



COLLABORATING ACROSS ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES: CO-CREATING A MORE JUST, RESILIENT AND THRIVING SOCIETY

Submission deadline: October 31, 2021

Objective and Rationale for the Special Issue

While the COVID-19 pandemic showed that most leaders and organizational designs were not well-prepared, nor equipped, to address this type of disruption (Worley & Jules, 2020), it also revealed outstanding cases of well-organized and effective responses that illustrate the potential of people and organizations to handle a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Bremmer, 2020; Nemhard et al., 2020; Roth, 2020). The objective of this Special Issue is to explore how actors in organizations, collaborating across organizational boundaries, can co-create a more just, resilient, and thriving “new normal” society.

More than 50 years ago, Emery & Trist (1965) foreshadowed our current VUCA world with the concept of a turbulent field. They stated that in such environments dissimilar, but interdependent, organizations should seek relationships that maximize cooperation (p. 28-29). This Special Issue wants to build on their seminal foresight by inviting submissions that explore such cooperation in the environmental contexts we face today.

The premise of this Special Issue is that the innovative responses to COVID-19 are just an illustration of a potential new way of perceiving and designing the role of inter-organizational collaborative partnerships. Such collaborations are gaining traction in efforts to address complex and wicked problems, enhance the positive role of business in society, and promote sustainability (Gray & Dewulf, 2021; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Pavez et al., 2021; Termeer et al., 2019).

Aims and Scope

We propose that for engaged scholars, in a variety of disciplinary fields, this is a unique moment to contribute to a better understanding of how to handle the challenges of the 21st century, specifically through inter-organizational collaboration. As a natural experiment, the current crisis has provided a space for improvisation and concurrent reflection on the theories we employ to make sense of complex unfolding events. Such endeavors might result in novel (or updated) theories and practices of collaboration across organizational boundaries. It might be possible that several taken-for-granted assumptions about collaborations and collaborating are no longer useful in the context of 21st challenges (e.g., climate change, terrorism, water scarcity, or structural inequality) in a VUCA world, or that organizations exposed to new realities need novel

theoretical lenses to apprehend their boundaries, their relationships with other societal agents, and the practices that lead to effective concerted action.

Currently, we are not only observers but participants in an unprecedented process of organizational and societal change (Ciabuschi et al., 2020; Mithani, 2020). Therefore, we invite authors to contribute to any topic that can enrich our understanding of how collaboration across organizational boundaries can help to create a more just, resilient, and thriving society. We encourage studies that shed light on how inter-organizational collaboration might contribute to tackle complex and wicked problems that we are likely to experience in the coming decades (Doh et al., 2018; Ferraro et al., 2015; Termeer et al., 2019; Worley & Jules, 2020). We welcome both theoretical and empirical articles (e.g., cases, action research, experiments, and surveys) and inter-disciplinary perspectives.

Indicative Themes and Possible Issues

Some themes of potential interest include but are not limited to the following:

- The role and nature of inter-organizational collaboration (e.g., multi-stakeholder partnerships or governance arrangements) to address specific major societal issues, such as climate change, threats to democracy, and food and water insecurity.
- Collaborative organizing and collective sensemaking in times of a “shock,” a big disruption, or a VUCA environment.
- Leading collaborative processes of coping and change during times of crisis and/or in VUCA environments.
- The role of culture and corporate values when facing a highly disruptive exogenous event that calls for inter-organizational collaboration.
- Attaining resilience, through collaboration, at individual, group, organization, and community levels.
- Emergent organizational forms, which might blur conventional organizational boundaries, as an adaptive response to crisis or disruptive exogenous events.
- The effect of organizational narratives and metaphors on inter-organizational collaboration.
- The affective and/or gendered underpinnings of inter-organizational collaboration.
- Theoretical perspectives (such as institutional, practice, process, and transition management theories) on the role of collaboration in defining, making sense, or providing meaning to a new and better “normal.”
- Research approaches (such as participatory action research) that are well suited to work with and capture dynamics of inter-organizational collaboration.

Submission Process, Deadlines & Contacts

We encourage dialogue prior to the final paper submission, by conversations with guest editors (see list below) from March 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021.

October 31, 2021: Initial paper submission to JABS portal.

December 31, 2021: Decisions & reviews communicated to authors.

March 31, 2022: Revisions due.

May 31, 2022: Submission of final papers.

Fall 2022: Special Edition published.

Special Edition Guest Editors

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