conflicting communities”, and in “building knowledge systems, open and indeterminate, capable of generating time and again, intellectual breakthrough and action.”

These authors distinguish this leadership form by 3 qualities: 1)“an appreciative approach to knowledge; 2) a generative approach to language that is rich in metaphor and narrative form; and 3) the formation of the “out of control” organization through the web of inclusion”. The appreciative approach to knowledge means actively trying to use processes that “seek to discover, learn about, and bring to prominence the “life-giving” best of every culture of inquiry”. The importance of narrative and metaphor are described in terms of their bridging power, their capacity to embrace complexity and ambiguity and their ability to create and sustain hope in the face of such diversity. It is all about a kind of leadership that enables the kind of sensemaking so well articulated by Karl Weick in the previous chapter. The authors bring to life these sensemaking constructions by describing a series of meetings of Mountain Forum participants held in circular Mongolian- styled yurts. Here the place for gatherings was a was rich in metaphoric possibility, and the social process used to encourage dialogue in the sessions relied explicitly on metaphors and images as means for opening up conversation and encouraging multiple interpretations. The use of appreciative approaches and metaphor and narration invites confusion, ambiguity and a sense of potential chaos. Kaczmariski and Cooperrider celebrate the delicate balancing that a constructionist leader must create to open up the dialogue through these methods and ways of relating, without surpassing the collective’s capacity to extend and elaborate its potential.

The final element in constructionist leadership is captured by the idea of web of inclusion which describes a leader’s commitment to inclusive structures and inclusive processes that ensure “an ever expansive domain of relatedness”. In the evolution of the Mountain Forum, this feature was assured through the creation and use of an open electronic network, through the commitment of values which support inclusion (open, democratic, decentralized, etc.), open membership and a reliance on temporary leadership groups.

By chapter’s end, one has a strong sense of the value of constructionist leadership for global organizing in its capacity to generate and bridge cultures of inquiry—in short, for making collective sense of a global agenda for change. One gains an intellectual and emotional appreciation for the possibilities derived from this form of leadership as well as understanding some of its defining features. Interestingly, these ideas are brought to life in the Mountain Forum case where no one leader or leadership group is ever named or identified.

In chapter three Francis Westley addresses one of the greatest threats to humanity's sensemaking capacity—the impact of *chronic disaster*. Building on Kai Erickson's recent book *A New Species of Trouble* (1994) this chapter begins by looking at a uniquely contemporary experience of disaster that gathers force slowly and insidiously, creeping around people's defenses rather than smashing through them. People become unable to mobilize against the threat sometimes because they feel there is nothing that can be done to avoid it, sometimes because they have been misinformed, but mostly because they have elected consciously or unconsciously to ignore it, to avoid anxiety by constricting awareness. In short, there is a dangerous constriction in sensemaking capacity and it happens at every level of human system, from individuals to groups, to organizations, and the whole of society.

The disasters today, explains Westley, are different than many that human beings have dealt with throughout history because they are: (1) chronic and insidious rather than acute and dramatic, (2) humanly generated, or man-made (3) they often involve toxins which seem to permeate the very ground of being, rendering the environment which surrounds us and of which we are a part “defiled and unreliable”. The dread, slowly and progressively, appears to grow with time. It has the capacity to make people feel demoralized, helpless, and traumatized in a “peculiarly inaccessible way”. It often incapacitates the very fabric of community, organization, and joint action—it raises questions about human beings contemporary capacity to comprehend the global agenda much less respond in viable and vigorous ways. The case in point: one of the most critical issues confronting the globe today is the rapid extinction of species. Some say as many as 24 species are disappearing a day, more than 10,000 species a year. Writes Westley: “While we may clean up our rivers and the atmosphere, learn new technologies for curing disease and for destroying toxic wastes, invent substitutes for environmentally destructive energy sources, return to chemical free forms of agriculture, we as a species have not learned to recreate the miracle of life”.

A “new species of solution”, what we earlier talked about as the global change organization, may in fact be one antidote to the hopelessness and constricted sensemaking associated with the experience of chronic disaster. It is here where Westley makes her inspiring contribution. Her research, which traces the story of a worldwide network called the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, takes a look at their effectiveness as a organization but more importantly documents the human impact that such organizing has on its members. Through in-depth interviews, surveys (87% response rate), and participant observation Westley provides insights into ways that organizing can transform the debilitating experiences of chronic disaster into informed and sustainable action.

Do organizations restrict our human capacity to make sense of our world, or are they centers which have broad potential for helping human beings reclaim and enlarge their sensemaking capacity? The question, theoretically, is important because it may help differentiate the sensemaking perspective on organizations from classic theories of decision making which stress constricted awareness and the “satisficing” effects of organization. Westley's scholarship, we believe, invites consideration of the later.

In the fourth chapter that takes a sensemaking perspective Tenkasi and Mohrman craft a series of arguments for why global change requires the creation of contexts in which

collaborative knowledge can be created and used. These authors locate the possibility for global change in the social process by which knowledge is created and shared between interacting units or organizations. Their chapter directly critiques traditional ideas that knowledge can be objectively realized, applied universally and considered complete. They substitute these traditional claims with ideas: 1) that knowledge is subjectively constructed and subjectively consumed; 2) that knowledge requires contextual adaptation; and 3) knowledge is incomplete. Throughout their chapter they use examples where knowledge transfer failed or succeeded depending on the consistency of actions with the collaborative knowledge creation perspective.

For these authors, successful global change requires the intentional and careful creation of what they call interpretive spaces where joint meaning between parties can take place and where joint learning is enabled. They mention several techniques and perspectives used in contexts of global collaboration which enable these interpretive spaces: the dialogic method, search conferencing, appreciative inquiry and interpretive interactionism.

## **Part Two: Collaboration and Partnership:**

### **The Structures of Global Change**

In our view, we are already witnessing a significant transformation in the central pre-occupation of organizational scholarship away from the individual or unitary organization and toward some more globally conceptualized entity. On one level the shift signals a change in organizational forms. At another level many are now arguing that *cooperation* is a higher order adaptive strategy than, for example, competition (see The Club of Lisbon's report "Limits To Competition, 1994). One is reminded of Astley and Fombrun's (1983, p. 181) notion of "collective strategy" which, as they ardently reason *specifically refuses the conception of organizations as autonomous, self-sufficient units and stresses the fact that all organizations are inevitably participants in a multitude of interorganizational associations that overlies and interpenetrate one another, thus constituting and intricate, functionally integrated network of vital relationships*. To understand organizations as unitary and competitive (the vast majority of organization theorizing and research are indeed still founded on such assumptions) may no longer be relevant to understanding what is happening in the world of global change. In effect, by giving priority to the unitary form, organizational theory might well be underestimating the cooperative resources in the world. Yet more debilitating to the generative potential of the field is the problem of paradigm blindness; the field simply may not see the higher order adaptive strategies. Only in this way does it make sense that still, some 25 years after the classic global eradication of smallpox, that not one single piece of organizational research can be found based on this unprecedented cooperative achievement. Have we painted a picture of the world's cooperative potential with a whole series of colors as missing?

As the authors in part two demonstrate, the organizations responding to the agenda for global change *are almost everything but unitary organizations*—they are all hybrids. Whether termed strategic bridging institutions, social movement organizations, public-private partnerships, regimes, networks, referent organizations, or locally-globally linked

NGOs virtually all involve *organizational arrangements that use resources and/or governance structures from more than one existing organization*. Such “hybrid organizational arrangements” (See Borys and Jemison, 1989) are no longer the exception but the norm and invite more relationally informed theorizing (e.g. concepts like “social capital”; the “strength of weak ties”; “cooperative advantage” and others). They also, as any leader in the arena of global change will attest, pose a myriad of new challenges for managerial practice. Imagine the hybrid organizational dynamics involved in the dramatic response to the depletion of the earth’s layer of ozone. Literally thousands of organizations—corporations like DuPont, social movement organizations, academies of science, inter-governmental agencies, trade associations, grassroots NGOs—combined their capacities to address the global environmental problem. Some observers say it was the most successful form of human cooperation and global action ever recorded, at least as it involved worldwide mitigation response to destructive activities affecting the world’s ecosystems (Haas, 1991). What do we know about this kind of organizing?

In chapter five L. David Brown and Darcy Ashman argue that items on the global agenda for change are systems of self-reinforcing difficulties, or “messes” (using Russell Ackoff’s colorful language) and are intractable to problem solving activities by single organizations focused on limited aspects of the problem system. Planned global change—for example dealing with chronic poverty, maldevelopment, and hunger in large parts of the world and including debt ridden economies whose instabilities are intensified by growing gaps between rich and poor—will inevitably demand changes at several levels of analysis. Global problems are often approached through “macro-level” changes that can alter the *policy* environment. They also begin as “micro-level” reforms vis-a vis locally focused *projects* that alter local behavior and institutions. But long term global change, where vast increases in interdependence and uncertainty abound, requires both the macro and micro in the form of “meso-level” *programs and institutional relations*. The meso-level, as described by the authors, is neither top down or bottom up and offers an alternative to free market or central planning approaches to societal regulation. It involves *global change partnerships* that are both *lateral* and *vertical*; lateral partnerships join diverse professional skills and capacities across organizations and sectors while vertical partnerships join parties across the divides of power, from the policy levels to the grassroots. This kind of hybrid arrangement has the earmark of a seminal idea, and as the authors demonstrate, can have high leverage effects on large systems with seemingly intractable problems.

The strength of the chapter is its research base in combination with a theoretical elaboration of Richard Putman’s concept of social capital in the global change domain. Thirteen cases of hybrid partnerships from 12 countries in Africa and Asia are examined seeking to “identify ingredients associated with successful cooperation across differences in sector and power”. Three factors are used to explain successful cooperative efforts: (1) pre-existing *social capital* in the form of previously experienced networks, norms and trust; (2) settings of dialogue that maximized *mutual influence* among organizations in spite of sector and power differences; and (3) face-to-face group *learning* processes that used conflict (moderate to high levels of conflict were more productive than low levels of reported conflict) to enable new choices and new behaviors by interorganizational systems. The Sudan Popular Health program, for example, involved over a hundred partner organizations crossing the vertical and lateral dimensions into a hybrid for change

that has had positive impact on the health of 1.6 million people. The cases, one after the other, are compelling. But equally important as the cases, are the innovations in research practice leading to the case writing. Each of the case studies was conducted by an international team of researchers—the medium, in this chapter, is also the message.

Most observers of the human response to global *environmental* change believe that the key to solving problems of collective action is in the creation of international regimes—and this is the focus of Barbara Gray in chapter 9. Regimes are interlocking sets of framework conventions and obligations that govern interactions among international actors. And although most of the study on international regimes concerns economic regimes, interest has mounted rapidly in the study of environmental regimes. To manage the myriad of environmental changes that are forecast (for example sea level increases from global warming) requires organizing at both the local and global levels. But such organizing presents a “supreme challenge”—it is about governing without government, it is about organizing a world of “uncorellated” stakeholders *in the absence of authority*. It is about *underorganized systems* where interdependence is high but where most actors are approaching global level phenomenon through local, uncoordinated action and where no party has sufficient power to force unilateral decisions.

For Gray the search for solutions to life threatening issues at the global level involves four classifications of environmental problems: commons, shared natural resources, transboundary externalities, and linked issues such as environmental and economic development linkages. In the absence of authority, the only real option, argues Gray, is collaboration: “collaboration involves a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain”. Like Brown and Ashman earlier, the author identifies a number of factors, like social capital, that are critical to the successful development of regimes. Theoretically Gray looks at how leadership, culture, structure, and technology become the mechanisms for negotiating the development of a domain and then quickly turns her attention to practical requirements or “how to’s”. What is most needed, she contends, is the formation of *active trust*. Likewise there is no escaping the kind of time it takes to build it; it is a trust that is gradually negotiated through interaction, the joint framing of the problem, the use of a good convener, and the candid dealing with power differences. There will be no regime formation where there is no trust, and no trust where there is no dialogue. Organizing for global change is not about cold structures and mechanistic power relations, argues Gray. Much needed in the area of global change is a *scholarship of human process*. While the structures of collaboration must likewise be better understood, Gray’s call is for a better understanding of the difficult human processes of negotiation, interaction, and trust development that lie at the foundation of the collaborative forms.

Mayer Zald turns his attention to another kind of organization, one of the great catalytic forms that often sparks efforts at regime formation—transnational social movement organizations (SMOs). Zald’s starting question is fundamental: How do people around the globe sometimes come to act in concert? His analysis is conceptually rich. It is guided by modern social movement theory, especially the writings that focus on resource mobilization, political opportunity, and cultural framing. But there is a paradox submits Zald: cooperation across national boundaries to alleviate hunger, to contain and eliminate the spread of AIDS, to combat environmental deterioration, and so on, also creates the

conditions for large scale conflicts. Groups and cultures that were once fairly isolated from each other are now brought into contact and, almost by definition, SMOs generate conflict precisely because they are born with social transformation and change as their reason for existence. So while the idea of cooperation across national boundaries to achieve desirable social goals has intuitive appeal, there are always groups and organizations with opposing priorities, goals, and values. The more effective the SMO is in generating cooperative transboundary action, the more conflict there will likely be in the world. A case in point is the role SMOs played in helping to virtually eliminate slave trade globally across national boundaries. So like the chapter by Brown and Ashman, cooperation and conflict go hand in hand, they are not opposites along a continuum.

Admittedly Zald's writing is in an "assertive mode", as if we knew a lot about the operation of transnational social movements. On a descriptive level, histories of particular social movements have been written. Yet, on a comparative and theoretical level "much remains to be done". Concludes Zald, "the trends in globalization will inevitably lead to more transnational social movements and a more complex interweaving of conflict and cooperation."

Julie Fisher's chapter puts some numbers to such trends. For example she maps out the "breathtaking growth" of indigenous nongovernmental organizations committed to addressing issues of poverty and environmental decline in the third world. The chapter explores characteristics of globally-locally linked grassroots organizations (GROs), horizontal networks between GROs, grassroots support organizations (GRSOs) and horizontal and vertical GRSO networks that are connecting across cyberspace in a "virtual global community". Organizations like EarthCare Africa, The Latin American Network for Child Welfare, ANGO (Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development), and dozens of others are described in ways that give the reader a feel—the *barefoot revolution* is on and the organizations being born have been "hybridized" with traditional ways of practicing cooperation in villages and cultures throughout the developing world. In Africa, for example, thousands of GROs were organized in response to the droughts of 1973 and 1985. In Kenya, there were 1600 women's GROs by 1987. All of them must be understood through the lens of their cultural roots and traditional relational forms.

In reading Fisher's chapter one is reminded of Pradip Khandwalla's (1988) pioneering work intended to make the organization and behavioral sciences more directly relevant to sustainable development, especially socio-economic growth in developing cultures. Fortunately, as Fisher's chapter so aptly shows, the opportunities and materials for studying the organization dimensions of global change from the perspective of the developing world context are tremendous. These organizations, as the reader will see from the descriptions, offer exceptionally rich sites for natural experiment and participatory type of research where "before", "during, and "after" data on structure, leadership, boundary spanning, human relations approaches, organization revitalization, and change methodologies can be learned from *in vivo*. Organization studies for social development is an exciting and overdue paradigm; it is an area where practice is truly outpacing theory.

In the final chapter of part two John Aram argues that the sheer numbers, the size and magnitude of the recent explosion global change organizations, suggests *the need for a*

*wholesale rethinking and revision of management assumptions and concepts.* Conceptually and practically, global change organizations provide a powerful counterpoint to the dominant cost-minimization, benefit-maximization paradigm in the management sciences—where, at best, organizations are seen as utilitarian inducement/contribution (contract) systems, where hierarchy and control are designed to minimize shirking and agency costs, and where self-interested opportunism is assumed to prevail. The global change organizations are public or collective goods organizations. The matters of concern—human rights, environmental protection, biodiversity, women’s rights, community development—are meant by members to be commonized, not privatized. In terms of the influential theory of collective action (Olson, 1965), these behaviors should not be evident where large numbers prevail and group membership is heterogeneous. However the enormous magnitude of the global change movement demonstrates the widespread prevalence of a different set of principles. From the standpoint of theory development, Aram proposes, “ the challenge is to build concepts in which the self-sacrificing quality of people and organizations that create public goods is the central, as opposed to the peripheral or tangential issue”. The organizational significance, the real story of the global change movement, lies in the incontrovertible and widespread evidence of public goods behavior.

So where do we go for insights into the growth of global change organizations, their innovativeness, and their ability to take public goods producing collective action? Here again is the idea of hybrid forms, of global change as requiring anything but unitary organizations. And in place of rational choice theories, Aram draws of the “theory of weak ties” in sociological network studies to cast an important light on the phenomenon. This theory explains how a social system organized by a greater number of *acquaintances* (weak ties) rather than close *friends* (strong ties) will exhibit greater aggregate innovativeness, cohesiveness, and adaptability. The decentralized, diffuse nature of membership in most global change efforts, especially aided by modern electronic communications, builds issue-oriented, low density organizational networks. Coupled with Aram’s convincing case against the universality of the widely accepted utilitarian models of management, this perspective is an exciting one in the ways it opens the door for fresh ideas for organization research and theory building.

### ***Part Three: Social Constructionism and Global Change***

In the interest of establishing priorities and achieving clarity of exposition, the *Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change* made a series of focused recommendations for the national program on global change research. One, for example, zeroes in on the relational aspects of a growing global change agenda—especially the enormous intensification of worldwide conflicts over values and choices:

*Proposals deserve priority to the extent they are likely to enhance understanding of processes of decision making and conflict management in response to global change...How will global environmental change intensify existing social conflicts or engender new forms of conflict? What technologies of conflict resolution or conflict management are likely to prove effective in coming to terms with these conflicts? (Stern et. al. 1992, p.243-247).*

Interestingly the committee also raises significant ethical questions about global change science itself, realizing that traditional science conventions—such as value freedom, detached objectivity, the picture theory of language, and the like—might well suppress the potentials of a human dimensions research program. “Novel theoretical constructs and research methods are needed” (p. 167) for example, the stakes may be quite high: “the reflexivity of human activity makes knowledge itself a driving force of the system that is the object of that knowledge” (p167). Even further, in light of the dramatic plurality inherent in global level inquiry, it is no longer possible or desirable to sustain patterns of insularity from the views, values, and understandings of those “not quite like us”.

Recently, social constructionist approaches to knowledge have begun to surface (see Gergen, 1994) which offer many exciting and promising ways of enriching the enterprise of human science, especially in a domain where questions of human relatedness (dealing with difficult issues of values, cultures, conflicts and beliefs) and reflexivity (where knowledge itself transforms the phenomenon) are increasingly of preeminent concern. Unlike earlier versions of social constructionism that appeared as “inherently critical” of virtually every aspect of conventional science, current expressions not only place great value on empirical methodologies and other traditional accomplishments, but also forge ahead with new methods demonstrating the advantages of breaking disciplinary boundaries, of entering interrelated dialogues, and approaching concerns of reflexivity not as “contaminating” limitation but as unique opportunity (e.g. the 1987 accounts of ozone depletion reflexively “turned back” on human beings and prompted unprecedented *reality shaping* forms of human cooperation and global action, including major alterations in corporate behaviors, changes in the agendas of international regimes, the birth of whole new connections among grassroots environmental movements, and rapid transformations in popular vocabularies and awareness).

For purposes here, constructionism is an approach to human science and practice which replaces the individual (or any “single” entity) with the *relationship* as the locus of knowledge. Philosophically it involves a decisive shift in western intellectual tradition from *cogito ergo sum*—to *communicamus ergo sum*. The common thread in most constructionist writing is a concern with the processes by which human beings, their values, and commonsense and scientific knowledge are both produced in, and reproduce, human communities. In practice constructionism replaces absolutist claims or the final word with the never ending collaborative quest to understand and construct options for better living (for the major statement in this area see Kenneth J. Gergen’s Realities and Relationships Harvard University Press, 1994),

One of its prominent strengths of the constructionist perspective, from the vantage point of developing a truly global human dimensions research program, is that it is always seeking to open the door to a fuller interweaving of the disparate communities of meaning. While descriptions of social constructionism vary widely and are subject to an enormous and rapidly expanding body of scholarship there are at least four exciting ways social constructionism can expand the scope and significance of research on the organization dimensions of global change: it invites greater attention to *ethical discourse and inquiry* into ever evolving visions of the good; it invites greater disciplinary *self critique and reflexivity*; it seeks *expansion of voices* participating in the world of science and action ;

and it invites *anticipatory theorizing*, constructing future images, propositions, and languages of positive possibility. All of these it would appear are important forms of scholarship to the emergent domain. And each of these invitations is illustrated, at least partially, in the papers making of part three of our volume.

For example Ken Gergen's paper on *Global Organization and the Potential for Ethical Inspiration* demonstrates how social constructionism does not avoid but engages with full priority the thorny questions of values, concerns of power, and how social constructionism has practical uses in the arena of "an enormous intensification of ethical conflict". For Gergen, the sources of conflicts in the global change domain are not essentially problems of malignant intention ("we should not think in terms of the evil intents of the multi-nationals as against the purity of the environmentally minded or vice versa") or ruthless and colonizing groups seeking world domination ("these terms are the epithets of the outsider"). Rather the problem is that of multiple and competing constructions of the good.

After dismissing and showing the weaknesses inherent in many conventional approaches to conflict resolution—including the long-standing attempt to generate universal and binding ethical principles *and when those do not work* the additional strategy of reactive international sanctions—Gergen finds compelling potential in new organizational forms and postmodern organizational theory.

The pivotal metaphor for simultaneously achieving organizational viability and ethical well-being, for Gergen, is found in conceptualizing ethical construction *as relational process*. Proposed is a shift in the western intellectual tradition from conceptions of ethical principles from which proper behaviors are later derived, to forms of *ethically generative practices* that give rise to conjoint action and the synergistic valuing of realities. From the social constructionist stance, global values and ethics will always be "interminable" and "unsettlable"; they are also contingent and parochial, reflecting the ongoing constructions of reality of parties in concrete relationship. Post modern *organizing*, therefore, is to be valued for its relational globalizing potential to the extent to which it continuously opens the opportunities for intelligibilities to commingle, to interpenetrate in cooperative practice, and where the pervasive pluralism of international life is met not with dismay but with a sense of reassurance. Concrete illustrations of the abstract argument are usefully offered, for example from a multinational pharmaceutical company, where the voices of ecological activists in essence became part of the management of the firm (the outside and inside of the corporation was obviously blurred)—leading the company to champion an international policy of bioethics. In the post modern organization, writes Gergen, boundaries are loose and permeable, there are no single individuals making autonomous decisions, there are multiple centers of intelligibility and rapidly obsolete rationality, there are many nonhierarchical and overlapping networks of group configurations, lattices, matrices, temporary systems—and there is healthy appreciation for incoherent policies. A formula for chaos? Just the opposite, says Gergen. In the relationally rich circular organization, intelligibility are not as likely to ossify. Images of the good and the right do not become frozen—where "my" reality is the reality. Conventions of negation, so often created when intelligibilities are walled off from one another, are softened. And a subtle shift is accomplished. Relational practice give rise to "livable ethics". Embedded in the hurly burly of everyday

vocabularies and constructed understandings, these ethics are fluidly reconstructed in the course of living, in the processes of practical dialogue. Much needed, argues Gergen, is transformation of our fundamental quest. The *ethically generative question* for the global change community of researchers and practitioners is not “What is *the good*?” but instead, given the heterogeneity of the world’s peoples, must become “What are the relational means by which we can help bring about dialogue and mutually satisfactory conditions?”

In chapter 12 Raza Mir, Marta Calas, and Linda Smircich demonstrate one of the truly unique commitments of the social constructionist perspective—reflexive deliberation. Too often in scientific and scholarly pursuits, attention is focused “out there” with little open reflection “inside” the discipline. Hidden from view, frequently, are perhaps oppressive tendencies, values, or even innocent but detrimental consequences of the work. For the constructionist there is recognition that whether a primitive society or a scientific sub-culture, we develop working languages, and with those words (concepts, theories, professional vocabularies) accounts are furnished on what is real, rational, and right. Without reflexive deliberation—exploration into the historically and culturally situated character and consequence of the accounts *including our own*—there is always risk of settling in too quickly. Univocal agreement tends to occlude critique. Outsiders not sharing the premises are rendered suspect, often dismissed or denigrated. Many disciplines obviously operate this way. But it is not a good foundation for building a program of inquiry into the human dimensions of global change. The all too familiar process of disciplinary fragmentation is antithetical to truly global learning. From this perspective, it is essential to build into global change science processes of reflexive deliberation. And by doing it in this chapter Mir, Calas and Smirchich offer a message that is demonstrated in its medium. It is a great piece of writing; something we need more of in organization theory.

The chapter begins in complete and utter protest with the theme of the present book. That we should hold up the *value of cooperation* as a positive and universal good appears at first glance to be a seductive vision. But not so quick, say the authors. Could it be that the language of cooperation is mainstream smoke; that it is fraught with historical connections to traditions, views, economic requirements, social systems, and practices that are oppressive? The possibility exists, says the authors. So, “as theorists striving for less constriction in the discourse, we have no option but to be *rebelliously uncooperative*.”

The scholarship of dislodgment that follows challenges all of us to re-trace the historical continuities involved in the language of cooperation including Frederick Taylor’s call for cooperation, Mayo’s human relations approaches, and others, including recent machinelike methods to organization re-engineering. The continuities are disturbing. The authors wonder if anything like authentic cooperation, or full voice, is ever possible in the global domain.

In the modern age, argue the authors, new forms of domination are increasingly embodied in the social relations of science and technology which organize knowledge and production systems. The story becomes further disturbing as a spotlight is placed on GE’s strategic business moves in India—and its implicatures in female infanticide. Hailed by mainstream organizational writers as a move of great entrepreneurial vision, the

authors show how the voices of women were systematically excluded in the broadest societal discourses. (One can easily transpose the argument to many global change concerns, like trying to understand loss of rainforests and the indigenous voices). Trying to understand the situation is complicated. But the problem, in the end, is not one of lack of explanations but *one of who can explain*. “Are we bound to remain trapped in an inability to produce a *participative epistemology*?” asks the authors, and “is the west (knowledgeable enough to be) even capable of hearing?”

Rene Bouwen and Chris Steyaert, almost seamlessly, continue the constructionist perspective with their chapter *From Dominant Frames Toward Multi-voiced Cooperation*. To understand human response to issues of global change, from inconsolable poverty to interrelated environmental pressures, we must compliment the institutional, legal, and political perspectives with new understandings about how interactions among the world’s peoples are framed in and through organizations. The question they add to Gergen’s earlier one is this: “How can we frame human response to global change so that all voices from *different and unequal positions* can be heard in organizational settings with equivalent seats?” No this is not an invitation to a Tower of Babel negatively interpreted, argue the authors. It is an invitation to recognize an “original polylinguism”. The care of our world and strengthening of cooperative capacity can be approached through the care of languages: “No language to waste, that is the polyphonic cry which can ground every global change or development project”.

Organizing, to be sustainable and effective, is about expansion of voice. The ideal, proposes the authors, is the development of “a polyphony of fully valid voices”. Writing from their home in Belgium, the authors explain “polyphony” as a metaphor they are using from the oldest of musical repertoires. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the Flemish Primitives created a furor throughout Europe with their paintings. At the same time a musical composition form was developed which eventually became an artistic production throughout all Europe. The composition technique was called polyphony, literally multi-voicedness. Two or more independent but organically related voice parts sound against one another. In polyphonic partiture, describe the authors, we find multiple melodic lines (not just melody and chorus) and every line could in theory be performed separately. But by performing all the lines simultaneously, there becomes a rich and complex musical totality. Most important, next to the independent horizontal lines, vertical lines emerge which also form a totality. In this way, a network of horizontal and vertical lines is created, in which every voice is meaningful but at the same time gains meaning in relation to other voices. Characteristic of Flemish polyphony, is equivalence of all. There is no soloist part and chorus part. *The different voices are created simultaneously in and through one another in relational practice*. This, propose the authors, is the central priority for building new knowledge regarding global change’s organization dimensions. Quoting from Bakhtin (1984), they conclude, “We must renounce our monologic habits so that we might come to feel at home in the new artistic sphere which Dostoevsky discovered, so that we might orient ourselves in that incomparably more complex artistic model of the world which he created”.

Nancy Adler, in the next chapter, seeks broad expansion of voices in her search for new leadership: “Where are we going to find the kind of leaders that we need for 21<sup>st</sup> century

society...What do we know about the women who hold the most senior global leadership positions?”

For Adler, the central task of the final years of this century is the creation of a new model of co-existence among the world’s various cultures, peoples, races, and religious spheres within a single interconnected civilization. In relationship to the rapidly growing agenda for global change, we face the task of re-creating virtually all of our organizations. Government organizations are encapsulated in increasingly obsolete domestic structures. Companies increasingly have the transnational structures and outlook necessary to address worldwide global issues, but lack the mandate and vision to do so. But are there exceptions? Are there corporations, for example, that have dedicated themselves to addressing global issues? What are their characteristics, especially in regards to leadership?

After creating a mapping of the world’s women leaders in both the governmental and global corporate sectors, Adler sets out on a fascinating search for the themes and patterns of women leaders. She traces the leaders’ unique paths to power, how they leveraged the fact that they are women, their rising numbers, the diverse styles and backgrounds, and their promising strengths. “Some strikingly unexpected patterns in the women leader’s paths to power differentiate them from most of their male contemporaries” observes Adler, “and these differences appear to fit well with the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century society”.

Picture, for instance, Anita Roddick, founder and CEO of the Body Shop, whose U.K. based company operating worldwide has become renowned for its global change commitments, including environmental campaigns, job creation efforts, leadership in the area of environmental auditing, and human rights advocacy. Roddick describes an image of organizing that fits our earlier definition of a global change organization: “Leaders in the business world should aspire to be true planetary citizens. They have global responsibilities since their decisions affect not just the world of business but world problems of poverty, national security, and the environment”. Indeed the Body Shop’s mission statement states our reason for being is to “*dedicate our business to the pursuit of social and environmental change*”.

It is important to note that Anita Roddick’s vision is not the same as the important, but more familiar, call for socially responsible enterprise. It is more about *organizations-as-leaders* of needed change. With economic globalization and changing local conditions, business leaders will increasingly be involved with a broader field of issues that effect not only their shareholders, employees, and customers but also the quality of life in communities and cities, our ecosystems, and people in countries throughout the world. In many ways Roddick’s views on leadership are iconoclastic. The conjoining of profits and social ideals is a disquieting proposition for some people. There is “business” and there is “good works” and never the twain shall meet. Is it an accident that this kind of future is being envisioned by a woman?

This is not the place for detailed commentary on Adler’s courageous, and perhaps for some, provocative findings. But her chapter points to deep level changes—whole system transformations in values, beliefs, basic assumptions, and commitments—taking place in society. Most of us grew up in organizations that were dominated by men and their

theorists—Henry Ford, Frederick Taylor, and Max Weber—the fathers of the classic bureaucratic system. These are not the organizations that will likely deal effectively with the transboundary concerns involved in the human response to global change. So where will the new cooperative forms come from? For Adler, the women in her exploration represent “a dialogue with future history”. And the new voices, in polyphonic fashion, are offering a prophesy: “approaches that worked well in the twentieth century but foretell disaster for the twenty-first century”.

In the final chapter in part three, Stuart L. Hart responds to a fourth constructionist invitation—to participate in the *construction of new worlds*. Many business, non-profit and government leaders talk about global environmental sustainability but few have been able to advance anticipatory theory that moves beyond good critique into an actionable agenda for organizations. As anticipatory theorist, Hart’s work suggests that the task of good organization theory is not only to hold a mirror to the world as it is, nor merely provide critiques of debilitating assumptions and practices, but to study that which has not yet occurred, that is, creating alternative conceptions of the future through theory. From a constructionist stance, theories and discourses of the profession are themselves constitutive of societal life. Some theories, as they enter the common discourse of the culture, prepare the way to the future by *sustaining* taken-for-granted assumptions while others, in more critical terms, serve the task of *dislodgment*. Hart’s work which he calls “prospective” theory, points to yet another direction: it responds to a mandate for social *transformation*. Rather than “telling it like it is” this chapter “tells it as it may become”.

Like it or not, argues Hart, the responsibility for ensuring a sustainable world fall largely on the shoulders of the world’s enterprises. The environmental revolution has been almost three decades in the making, and it has changed forever how companies do business. However, suggests Hart, the distance traveled to date will seem small, when in 30 years, we look back to the 1990s. Beyond greening, beyond competitive strategy, lies an enormous challenge. Hart’s interest is in how the changing relationship between the world’s ecosystems and the economy will change the whole paradigm of management “where competitive strategy should give way to cooperative action”. More than that Hart’s paper is a call for systematic inquiry into “corporations as agents of global change”—pathfinders who have accepted the enormous challenge of developing a sustainable global economy. While the social and technological issues exceed the mandate and the capabilities of any corporation, at the same time, corporations are the only organizations with the resources, the global reach, and ultimately, the market motivation to achieve sustainability.

For Hart the future of enterprise lies not just in *pollution prevention* (minimizing or eliminating waste before it is created) or even *product stewardship* (minimizing pollution from manufacturing *and* also all environmental impacts involve with the full life cycle of a product) but in leading the way to *sustainable development* (vision led companies that are finding ways to act on three goals—environmental and social sustainability, and economic development—at the same time). By implication: corporations can and should lead the way helping to shape public policy, driving change in consumers’ behavior, shaping new relationships to suppliers and other companies, and becoming educators rather than mere marketers of products. Obviously there are very few examples of firms operating at the third level.

Hart's chapter illustrates with a couple, like Merck's work with INBio in the Costa Rican rainforest and Mazda's "sacred quest" for a hydrogen rotary engine that emits only water vapor in its operation. Hart's prospective propositions are meant to hasten discovery of corporate leaders in the global change domain. His conclusion is that those who think that sustainability is only a matter of pollution control are missing the bigger picture. We are poised at the threshold of a historic moment in which many of the world's industries may be transformed. As a field we are being invited into a research arena where the stakes are real. We need, as theorists, to be willing to set sail from the shores of the familiar. Much needed, argues Hart, is research into the firms and industries that are "first movers".

### **Concluding Comments**

In this discussion we have attempted to bring thematic focus to the chapters to follow and have pointed to the central contours of a contemporary research agenda of tremendous importance and exciting implication. There is little question that globalization and global level concerns are calling for the transformation of all social sciences in terms of their research and learning priorities, agendas, metatheoretical commitments, and methodologies. As it relates to the organization dimensions we have proposed that:

- there is not one single item on the global agenda for change that can be understood outside of the role and functioning of organizations. Any effort to understand, much less come to terms with global change that does not include a sustained commitment to improving our knowledge of the organizational dimensions cannot succeed.
- an increasingly important field of scholarship and knowledge is being born whereby organization and management studies will be viewed on a much broader scale than ever before, indeed as a matter of world affairs.

Our common future in many ways will depend on the extent to which today's executives, grassroots citizens, and political leaders develop their visions of a better world, the shared will to achieve it, and the *organizations* capable of embodying humanity's cooperative potential. And so finally, with important caveats as expressed for example in the chapters by Mir et. al. and Aram, we would like to end this chapter with an opportunity focused, affirmative direction for future research, dialogue, and experimentation in the domain of the organization dimensions of global change (ODGC). Our suggestion and vision:

*ODGC research is an enterprise whose focus and task is to interpret basic new trends in humanity's global cooperative capacity, to anticipate new possibilities in organizational forms and processes, and to study the new relational practices which can contribute to a deeper understanding of the "life-promoting" interrelation of humanity and world ecosystems, cooperative forms and global society.*