Solidarity at home

2012 was declared the “UN year of Cooperatives” and although the year is almost over, the slogan remains just as true: ‘Cooperative Enterprises build a better world’. Indeed many cooperatives have been able to withstand the current international economic crisis and together, they have been able to create wealth and keep unemployment rates down.

There is this amazing story of the Valley of Mondragón, a town with 24,000 inhabitants in Basque Country, Spain. We’re used to hearing from the Basque in relation to bomb attacks by the ETA, but this Basques has found yet another way to be at the helm of their own development.

Cooperatives, both consumers and workers, and self-help organizations have a long tradition in the Basque Country. In 1941, a young priest, José Mará Arizmendiarrieta, established what is now called the Mondragón Cooperative Movement, and in 2010, the total turnover of the 120 interlinked co-operatives was 14.8 billion Euros, employing about 100,000 workers, thus making it Spain’s fourth largest industrial and seventh largest financial group and an example to the world. 87 out of the 120 cooperatives are industrial, producing anything from “spoons to railway bridges, from airbags to night glasses,” according to Tegenlicht, a Dutch documentary. There is a cooperative Bank by name Caja Laboral; there are cooperatives providing services including consultancy, architecture, engineering (one of the leading retail groups in Spain is a Mondragón cooperative) and there are few educational institutions, one of which is a university where both education-training and innovation are focal points and which partly serves as the research & development departments of the other cooperatives.

Workers own the Cooperatives by taking Loans to buy the shares which they repay whilst working and then receive the amount back with interest as their pension package. The enterprises are run democratically and when the going gets too tough for one market, both people and finances can move from one cooperative to the other, making them resilient together.

The ties that link the Mondragón cooperatives are strong, as these bonds emanate from a humanist concept of business, interrelated by a philosophy of participation and solidarity and a shared business culture. As the owners, who are at the same time the workers say: “this is our house”.

Caja Laboral, with a balance of 3.5 billion, has invested its finances into the co-operatives and into the Spanish capital market: “Why would we invest in the international capital market?” a spokesman says, “That what you know is where you find safety: at home. We need to earn money and we go for safety, not for profit. Capital doesn’t have a homeland, companies hop from one continent to another, leaving the people behind. This company is like me: it has a homeland and here is where we need to make it happen.”

Do cooperatives still have the name of being ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘inefficient’? This story and many others throughout the world prove the opposite. There is one billion people-member cooperatives worldwide; they are successful and sustainable enterprises and the 300 largest cooperatives in the world have combined sales of over a trillion dollars!

Probably one Year of Cooperatives is not enough. Let’s make it the 21st century of the Cooperatives.
IODA WORLD CONFERENCE  2013 IN PERU

Permanent Transformation of Organizations

September 24th to 28th 2013

By José Campoverde, Peru

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IODA CONFERENCE

LIMA 2013

Lima, capital and biggest city of Peru with 9 million inhabitants

IODA will soon be celebrating its first 30 World Conference, this happens following the Peru and Japan Conferences. It is a good idea to think about its significance in the changing world scenario. From physical, routine, repetitive labor, we have gone on to intellectual and creative work, of continuous flow in houses and airplanes.

We have gone from intermittent innovations to constant innovation; from large, ponderous businesses to small, powerful ones; from rigid structures to virtual and flexible ones; and, from fast transactions to those in real time.

We have passed from a society of masses that depresses the individual to de-massed society, which elevates the individual; from the supreme economic commandment to respect for the religious, the ethnic, the cultural; to respect for customs and traditions; and, from conflicts among majorities to disputes among minorities.

We have passed from big governments to small ones; from political parties that are big, strong, and behaviorist to small and influential ones; from the power of gold to the power of information; from fear of change to the mastering of change; and, from leadership at the summit to leadership at the base.

We have gone from selling to the customer to listening to him; from believing in the power of the General Management to believing more in the power of the mid-level work teams; from mastering the process to the position of a Culture; and, from investigating the future to producing it.

We have progressed from treating people well, to discovering what they are capable of; from democracy through observation to democracy through action; and, from a lukewarm conscience, tolerant and often indolent, to the activating conscience of proper leadership, and thus we come to OD in its latest meanings as presented in the IODA Conference.

From the nature of OD, concentrated in the observation of the behavior of a group, we have gone on to the observation of attitudes; from this observation to shared learning; from individual conduct to group conducts; and, from there to the whole organization and to the quest for transformations in society.
The IODA Conferences have kept in step with world changes, changes in the continents and countries; and this has been the route of the IODA Conference since its foundation:

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Peru, like any other country in steady growth, is seeking to reduce poverty, seeking added value for its exports; is eager to reduce the State and expand the private sector; wants to improve education, make its streets safe, and open its doors to world trade. It opens its doors to the hundreds of experts, consultants, researchers, advisors, students and OD practitioners to share a conference in the planning since 2010, when Peru was designated to host the 2013 Conference.

**28th IODA CONFERENCE**

24 – 28 Sept 2013

**HOW THE CONFERENCE IS BEING FOCALIZED**

**MAKING CONTACT**

The 28th IODA Conference will be held in Lima, the capital of Peru, on the Pacific coast in the central part of South America. It is a city with a population of nine million, which concentrates the political, economic, social, and technological power of a democratic country of 30 million inhabitants and with 192 years of independence.

Over the past 40 years, Peruvian Management has begun to develop. In the seventies, public companies were privatized, and from then until 1985 there were reductions in the State apparatus; from 10 traditional Universities, 135 Universities came into being; and, in the past 15 years there has been an increase in Postgraduate, Master’s, and Diploma Courses. In 2010, one University started a postgraduate course in Organizational Development – at a fundamental level, since certain traditional courses are included in its design. OD is not yet so widely known as we would wish.

Three impressions of Lima’s modern part: Miraflores
TITLE OF THE CONFERENCE

It has been given the title of PERMANENT TRANSFORMATION OF ORGANIZATIONS, based on three principles:

One: The world is changing increasingly fast, it transforms itself, new countries come into being, new block relations, new technologies, new world routes emerge, minorities have more influence, religious wars, knowledge becomes diversified, work moves to the home, information technology multiplies world management and makes knowledge detonate within a radius of 360º.

Two: Companies grow and become multicultural, decision-making power gets diversified, delivery dates become shorter, and changes are more dynamic. Small businesses grow faster than they did 40 years ago. Medium and large companies emerge, where there was no room before.

Three: Interacting changes advance faster than behavioral changes. Fashion lasts less time. All organizations are en route to process management.

IODA IN MOZAMBIQUE 2012

My reflections of the conference

By Nomso Markson, Nigeria

My reflections of the 27th IODA World Conference 2012 in Mozambique, is full of quite intriguing moments and memories. I learnt a lot from professional OD practitioners from all around the world through their shared experiences from different perspectives of OD.

The most important thing about the conference for me were the workshops which were so powerful and loaded. The plenary sessions were so unique, in the sense that they were structured to be interactive and participatory.

The IODA Conference has helped me fine tune my aspirations over what I have been trying to do. This clear focus I have now came from the positive words of encouragements that came from IODA colleagues and friends whom I interacted with. I returned to my country with a clear focus which has given birth to my own consulting firm “Crystal Visions Development Consulting”

For me, attending this year’s conference was all I needed. Besides the learning sessions of the conference, I guess all the participant had great fun and the adventures that came with it were memorable.

I want to use this medium to say a big thanks to the Executive Committee of IODA, for giving me the great opportunity through the scholarship support scheme to attend the conference.

Nomso Markson
nomxus@yahoo.com
FEEDBACK ON THE CONFERENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

By Suzanne M. Zaldivar, USA

IODA’s annual conference in Mozambique offered me a particularly joyful experience: networking with a group of OD practitioners who don’t just talk about OD, but embody it. I have never felt so warmly welcomed and so quickly absorbed into the group, as I have during this conference. Alfredo and Beatriz Mazive, our generous hosts, and their incredible team, managed to create an engaging space where we could hear about the impact of OD practitioners across Africa and Asia – many of whom are applying the discipline in challenging environments with limited resources. I felt inspired by so many of the practitioners there – many working in capacity development – who demonstrated such resilience and commitment to supporting the development of healthy systems that serve people well and create results.

At the lovely hotel Xisaka in Namaacha, nestled in the mountains outside of Maputo, we had the joy of being visited by famous Mozambican timbila musicians as well as a talented troupe of young dancers who electrified the air with drumming and stomping feet. Did I mention the dancing every night? Yes, there was dancing every night – my own happy feet did some stomping – music from all over the world invited us to move, swing, swish and gyrate. We even had a Mozambican type of dance-off between the men and the women (I won’t tell you who won!).

Most poignant for me were the visits we made to two local non-profit organizations in Namaacha – one which provided home-health aid, and the other a Catholic orphanage. We learned about some of the successes and struggles that these organizations have been having. IODA has committed to finding a way to continue to channel financial and consulting resources to these organizations – I look forward to hearing of more to come.

Mozambique now has a very special place in my heart…and IODA has an enthusiastic new member!

Warm regards,

Suzanne

smz@inspired-inc.com
MY MOZAMBIкан COCKTAIL

By Zita Falatovics, Hungary

Starting to write this article I turned my phone off, closed my mails, and slowly went through my memories of Mozambique: the red sand, the colors, the people on the street, the warm peanuts, the even warmer welcome by our hosts, Anselmo’s amazing crayfish… After the sensational excitement my mind started to wonder around people, ideas and stories… And interestingly enough that’s when I started to feel a slightly uncomfortable, but the same time exciting pain in my stomach: the longing to go to Peru next year. I recognized this feeling, I actually know it very well! I had it after the OD World Summit, IODA’s 25th in 2010. But what makes it happen?

What is the magic cocktail of the IODA community?
Playing with the most memorable moments in my mind, I found a very clear pattern: it always included great discussions. Simple as that. And I think I wasn’t the only one with this experience in Namaacha (or Budapest). I am a generally open and easy-going person, who loves to exchange ideas, but even like that I don’t always end up having great discussions, and especially not so many is such short time, and with different people too! I was triggered to look beyond… IODA is creating the platforms for the discussions, both formal and informal ones: the conference, the sessions, the evening parties, the morning programs etc.

But many does it, I’m curious about the energy of these discussions. What puts such high level energy into the system? I tell no secret: the people.

What was very interesting for me is, that these people shared two things:
1. They are all genuinely interested.
2. They are all willing to take responsibility (…for their ideas, for their decisions, for their active participation, for important causes, eventually for a better world - or to stay realistic, for a good enough world).
I found this exceptional, because I don’t talk about one or two remarkable person, but most of the participants! (Naturally I didn’t meet and speak with everyone, all those whom I haven’t talked to, could be horrible and awfully boring people. But I doubt that.)

So back to the magic cocktail analogy: we’ve got the ice and the vodka, but what makes this potion so nice and tasty? (Note to myself: using cocktails for OD analogy, really?! I have to stop drinking… too many Christmas parties already…)

During these exceptional conversations people always shared something with me: their passion, their perspective, and their real presence.
Most of the time these ingredients came in package, but even one of them was enough to create real inspiring ideas or touching moments.

And that’s where the big deal is: the way how the people mix or shake together… Passion, personal perspectives and real presence are all very delicate commodities. And that’s where respect becomes crucial. No matter my age, my experiences I always felt respected just because of being who I am, and this let me to entertain myself with every idea, letting my mind to carefully and openly choose what to embrace and nurture or what to refuse. And for me this means the greatest opportunity to learn, to develop, to live… And I am really thankful for that.

So just to quickly summarize my version of this magical cocktail:
(But the way, the recipe works with dancing as well, which is obviously just another form of discussions…)

If you would like to re-create the wonderful “IODA-Discussion Martini” (for example next year in Peru, but actually anywhere in your life) take at least two person and start shaking your… genuine interest and willingness to take responsibility, you can add passion and/or perspective and/or real presence. My best advice on this is to start with offering a sip of respect and finish with the cherry. For that, all you need is …

Thank you so much everyone involved, but especially Alfredo and Ulla for this beautiful experience again!

Zita Falatovics

zita.falatovics@googlemail.com
Dear IODA-Members, OD Practitioners, Other Professionals and Friends,

My six years of presidency of IODA and my 14 years as a member of IODA’s EC will be completed within a few months. This has inspired me to reflect on various achievements, things I have learned about IODA and what makes IODA outstanding.

While writing this article I’m browsing my “vision charts” which I created for the first EC and members’ meeting as president in Canada in 2007. I still remember the fire in me whilst designing the slides.

What were the challenges I discovered for IODA in 2007?

1. Professional organizations and conference arrangements are springing up like mushrooms. Conferencing is becoming an unique business. IODA faces lots of competition. There are more alternative conferences one can attend.

2. Global internet access changes professional learning: People don't need to know a special organization in order to stay in contact with other professionals. And they don’t need to meet at conferences in order to share.

3. Increased work loads and the speedup of life are decreasing the opportunities and motivation to make additional business trips and to dedicate time to more voluntary work.

What was my idea for taking on these challenges?

I wanted to reach out for new horizons and make IODA grow in size, professional importance and international recognition. I dreamed of IODA chapters world-wide and OD advanced education centres under the stamp of IODA in all continents in order to attract an increasing number of professionals, especially job starters. I had the vision that students in our field are keen to apply for IODA young professional awards. "IODA China" was one and Ghana 2008 was the second most remarkable undertakings of this rapturous beginning.
What happened then?

Surprisingly, I had to change my course. What I was targeting had already reached the boundaries of the original conception of IODA. My years as president helped me to gain unexpected insights and taught me a new view on the potential of our association. As organization developers we know one principal: if a system is forced to a change you will have the best opportunities to learn how it functions - and to overcome unrealistic assumptions about it. I myself went through a huge learning process about IODA and also underwent a personal change. And the best of all was that I had great companions - my executive committee and our assistants. We went through the change jointly. Not always harmoniously but successfully. Finally, the common decision was to stand first for the values and only second for expansion in order to save the spirit that our founders had infused into the organization.

Did my dreams come true?

Interestingly, despite the course correction, very many of my dreams in my vision chords have been realized! First of all, IODA has become more vibrant!

1. The EC meets quarterly on the web and has developed an efficient meeting culture. The climate within the EC is based on partnership and friendship now.
2. Our executive and accounting assistance network harmoniously and with high reliability. They is also a great support for the EC. Finances are sound.
3. All EC members have their own areas of responsibility and organize their own committees. These committees are working throughout the year.
4. Communication has improved. The newsletter is priceless and it’s a symbol of the growing interest in communication and sharing in the time between conferences. We have a linked-in group that was active throughout 2012!
5. We have a new and modern web platform. And I understand it’s really only a few days to go before the essentially improved version will be online!
6. IODA has a Young Professional Program. Last year we sponsored the participation of our member from Papua New Guinea in an international project for global peers.
7. We received high recognition as an organization by being given the charitable status 501 (c) 3.
8. We are proud about our first endowment, granted for the Saul Silverman Award.
9. Our Award program works quite well and has been extended. We honoured special members with the Richard Beckhard Award annually. Twice we gave the IODA Life Time Award to outstanding professionals.
10. Our resource management has developed to a new level. Colleagues are donating their libraries to colleagues from developing countries.
11. IODA is more recognized and acknowledged in the professional world especially due to the OD World Summit in Budapest 2010 and all the PR and professional activities before and after the summit. Furthermore, IODA is networking more actively with other international organizations in our field, such as ODN, AODN, ODA, ODNJ, ISOD, EASC etc.
12. The IODA World Conferences have always been and are still of a high quality regarding professional input, as well as being community building opportunities. The next two conference venues in Peru and Japan are of high interest. The dates are fixed and preparations are taking their course. Negotiations with the OD Network for a joint conference in 2015 are progressing favourably.
What is IODA? Is it an organization or a community?

It is obviously easier to unleash IODA’s potential as a community rather than as an organization. But the latter is our declared goal. The amendment to a 501 (c) 3 organization was a clear step into this direction. We have created the preconditions to conduct successful fund raising for educational projects. There, fertile land is being prepared; it only needs to be farmed! But where are the “farmers”? The third challenge I described about the hectic rush and increasing stress levels in our lives prevents us from donating time and efforts in voluntary work? Will the ambitious - who often are the best in volunteering as well - reach their limits? What impact will it have to IODA?

Which other challenges IODA is faced with?

Regarding the beauty of IODA - one thing mustn’t be ignored. To remain with my metaphors, IODA is not only an oasis or a fertile field for everybody. It is also a luxury that many international colleagues do not have access to. There is one challenge or obstacle arisen I was not aware of: increasing global crisis. I calculated that our income would grow by decreasing travel expenses and conference fees which would have enabled a larger group of professionals to attend our world conferences. Unfortunately, prices have been developing the other way around. IODA stands for face to face sharing in multicultural, international settings. This cannot be accomplished without travelling longer distances or, for instance, only by sitting in front of a computer screen. IODA, in collaboration with the annual world conference hosts, has created a respectable scholarship system. But since travel expenses can not be included, many of the scholarship recipients, especially young job starters, weren’t able to make the journey in the end. What solutions can we find to enhance inclusion and an opportunity for attending the conferences of representatives from all nations and countries again? Very reasonable conference venues are one direct contribution. But what else can we do?

How can IODA be better labelled or branded?

This was one of my dreams which should be followed up by my successor. We already started with another round of visioning and labelling in Mozambique - during the EC meeting and also the members’ meeting. By the way, the results were sent to you on September 9, 2012 by IODA’s assistant.

Which slogan would I propose for IODA?

I went through the adjectives found in Mozambique and the slogans created there. First I arranged the attributes in a special order. Then I connected them to a slogan. I added one word in loving memory of our honourable member and friend Imre Lóvey who died unexpectedly last year. “Joyful organizations” and IODA will be connected forever! I hope you like it. Please, feel free to join the collective designing process!
Dear Members,
It has been an adventure, a pleasure and an honour to serve you as IODA-President for almost six years. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your trust in me and for your ongoing support.

The elections have started at the beginning of this week. I'm sure highly potential presidential candidates are ready for running. Please don't miss out in supporting the elections!

With cordial regards,
Dr. Ulla Nagel
ulla.nagel@ipu-nagel.de
ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT 2013

IODA President and one Board member position are up for elections

By the Election Committee

Following the Board decision at the IODA Telco on 24th of November 2012 there will be elections for two vacant positions on the Board of IODA.

Ulla Nagel’s second term as president ends in 2013. Christine Wawra resigned as membership coordinator due to changing priorities in her private life.

Available Positions

President
Membership Coordinator

General role and term of elected Board members

The primary function of Board members is to guide IODA in fulfilling its vision and mission and to set all Board policy decisions according to the bylaws and the decisions of the member meetings. An international and multicultural vision is important that reflects the interests and desires of OD practitioners worldwide.

Board members have a three year term of office, beginning two weeks following the posting of the election results. Board members commit to attend all Board meetings and participate in all e-mail discussions as they arise during the year.

Election Process

IODA members will have the opportunity to nominate themselves or recommend other members.

To conduct the elections a three-person Election Committee has been formed:

Rod Barnett, IODA Vice President and Chair of the Election Committee;
Mohan Krishnan, Member of the Election Committee;
Silke Haebold, IODA Project Assistant and Election Clerk

The election process will take place during the period January 2013 – April 2013. Please find attached the election timeline. The procedure and role description of all positions was sent to all IODA members on January 8th 2013.

Eligibility Criteria for Nomination

Any IODA member seeking nomination must be a paying member in good standing for the current year or 2012. Any IODA member who is eligible to vote and who meets the nomination criteria may self-nominate or nominate another member who meets the criteria for eligibility for nomination. All members being nominated by others must be informed and have given assent before their names can be sent in as nominations.

Eligibility Criteria to vote

To be eligible to vote, IODA members must have paid membership dues for the year in which the election is held or for 2012. Each member may cast only one vote for each position.

Voting Process

Voting will take place if there are multiple candidates for a position and will be conducted using a formal and confidential process. Members may vote only by e-mail using an official ballot received from the Election External Auditor and returned to the External Auditor mailbox. The External Auditor will count the ballots received and report the results to the Election Committee who will announce the election results to the candidates, members of the Board and IODA members.

We invite all IODA members who meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the voting process and vote for these two Board member positions that are up for election.

Please think also about nominating yourself or recommending other IODA members for these positions in which they can make an important contribution in guiding the development of IODA together with your fellow members.

The invitation with the nomination form to submit nominations was sent to eligible members on January 8th 2013.

Rod Barnett, salient@optusnet.com.au
KAREN J. DAVIS, USA

Winner of the Richard Beckhard Award 2012

Interview by newsletter chair Alette Vonk, NL

Congratulations with your winning the RBA! Unfortunately you couldn’t be there when the award was announced, in Mozambique. What was your reaction when this news reached you?

Initial surprise, then feeling thankful and humbled which turned to excitement. The Beckhard award is particularly meaningful to me because of my friendship with Dick Beckhard and my deep respect for him.

Why, do you think, did you end up in the field of OD, why is it appealing to you?

OD, grounded in systems theory, has to do with wholeness, oneness, and interrelatedness. My entire vocational path has been focused on systems and the big picture - starting with science and chemistry, moving to the internal psychological system of individuals, to the dynamics of groups, to human/social systems of organizations, to the sustainability of our universe/world. Also a consistent part of my own evolution has been music, both playing and deep listening.

Those of us in Mozambique listened to an impressive list of your activities and achievements. For those of us who couldn’t be there (and for the ones with bad memories), could you tell us about some of your undertakings in the field of OD, that you cherish most, or are proud of or love to talk about?

I’ve no idea what ‘activities and achievements’ of mine were mentioned in Mozambique. For many years one of my passions has been co-creating global community, including in the OD global community. I’ve been dedicated to supporting individuals and OD groups throughout the world through learning/teaching, consulting, and being present in many different cultures and nations.

In recent years, when asked “what do you do”, my initial response has been “as little as possible”. I smile and quickly add, that I mean that in several different ways: one is recognizing and encouraging people to re-discover the wisdom and gifts in themselves and to be and do that of which each is capable. I see my function/role as co-creating and holding a safe space for individuals and groups to do what is important to them and what they are willing to take responsibility for and act upon.

Some would say I have perseverance (and patience). In the field of OD this reminds me especially of two areas of some influence over the years. One is technology and how in the early 80’s before the Internet some of us were using participative/interactive computer systems to plan an international OD conference. At that time the technophobia of folks in our field was a major challenge and most OD practitioners weren’t ready to use high technology to enhance their work and interactions. And look where we are today? The other thing is my holding a global perspective in ODN including convening the Global Forum. As a profession we still have a long ways to go for OD professionals to understand that there is only global OD and that our ultimate client is the global community, regardless of where we work or what we are doing.
At an IODA conference someone once asked me what I taught at the University and a former student who was standing there immediately responded, “She teaches magic.” I’d not thought of it that way before and really appreciated her perception. I’ve found through “teaching” and “consulting” in other countries that the people are usually/often much more open and receptive to new ways of being and knowing than in my experience in my own country.

**You’re being described as a ‘global citizen’. Which are the places on the earth that are important to you and could you describe for each of them their meaning to you, in a few words?**

I experience that “wherever I go, here I am”. I have many “homes” in the world. My roots are in Arizona with Nature’s wide open spaces, intense and diverse beauty, and indigenous cultures. New York City is my permanent residence and with all the beauty and ingenuity of humans and its concrete canyons, a tapestry of millions of diverse peoples/cultures, and continuous stimuli of all arts. Rural Quebec brings me close to earth and the relationship with the seasons. Chile and Hungary are countries where I always feel like I’m going home again.

_I understand you describe yourself as ‘a gardener’. We read: ‘the earth is her playground and life long teacher,’ and we understand you spend a part of the year on your farm in Quebec. Apart from that many of us admire your strength as a person. Would you say these two are related and could you please share a few of these teachings with us?_

Being one with the earth and all its creatures was part of my growing up in Arizona. I have always been fascinated by the beauty and creations of the natural world with its complex adaptive systems. And early I learned that Nature is an invaluable teacher/mentor. There is so much to learn from Earth Wisdom and from its relationship to indigenous cultures. This has been important for better understanding myself and continuing to become more in balance and harmony with the universe. I experience my personal and professional life as a “gardener” who sometimes plants seeds and then trusts Nature’s process. It is always a delight to discover what grows and flourishes – or not.

About the earth/world as my playground, it’s with the childlike curiosity, spontaneity and trusting that anywhere on the planet I can learn and can discover the joys and surprises of living.

***Finally, could you tell us about you and IODA: what is IODA to you, how did that come about, and what’s your advice for the future?***

I first knew ODI (OD Institute) which inadvertently “birthed” IODA as a truly international OD group. My first IODA conference was in Harpers Ferry, USA in 1987. I was deeply inspired by the four days of our focusing on values (with Ken Benne) and by the dialogue and learning among multiple nationalities and perspectives. This experience also felt like “home”. The worldwide relationships that have evolved and that I continue to discover are very significant in my life.

Allow me to put a few abstracts from my earlier published writing here, mostly the Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook, as an additional answer to your question:
“From the information/knowledge era (with a focus on the human mind and intellectual capital), we are approaching an era of spirit (with focus on consciousness and wisdom) in which community is the model. This suggests a global wisdom society with global wisdom organizations. A “global wisdom society” values all cultures and traditions and skillfully utilizes multiple ways of knowing for the greater benefit of all life.”

“What a global wisdom organization might look like is very connected to how I see global work and the type of organizations that the world needs at this time. I believe our OD work - and a major challenge in general - is to always be looking at the wholeness, the interrelatedness, and the systemic aspects of any system. Organizations need to operate out of a deep understanding of and respect for natural systems, ancient wisdom traditions, human needs and future generations. This includes learning from the new sciences. A global wisdom organization trusts the dynamics of self-organizing and collective consciousness. And it is in the business of ethically serving society and earth in life-affirming and sustainable ways, particularly those that are in harmony with natural ecological and global environmental systems; this is being in stewardship of the whole.”

“OD is a way of thinking/being in the world rather than an intervention, product, technology or model. No matter what we believe or have been taught about OD, the practice/work of organization development is rather simple. OD has to do with co-creating and holding the space where people can talk and act with each other about what is important to them, to their organization and to our world.”

And a final note about the future of OD. I see our becoming more congruent as global OD professionals and understanding our practice as oneness and interconnected with all life. When we truly value and work/play from the perspective of “triple bottom line” - people, profit, planet - then we have the possibility of sustainable organizations and a sustainable earth. Then we can truly make a difference in the world.

I continue to hold the question: What questions do we need to be asking ourselves, our colleagues, our communities, our organizations, and our world at this time – and for future generations?

Karen J. Davis
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New York City, 11/24/12
ABOUT IMRE AROUND CHRISTMAS

By Peter Kalmar, Hungary
IODA Board Member

In Hungary Christmas - on top of its religious significance - is about making sure that The Family is together. It is for this reason that in every family where someone has passed away during the year, it is just very hard to celebrate knowing that someone is missing and the gathering is not going to be the same without him or her.

Our local and global OD community is in grief and we still haven’t accepted fully that in our wonderful IODA gatherings and great global conferences we will never see Imre Lövey again. Indeed experiencing the absence of our beloved and respected friend and colleague - Imre - feels like loosing someone who was and is an integral part of us, the Global OD Family.

He has always been a central figure in everything we did and planned to do. He was there in our plenary sessions, our small group discussions and think tanks, wherever there was an important piece of work to do, we could always rely on him. And just for the records: in our community life too. He made the boys compete, the ladies dance and the crowd cheer, laugh and sometimes cry.

I remember him as an experienced trainer teaching us – university students – how to act like professionals. I remember him as one of the founders of Concordia, his own consulting firm, one of the early birds of the Hungarian OD movement. I also remember him as one of the founding members and the first president of the Hungarian OD Society. I remember him in the 90-es as an influential member of IODA and the global OD community. I remember him as the Chair of the first IODA Conference in Hungary in 1997 and as the Co-chair of the first OD World Summit August 2010: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWUmZEYT0Kw&list=UUJ7nPP_sV9uxQ4FicmTnylQA&index=7

A man who took care of the communities he created and worked for. A man with an incredible instinct and talent to develop individuals, teams and organizations. A man who wasn’t easy to convince, but who has always been open, approachable, active and proactive in everything that really mattered. A man who sent us into battle by spreading the word about the importance of building and nurturing healthy organizations. A man who’s philosophy was to bring people together cross-cultures and cross-boundaries. A man who contributed so much to our profession and shared willingly all what he has learned and created during his career.

He was active till the last moment, working on the idea of a second OD World Summit in 2015, contributing to the creation of an European OD Institute in Budapest, educating and developing his top notch clients, his own team and in general the people around him. And he was playful and living a joyful life all along the way. He was indeed playing with his colleagues when his heart stopped and he had to go.

Imre, we don’t know what your next big plan is, but we feel that you are around and that you are with us in every significant moment. You will stay with us for a long-long time.

God bless you and rest in peace:
Peter Kalmar, the Hungarian OD Community and your friends from all corners of the World
peter.kalmar@flowinternational.eu
David Lövey - Farewell speech to my Dear Father, Dr. Imre Lövey

Dear Father,

Now that I’m talking about you, but I cannot speak to you in person, only now I understand what has happened. Despite all of this, I’m not afraid, because I know that you are here with us; I feel your attention, I can see your smile, I get answers to my questions, I can hear your laugh. I know you’re here with us, and if we need, you will help us.

The shared memories are always with us, and we will take care for it, as a guard protects the royal library. Let me call back a couple of images of our life.

Do you remember our trip to the Tatra Mountains, when you taught me how to pay attention to the positive things going on instantaneously? I was not even 5 years old, it was a cold winter and I was terribly thirsty. I followed you on the path, continually asking for lemonade. You replied to me by showing how beautiful the mountains and valleys were we were going through, the wonderful nature around us, and you told me if we are paying attention to the surrounding beauty, it is enough to quench our thirst once in a while.

It also comes into my mind, when we were walking with our dog in Szentendre, you were telling me about your work, the programs that you hold at that time. You told me how good it makes you feel when we see that people appreciate their jobs, and they are happier and more successful in their life. It is not always easy to achieve this state, but if we really want to, and we do believe in each other, we can dream big, and the dream will come true. Could you bring up when we, your kids, became adolescents? The exciting moments we had together, even though you were worried about us sometimes. At the Amusement Park you were screaming with us on the roller coaster; you jumped after me into the cold river, when I almost froze. Our family trips were momentous: we had delicious breakfast on the streets of San Francisco, we discovered Yellowstone by motorhome, and we had the chance to admire together the setting sun at the Grand Canyon.

The last couple of years, we talked often about the importance of the family, and we knew that nothing is more meaningful than having each other. You took care for us, as you took care of yourself. Allow me here to say thank you for taking so much care for your health. You showed all of us a direction with your way of living.

You said recently, that the loss of parents is part of the process of growing up. Although we grew up in a second, we do not feel that we have lost you. We are always so thankful for what you are doing for us, and that you motivate and help us when we need.

Dear Father, You stay with us!

David, 21st of September, 2012, Budapest
MOURNING IMRE LOVEY

My Journey to Budapest

By Ulla Nagel, Germany

Over the years I have travelled to Budapest many times. It was often on the way to holiday destinations and also to visit Imre with my employees to exchange one another’s methodologies. Then in 2010, together with my son Rutger and Silke Häbold, I attended the OD world summit. How different this past trip was. I went to mourn our friend and honored IODA member, Imre Lövey.

This outstanding colleague who always thought about the future had to stop visioning forever. No more talks with him, no more sharing and reflecting. His wisdom is missing. I felt deep sadness and helplessness when facing Imre’s unexpected and sudden death.

Imre’s funeral ceremony

The church emitted a solemn atmosphere and a huge number of mourners bid farewell to our dear Imre. Among them were Imre’s family, colleagues from his company Concordia, friends and international guests. All together six speakers eulogized Imre: his two sons David and Adam, Szilágyi Tamás (managing director of Concordia), and Elvira Kalmar as president of the Hungarian OD society. The speech from Kim Barnes, friend and OD colleague from the USA and my speech were translated simultaneously in Hungarian language.

Staying with Peter Kalmar and his family

I was very pleased by Peter and Judit’s invitation to stay at their home near Budapest. I had been in close contact with Peter Kalmar after having heard the news of Imre’s passing. The warmness in Peter’s and Judit’s family was a great help for me in coping with the sorrow. Sharing hospitality among IODA members follows an old IODA tradition with simply feels good and is even better in moments of sadness. Spending time together with Peter gave us the chance to exchange thoughts about Peter’s forthcoming attendance at the ODN conference in Phoenix, Arizona and to talk about several IODA matters and the organization’s future.
My visit to Imre’s family

I was especially happy about the invitation from Imre’s partner Oxana on the next evening. Sitting together with Oxana, her two children and Imre’s two sons, we recalled stories about Imre and what we loved about him. Oxana said: “I still can feel that he is around us, I notice more than one sign sent by him and expect him to walk through the door.” Her first grandchild occupies part of her attention, gives her much joy and meaning in these difficult times.

David was interested in his father’s accomplishments for IODA. He has promised to keep in touch and hopefully we can expect his participation during the next IODA world conference in Peru.

Meeting Elvira Kalmar

I’m thankful for having had the chance to meet Elvira Kalmar. She is not, by the way, related to Peter K. but the president of the Hungarian National OD Society. We got to know each other during the OD world summit. Eva welcomed me to a brand new office in central Budapest. I found the renting office model quite impressive. The Hungarian OD Society rents neutral furnished offices and members can use rooms with desks and Internet access as well as renting rooms for business meetings. According to Eva this service is well used and appreciated by the Hungarian members. The office has become the organization’s social meeting center.

IODA CEREMONIA SPEECH FOR IMRE LÖVEY

Dear Family of Imre, dear Oxana, dear OD colleagues, friends, dear mourners

For me and the multicultural community of the International Organization Development Association it is still very hard to accept that one of our great and most committed members and OD professionals, our Hungarian friend and mentor Imre Lővey, has passed away. I’ve received condolences from over 30 countries. The worldwide sympathies of professionals who knew Imre were overwhelming. As IODA President I’m here to speak to the mourning family and the mourning community on behalf of IODA’s board and all IODA members.

Imre was at the peak of his professional achievements and in a period of personal joy and happiness when, unexpectedly and so soon, he had to let go. During the time before his passing he had been working with colleagues experimenting, discovering and co-creating a new group exercise. This is indeed how we knew him even in his last moments: highly committed to work, to the profession, to people and to the values that help design healthy organizations.
Imre was ahead of his time, and years before "organizational health" was recognized as one of the key factors for company success he foresaw its importance, wrote books and developed assessment tools to measure, evaluate and build up organizational health. I can’t remember an IODA World Conference during the last decade where he didn’t run a pre-conference or keynote workshop on this topic and taught us to think holistically and systemically. In their words of sympathy, colleagues from all over the world described him with attitudes such as friendly, helpful, professional, committed, hard working, reliable, serious, sensitive, warm, true, an example for others, simply outstanding!

IODA without Imre will not be the same. He took an active part in shaping IODA. Imre joined IODA directly after it was founded in 1986.

He attended more than 20 IODA World Conferences - I guess even 25! - where he always contributed through pre-conference workshops or key sessions which attracted large audiences. He cross-fertilized, co-organized and chaired two of the most remarkable IODA World Conferences (in 1997 and in 2010). With the 1997 conference in Siofok, Imre and his team set up a quality benchmark for all future IODA conferences. Interestingly it was only topped by the 2010 conference, the OD World Summit in Budapest, organized again by the Hungarian team under Imre’s lead. I met with Imre in different parts of the world like Canada, India, and the U.S.A, where he presented the idea of bringing the different schools of our profession together in one place. The place was here: his home: Budapest! But that was not all: He convinced the inspirational leaders of these schools to overcome boundaries and start joint thinking about how to best facilitate companies and communities co-creating a valuable future on our planet. With high enthusiasm he brought across the vision and mobilized masses. I saw the fire in his eyes. Imre was rather calm and gentle but when presenting the ODWS he changed into a vibrant missionary. He fulfilled his mission in August 2010 here in his hometown!

For eight consecutive years (1997-2005), Imre was an active member of IODA’s Executive Committee, serving IODA’s progress, developing our organization and providing direction for future conferences and workshops. I had the chance to be on the board together with him in most of these years. I remember very well his anticipatory ability, his reason, and his intelligence. And despite these precious gifts he always remained humble.

With warm memories I think back to the days in May 2009 when my company – 5 professionals – was invited to learn from him and exchange experiences. We spent three valuable days with Imre enjoying his hospitality and warmth.

Imre’s work made a significant contribution towards OD being considered and recognized as a vital profession. He worked as professor in the faculty of IODA, and supported OD Master Programs such as those at the Assumption University in Bangkok.

In 2007 he was the recipient of the Richard Beckhard Award, the highest recognition granted by IODA. And he was the youngest awardee ever.

In Imre we are mourning a great man, a visionary professional and a wonderful friend: gentle, valuable, intelligent, creative, wise, warm and always caring.

In these times of deep sadness and grief our deepest sympathies go to the family, especially to his mother, to his sons David and Adam, his sister, and to his companion Oxana.

Dear Imre, may your soul rest in peace. We will never forget you. You will always be with us.
INTERVIEW WITH THE FORMER VICE PRESIDENT
MR. BEN ARIKPO, NIGERIA

By Newsletter Team Member Toki Mabogunje, Nigeria

Our guest personality for this edition is Mr. Ben Arikpo. Ben is a Nigerian National and for six years he has been the Vice President in IODA (a position that has been taken over by Rod Barnett, halfway 2012). For those who do not know Ben, he is the one with the gentle voice, broad smile and the warm and welcoming disposition. The newsletter team, represented by Mrs. Toki Mabogunje, fielded some questions with BEN to get to know him better, discover his attraction to IODA, his experiences as a Vice President and his thoughts for the future. Here is what BEN had to say:

Please tell us about your background as an OD Consultant.

I have been involved in OD Practice since the mid-1990s, when I was a staff representative in a change process by a Canadian International NGO (CUSO). However I became a Certified Systemic OD Consultant in 1997 after a successful 2 year post graduate training in OD facilitated by two German agencies, GTZ now GIZ and EZE now EED for Anglophone Africa.

When did you join IODA and why?

I joined IODA in 1998 during the Kenyan Conference. Two factors were responsible for my joining IODA. First, attending the conference in Kenya was a graduation dream for most of the participants of the OD training program. Secondly, I was involved in a change process with one of Nigeria’s leading petroleum companies to introduce community processes for empowering communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Consequently I came to the conference to present the design of the project and to get colleagues to make inputs into the process as necessary. I got both objectives fulfilled at the conference. In addition, I also became part of the organizing team due to the challenges faced by the host colleagues in Kenya.

What made you decide to run for Vice President of the Organization?

The decision to run for Vice President was both engineered and self-motivated. At the time, IODA had several internal crisis and challenges, partly due to the non-inclusion of members in decision making. Consequently, some colleagues who shared this view encouraged me to vie for the post. I also wanted to make fundamental contributions to the organization by contributing at the Board level to the democratization process. Furthermore, IODA needed at the time to be more diverse as an international organization in fulfillment of its vision and mission. The election was keenly competed and I won.

Since becoming Vice President, what has been your experience of IODA?

IODA has made tremendous changes and grown as an organization and an institution. During my tenure, the EC transformed to a full-fledged Board in line with our new status. The President with the Board has continued to keep the vision of growing the organization and being inclusive in taking the conferences to different continents every year. The membership might seem to be dwindling but the commitment of the core of members remains resolute. Sometimes IODA faces crisis like all organizations. Its ability to deal with this professionally and move ahead with the lessons learnt from the conflict and crises remains a strength. The EC/Board members commit a lot of time to the growing of the organization but some members often do not appreciate this. Overall, IODA is gradually building and emerging as an established organization.
**What are your aspirations for IODA? Where do you see IODA in the future?**

I see IODA emerging as a world-class membership led organization with membership in every continent of the world. I strongly believe that IODA should continue to be run by volunteer Board members, as it will be unable to raise funds to support a professional secretariat. I see IODA supporting educational programs that build sustainable organizations and communities around the world. I see IODA working towards recognition by the United Nations as a Social Organization working in partnership with it for world peace, sustainable organizations and nations. Given the new status of IODA, I see IODA leading the development of partnerships with members and educational institutions for the development of certification programs for building the capacity in OD around the world. To achieve the above vision, IODA needs to continue to seek dynamic leaders and attract them to the Board. The current situation, where filling Board positions is a challenge, needs to be addressed urgently.

**What words of advice do you have for young OD practitioners?**

I am currently training participants in OD to become consultants. One statement I made at the opening of the training was that OD is a life transforming profession. It is an empowering profession both for the individual practitioner and the organizations they support. The practice of OD transformed my life fundamentally and those of many graduates of various training programs I have conducted. Getting involved with OD is a life changer and you should be ready for a good experience in your practice. Take responsibility for your learning and growth and seek help from others when you feel stuck. Seeking help is a strength not a weakness.

**What would you like to say to the membership about the practice of OD and IODA’s role in the future?**

I tend to be very evangelical about my views on OD. I believe OD is the only way to build sustainable institutions! I believe that a partnership based practice is more fulfilling and should be the focus of our practice. In this regard, I see IODA’s role as supporting members to develop such a practice through the conference themes, through partnership educational programs and through mentorship programs for young professionals. Listening to BEN, is to listen to the story of an organization transforming to meet the needs of its ever growing global membership and the challenges that come with this. The newsletter team gives an incredible “THANK YOU!” to Ben for all he’s done for IODA and beyond.

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THE INFLUENCE OF GLOBAL PEERS

What remains from that Intercultural Experience?

Michaela Faulhammer, Austria

In this article Michaela Faulhammer, initiator of the program “global peers” describes how participants experienced the learning journey, shares lessons learned and discusses the impact of this intervention.

How can OD contribute to creating a world beyond poverty?

This was the driving question for me as the initiator of Global Peers. In July of 2012, OD Consultants from Africa, India, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Austria and the USA gathered in Vienna to explore this issue.

Incorporating different viewpoints, participants of global peers discussed:

1. How OD approaches from Austrian corporations, NGOs and networks might inform the practice of the consultant working with the slum dwellers’ projects in India?
2. How motivation theory can apply to community work in PNG?
3. And how facilitating change can be implemented in African church groups?

In a T-group setting Global Peers learned a new approach in interpersonal effectiveness. By experiencing all this, the answer to the initial question for me was a clear “yes we can”, but there is quite a way to go. To me, Organisational Development is facilitating change. Doing so professionally contributes to improving the quality of life based on human dignity.

What are the lessons learned?

First, it’s all about the clarification of a term.

During our discussions it turned out, that there is a need for a common understanding of Organizational Development. We realized how important it is for us to find a shared definition of (or for) what we are doing. What are the causes and effects, means and ends of OD interventions? Through Nicholas Darkos facilitation, Global Peers were invited to submit their own definitions of OD. These were studied, and based on the experiences of Global Peers, words such as “community”, “culture” and “learning” became relevant. Most importantly, the beauty of the diversity of the definitions by all Global Peers was given a place in the working definition: “OD is a process of trust building between a change agent and a community/organisation, through mutual learning; by leveraging the consciousness of the need for humility, transparency, cultural sensitivity and improvement of the internal and external functioning of the community/organisation to achieve self-dependence in its sustained viability in a changing environment.” (Global Peers, July 2012)

Second, it’s about contextualizing the OD intervention.

In the process of translating best practices, we realized how cultural, technical and environmental circumstances influence OD interventions. Best practice from European countries cannot simply be transferred 1:1. OD makes implicit power equity assumptions around gender, race, age etc and needs to be driven by people affected and influenced by the change. Furthermore, before people are able to think about organisational change, they need to experience a minimum level of individual social stability and a certain level of security and protection. In cultures where this does not exist, OD technologies are not as effective. Let me share an example from Papua New Guinea (PNG):
1. In western countries social stability is the norm and no one is exposed to violence when leaving their home-base or community. Due to high security risks in PNG it can be hazardous for individuals to travel from one province to the other to, for example, attend capacity building interventions.

2. In western countries the culture allows people to have their say and to express their concerns. In PNG on the other hand, expressing concerns can be considered inappropriate, undesirable or even counterproductive to the desired changes.

3. In western countries a participatory approach in creating change is widely accepted and even favoured. In patriarch cultures the so called “Big men” power sometimes contradicts jointly developed approaches.

Knowing this background, Organisational Development and capacity building in PNG, requires much more flexibility, participation, sensitivity and creativity than in the western context and a strong acceptance of local wisdom, dynamics and experience is crucial. Global Peers shares the capacity building approach from Rick James (refer to article Praxis Paper 6, Realities of Change, Understanding How African, NGO Leaders Develop) and his major considerations for successful interventions in least or development countries:

- assist leaders to develop their own coherent guiding theory of leadership;
- recognize the congestion in leaders’ lives and help them think through their different roles in life, and in particular look at gender implications;
- actively reinforce the identified catalysts for change;
- ensure that workshops and training create space for reflection and peer feedback;
- take an experiential learning approach, provide new knowledge and use role models;
- use mentoring and peer learning as follow-through and as stand-alone leadership development inputs in their own right;

Third, it’s about thinking of new concepts.

Global Peers acknowledge the importance of local ownership and approaches. Hence there are some approaches we learned and considered as helpful in supporting organisational change. While learning how Management by Objectives in an Austrian energy corporation is incorporated as an effective approach to maintain accountability and responsibility, we inspired a discussion about how this can be a useful approach in Indian NGOs or Ghanaian faith based groups when it comes to keeping volunteers committed and inspired. Working on OD case studies, Global Peers recognized once again, the importance of building and sharing hypotheses, in designing change processes in order to create effective interventions.

Fourth, it’s about reversing roles.

The fundamental value for developmental aid is dignity and not charity. This requires inclusion, participation and cohesion of local stakeholders. As a consequence OD interventions must support reversing from extracting to empowering. The concept of sending western experts on short term assignments for “a quick fix” is no longer working. Strengthening local facilitation skills and knowing the local context is crucial in Organisational Development in the development context.

Fifth, it’s about sharing a mission.

Collaboration requires investment in building trust and emotional connection. By going jointly through different experiences we became friends. Global Peers is not only a professional group, it’s a group of individuals sharing values, aspirations and a mission. Thanks to this strong bond and supported by social media like drop box, face book, a buddy system…. we still support each other in our challenges as much as possible and jointly devote our work to the strengthening of civil society.

Ghana

1. Nicholas Darko: “achieving effectiveness is now directed more to NGOs and this is helpful”.
2. Participants from Ghana have made deliberate efforts to meet some NGO leaders to facilitate their understanding of the role of OD in their NGOs.
3. Ghanaian colleagues committed themselves to facilitating the implementation of Group Dynamics in the Authentic Influence forum in Ghana, to build the capacity of Business/NGO leaders in Ghana over the next few years in conjunction with the Global Peers leaders. This is a direct outcome of my involvement in Global Peers.
4. Peers from Ghana shared the Global Peers experience as part of the strategy to promote the program in Ghana through our OD colleagues and students.

India

Indian participants are starting to create a network of OD professionals catering only to NGO sector needs, as a low cost service through our home organization, Team4Change. This is a collaborative effort amongst individuals, ISABS and Global Peers, billed to start in India and later Asia.

The Global Peers programme helped participants to deepen their understanding of OD concepts, values and intervention facilitation and to sharpen analytical skills. It also contributed to a widened perspective of development discourse in an international and inter-cultural learning space. “This exposure provides much more confidence in articulating my thoughts and ideas with enhanced knowledge, skills and raised awareness in the endeavour to support institutional building processes of small and large civil society organisations in India in their mission of social transformation.” After the learning journey, Sincy from India had conducted a team building process for a small NGO with a team of 8 members. During the process, she was very conscious and sensitive about the value system of the organisation. Constantly she had to remind herself not to allow her value system to clash with theirs in the process of facilitation. She also used the technique of aligning their cognitive knowledge with body knowledge, which was useful for the group.

Austria

The pilot activity encouraged Global Peers to move on. The next learning journey for Global Peers will be conducted in July 2013 in Austria. Applications will be opened by January 2013. There will be more information about this on www.partners4.com

Global Peers is now incorporated as an Austrian NGO with shared ownership among the members. The Current plan is to roll out the learning journey to India and Ghana as soon as the idea has sufficient support.

USA

During the learning journey in July 2012 we had the great pleasure of receiving support from Scott Bristol, Lecturer in Organizational Behaviour at the Graduate School of Business (GSB), Stanford University. He introduced the concept of “Authentic influence” to Global Peers. We learnt how much it contributes to the development of emotional literacy, value awareness, social identity and culture competence in, Authentic Discourse. This new approach in management training will be implemented in future learning journeys and will kick off the annual journey. Authentic Influence is the essential dynamic of interpersonal effectiveness used by successful leaders, managers, and consultants to achieve results. Interpersonal and group effectiveness and success is dependent on your ability to express your personal expertise and experience in ways that influence, motivate, and compel open-minded dialogue and meaningful group problem solving.

Acknowledgements

This program wouldn’t have been successful without the contributions of the wonderful resource persons of IODA and the efforts of consultants who share IODA’s mission. My thanks goes to the president of IODA, Ulla Nagel and to the IODA members Noble Kumawu and Christine Wawra. Joachim Schwendenwein, Liselotte Zvacek and Scott Bristol donated countless hours to implement the program in Austria. Thanks to the eagerness to learn and share experience, Global Peers is now on steady feet and ready to grow.

Michaela Faulhammer
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Assumption University Graduate School of Business Organization Development Institute (ABAC GSB ODI) launched the ABAC OD Summit 2012 on Campus at Hua Mak, Bangkapi, Bangkok, on November 19-20, 2012

The Summit held with Prof. Dr. Behnam N. Tabrizi giving the Keynote address on "Inside Out Effect Transformational Leadership". Professor Behnam N. Tabrizi is a consulting professor at Stanford University, author of the bestselling book "Rapid Transformation: A 90-day Plan for Fast and Effective Change"; and Advisor on Change and Transformation on Obama’s Campaign and the Obama Transition Team.” His address was based on his book which is soon to be published on the same topic.

The Summit held at the Hall of Fame Coronation Hall no less than a hundred participants attended. Participants included MMOD, PhDOD Students and Alumni. The Summit was sponsored by ADECCO, ICBC, True Corporation.

This Summit presented experts such as Dr. Tabrizi. Dr. Tabrizi also addressed the theme with different working groups. A presentation was made by the ODI Team lead by Dr. Perla Rizalina M. Tayko (ODI Director) and Dr. Sirichai Preudhikulpradap, MMOD Associate Director in an OD Forum. This Summit brought together these speakers and created a forum for high level engagement and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

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21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP
A HEROS’S JOURNEY?
Santhosh Babu, India

On a flight from Goa to Delhi with Gautam Thapar, having facilitated a Leadership and Culture session for Avantha Group, discussions trailed to personal mastery and leadership. Gautam said he strongly felt that good leadership is not about what a leader does, but more who he is and his authentic search for meaning. This fuelled the line of questioning: ‘What is the kind of leadership we need to steer organizations and communities through today’s challenging and changing times? What mental models do we use to understand organizations and communities that would serve us to create long-term, sustainable solutions to our present-day challenges?’

New challenges and the fast pace of change

The Iceland volcano, Japanese tsunami and earthquake, unrest in the Middle Eastern region such as that seen in Egypt, the banking crisis and recession, the crisis to secure clean drinking water and the economic challenges in Europe are all problems that do not have a linear answer. To these gigantic challenges, we add to the mix the pace of change happening all around us. While television took 38 years to reach 50 million people, Facebook took just two years to reach 50 billion people. What engineering students are learning at their first year in university is outdated by the time they graduate. When McKinsey & Co asked the question about what single factor contributes to the accelerating pace of change in the business environment, the highest number of respondents said “innovation in product, services and business models”. In the same study, when asked what fuels competitiveness, the most common response was “better knowledge and better talent”.

So newer survival-threatening challenges, the fast pace of change and a need to upgrade the knowledge, awareness and talent of staff are themes emerging in front of all leaders. I have been keenly following the work that is happening around Leadership, Psychology and Transformation all over the world, partly because of my professional interest and partly due to my own quest for meaning and need to understand what is my call and my purpose, and how am I showing up in my world and “the” world. One prominent trend emerging that I have been drawn to is leaders transforming themselves, becoming more evolved, more conscious about themselves, and operating from a higher-order value. A kind of “conscious capitalism” where there is the potential to enhance organizational performance while advancing quality of self, those around us and the planet. Let’s look at the works of three contemporary writers, researchers and teachers in the field of leadership.

Experts talk about new leadership

Ronald Heifetz is the Senior Lecturer in Public Leadership and founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard’s Kennedy School and has written multiple books. Robert Kegan is a Professor in Adult Learning and Professional Development in Harvard Graduate School, and has written books around leadership and adult development. Richard Barrett is an author, speaker and an expert on values, leadership and culture. According to Heifetz, leaders are confronted by two types of problems: technical problems, which can be solved by expertise and good management; and "adaptive" problems, like the ones I mentioned above – natural disasters, natural resource supplies and economic problems – which require innovation and learning. While traditional management strategies are useful in dealing with technical problems, Heifetz argues that only leaders who are evolving their thinking and values to a new, higher level can address the new century’s many adaptive challenges.
Kegan talks about there being a range of “orders” of the mind and of the need for leaders to scale their abilities to the higher orders so that they can solve complex problems and create personal transformation. For Kegan, transformation is about changing the very form of the container – making it larger, more complex and more able to deal with multiple demands and uncertainty. Transformation occurs, he says, when you are newly able to step back and reflect on something and make decisions about it. Barrett talks about seven levels of consciousness – a model he developed as an extension of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs.

More evolved, more self-aware leaders

All three experts suggest a more conscious, more evolved and more self-transformed leader to deal with today’s challenges. If we look at the current leadership development trainings and opportunities available for senior leaders, you will see most of them focus on the “doing skills” of leadership like visioning, empowering, aligning, executing and so forth, without any emphasis on self-transformation and moving up the levels of consciousness. And so there is a huge gap between the leadership that we require, and what the existing leadership development programs offer. So where do CEOs and senior leaders go to learn how to solve adaptive problems and transform their minds to a higher level of consciousness? I am not suggesting they should now do Vipassana meditation though it can be a useful way to understand oneself. I believe they need a new curriculum, a new approach that explores the “being” side of leadership over the “doing” side. I believe also that they need a “vision quest” that helps them understand their so-called Hero’s Journey – or leadership journey – the way it was described by author, Joseph Campbell.

The Hero’s Journey

Interestingly and ironically, the first published study on heroism that could be linked to leadership was not from a psychologist at all. In 1949, comparative mythologist, Joseph Campbell, who studied medieval literature and world religions, wrote a book called The Hero of a Thousand Faces. While studying hero myths from around the world, Campbell noticed a distinct pattern. It didn’t matter where or when a particular myth was created; the world’s hero stories were all strikingly similar to one another. According to Campbell, in these stories “a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

Campbell proposed that this prototypical heroic journey, which he called the hero monomyth, consists of three parts: departure, initiation and return. The Departure is where the Hero is thrown into a challenge, a danger, and into a darker world. The initiation stage features a series of tests or challenges that the hero must overcome. Temptations of the flesh or a battle with a father figure who must be vanquished are quite common. Upon his return, the hero brings a great boon, or benefit, to the world. Not only is the returned hero forever transformed, so is the society that receives the boon. I would argue that we need a curriculum or an experience that helps leaders cope with the challenges of the “departure” and “initiation” so that the leaders can return transformed and, in turn, transform the world around them.

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THE GAME MACHINE

I feel like I am looking at a chess board
You make your move
And I make mine
We both know what the odds may be

It is interesting this game we play
Sometimes relaxing
At other times exciting

Chances are that life is
Not about what we do
Or where we end up
It's about ............
The interplay betwixt and between
The other players on the board
The things that happen despite us
It's not a chess board is it?
It's a gaming machine
A lot more is left to chance

Sit back and watch
Detach yourself
And admire the kaleidoscope before you
Revel in it like a child without a care in the world

Let's play together
You and I
This game machine of life

By Toki Mabogunje
November 29th 1999
Lagos, Nigeria
LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Nomvula Dlamini, South Africa

In October 2012 I had opportunity to co-facilitate a 3-day retreat for leaders of NGOs that work in the land and agrarian transformation sector. For many of the leaders the last few years have been particularly challenging. The slow pace of land reform in South Africa and the changes in the funding climate have made it difficult for these organisations to sustain their work. They have struggled to keep both the advocacy and community aspects of their work going. In exploring new ways of working, this group of 10 organisations embarked on a collaborative initiative. For the last two years they have been implementing a joint programme. Needless to say, the collaboration has not been easy, this way of working was new to them and they had to “feel” their way and “make the path by walking” as there was no blueprint.

At the start of the leadership retreat, all of the leaders had expressed tiredness, stress and disconnection. Many expressed the feeling of being on a “treadmill” and seldom have time to stop, ponder and simply reflect. The challenges of sustaining their organisations had started to take away the joy of what they do with people. On the first day of the retreat process, many struggled to simply be, to let go and relax in the space. A perfect mountain setting had been chosen for the retreat, a natural forest with a river running through it provided the ideal venue. The cottages we lived in were literally at the “foot of the mountains”. A walk through the forest and up the mountains brought you to the most spectacular waterfalls.

The leadership retreat offered the group the opportunity to stop, step back from the daily grind, reflect, review, renew and re-focus. For three days they had opportunity to connect to self, to others and to nature. As facilitators, we resisted having a strongly structured process. After listening deeply to what mattered to them, we designed a process that would require light facilitation. A process that would allow for them to slow down, do some introspection, and connect to colleagues … the space was contemplative and communing with nature offered some healing.

The leaders were guided through a process of exploring their own leadership journey. Through a biographical process that adopted a past, present and future orientation, they were helped to reconnect to and reflect on the experiences and moments that had brought them into and drew them to leadership. This individual reflection process got them to explore the passions that bring them to leadership as well as a look into what terrifies them about their own leadership and the qualities they bring to it. At the same time, the process brought the present challenges into sharp focus and helped them to see and understand the organisational and national contexts that frame their leadership in a new way. While they did not immediately have solutions and answers to the challenges, the exercise helped them to see themselves in a new way.

Out of the individual reflections they connected with a colleague who acted as a listening partner. Through the sharing experience, the listening partners held up a mirror and reflected back to them what they were hearing. Using questions only, the listening partners helped them delve deeper and arrive at that honest place where they could connect with who they really are. The listening partners were not only challengers; they were also empathetic and were asked to be respectful of the journeys of others. They not only listened with an empathetic ear and heart, they brought a posture of humility to their listening.
We then engaged them in a process of reflecting on the collaboration. It became evident that while the activities were taken care of, the relational aspect of the collaboration was not given much attention. The absence of trust, an inability to listen and not knowing how to support one another in the collaborative space were some of the issues that were highlighted. We used metaphor and alternative language to craft and shape the kind and quality of relationships that would make the collaboration effective and healthy. The use of metaphor and alternative language released the creative energy which they realised had been missing in the collaboration. The retreat enabled them to connect with that energy. They acknowledged that the collaboration had become a humdrum of implementing activities and relationships were not treated as an important aspect of the collaboration. Their approach to individually bring their leadership to the collaboration was also not given much attention. The retreat helped them come to terms with the fact that through the collaboration they had created something new between themselves, that is alive and this demanded a different kind of leadership.

Reflecting on the process at the end of the 3 days, all of the participants were appreciative of the contemplative space. They shared the fact that they had lost themselves in the noise and demands of the world and the many challenges they have to navigate on a daily basis. In the face of challenges, their fears, anxieties and uncertainties took over and rendered them helpless. For many, the retreat space helped them gain a fresh perspective on themselves, their organisations and the challenges of work and life. Through the process they were helped to connect to their different leadership voices and a consciousness about which voice to bring to which situation.

Not only were they able to see themselves in a new way, it helped them appreciate themselves and what they brought to their organisations and the sector of which they were a part. This new way of seeing themselves got them to question not only their leadership but also their activism – are we still helping people to be open to possibility while we ourselves seem to have stopped being open to possibility? The retreat reminded them that leadership is an inside out process. You cannot expect of others what you are not able to do. Adopting an inside out approach meant that they needed to take care of themselves first in order to be able to take care of others. The renewal helped them see that they have to re-invent themselves creatively in the constant onslaught of the harsh context in which they lead others and their organisations. For them this was one of the challenges of leadership.

Being in a peaceful, beautiful and tranquil space was helpful. It enabled them to slow down and to still themselves from inside. By observing nature – changes in the light, breathing in the fresh air, listening to the sounds which are different from those in the city, observing the mist clear – they were awakened to different rhythms. This helped them recognise the different rhythms in their own lives. For some of the exercises they went for walks with their partners, the steep climbs helped to physically move something within. It released energy and with that, a shift in perspective, seeing and understanding. After three days they left feeling renewed. Feeling that leadership is about taking yourself to new places. For this group on the retreat, the renewal came from being in a new place physically. The three days at the foot of the Amathole Mountains has also planted the seeds for a renewal in the relationships between the leaders of the different organisations.

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After working in two separate public sector OD projects in Afghanistan, funded by USAID (US Agency for International Development) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), in 2007 and 2008, and spending a combined total of 5 months in that country, I gained an appreciation for the potential of OD in such a challenging environment, despite its cultural biases. In an earlier article (2008) I looked at the world of international development in Afghanistan through an OD lens. I also explored how having an OD orientation—embodying the essence of the discipline—was key to having a positive impact in a complex environment where some OD tools won’t work. Now, I will explore how the sometimes hidden power of cultural context, in Afghanistan and in the practice of OD, impacted the change consulting process, especially when the underlying values contrasted. This exploration is particularly relevant to the profession of OD, which is increasingly applied in contexts beyond the culture of its founders. It is also relevant for those who seek change in environments different from the promoters of change. The twin blinders of pre-conceived notions about a client and lack of self-awareness interfere with a consultant’s ability to perceive and navigate effectively in human systems. The former derives from ignorance about a client’s environment and mindset, the latter from ignorance about one’s own filters. Ignorance or lack of skill in surfacing these blinders on the part of the consultant inevitably reinforces resistance to change. For this reason, OD, despite its cultural bias, is in a unique position to add value in complex, cross-cultural environments with its emphasis on two key elements of an OD orientation: use of self and action research. Both methodologies help mitigate the damage of the twin blinders and enable greater skill when consulting within a challenging environment.

In this article, I will start with a brief background of the players and the domains of the projects. The main body of the article then contrasts the Afghan national culture (which I will call ANC) as captured by Entezar (2007) who used Hofstede’s (1980, 2001, 2005) original four dimension model of culture to try to explain deep values of Afghans, beyond behaviors, to foreigners hoping to work successfully in the country. I will contrast Entezar’s ANC values with Jaeger’s (1986) values of OD and will show how each of the four dimensions affected the consulting process. Then I will discuss why two key elements of an OD orientation were important to our work: use of self, which enabled self-awareness, and action research, which was key in increasing our awareness of the client system. I will conclude with a discussion of the implications for the field of OD.

Background

My colleague and I are white, female Americans privileged to hold advanced degrees. We subcontracted to different consulting firms operating in Afghanistan during the two projects who employed both Afghans of various tribes and foreigners from a variety of countries. There was a mix of men and women in the firms. Our clients in the Afghan government, amongst different organizations in both the central government and several provincial governments, were mostly men, from a mixture of tribes, and typically well established in terms of tenure in the government. We used an adapted version of action research heavily balanced with diplomacy.

Expectations about Equality

Entezar, a cross-cultural trainer, used interviews, stories, observation and other forms of data collection, to determine how Hofstede’s model of culture applied to the national culture of Afghanistan. He used the same four original dimensions as Hofstede to isolate patterns of values. The first dimension, Power Distance (PD), is “defined as the extent to which the less powerful members...within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (2005, p. 46). Entezar suggests that the ANC has high power distance, meaning that most Afghans expect there to be inequality in society, whether between parents and children, between men and women, or between those in power and those with less. In contrast, Jaeger proposes that OD as a profession values smaller power distance, meaning OD practitioners promote greater equality. In our work, this contrast of values presented a huge gap in expectations on a systems level, as well as on a practical level.
On a systems level, we represented the occupying force in a nation at war. The invasion of Afghanistan by the US-led coalition forces in late 2001, the subsequent overwhelming presence of US and international armed forces as well as foreign aid workers created a dynamic which placed us higher in the hierarchy of influence than we might have experienced in a different system, or in a different time in this system, and gave us additional leverage (and of course invited understandable resistance).

On a practical level, we had to make sure we had the expressed sponsorship of senior players in order to be able to deal with people lower in the system (typical of most OD practitioners operating in a formal hierarchy). Often, this meant weeks of introductions through credible people. Our introductions were sometimes blocked by individuals wary of our presence and approach, so persistence was key.

In addition, we made sure we isolated levels of hierarchy in our series of data collection meetings to promote a safe space for discussion, since individuals rarely countered their superiors publicly. We did attempt to encourage participation (low PD) within these isolated groups, though typically one or two dominant players (high PD) usually made the decisions for the group.

One thing we learned early on was that using our personal power was critical. Cultures high in power distance tend to place more emphasis on personal rather than institutional control. We needed to convey strength, clarity and be willing to balance respect with assertiveness in order to earn credibility. Entezar (2007) notes that for Afghans, the authority of the person, rather than the authority of the rule determines social weight. We gained little from trying to persuade clients of the value of our approach, but were able to gain more from how we conducted ourselves. We were also challenged to adapt to an environment where assertiveness and intimidation are used to establish personal power. Though we took pains to be respectful of the culture and individuals, we were sometimes openly confronted, which we met by standing our ground, sometimes “toning” (a concept from the military of raising one’s voice to convey strength and importance).

With such emphasis on personal power, institutions have not been historically strong in Afghanistan (Azoy, 2003, p.27) Azoy further notes that “the Afghan form of authority resides neither in permanent corporations nor in formal statuses, but in individual men who relate to each other in transient patterns of cooperation and competition” (2003, p. 24). Since authority is considered impermanent and insecure, our focus was much more on assessing and strategizing current relationships rather than the current state of the system. Job descriptions and organizational charts (often drawn up by outsiders) did little to illuminate the situation. Instead, we had to strategize intensely around the covert processes and navigate daily with little roadmap.

Anxiety about the Unknown

The second domain of Hofstede’s model is Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), which he defines as “the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (2005, p. 167) Cultures that have strong uncertainty avoidance tend to have clear and strongly reinforced rules about what is acceptable in order to manage the anxiety of uncertainty. In the case of Afghanistan, according to Entezar (2007), people feel that chance plays a bigger role in what happens than choice. Afghans tend to embrace a fatalist orientation - life generally is out of control (some Afghans, in response, use the Arabic phrase “in sh’allah”, or “God-willing” when someone expresses a wish for the future). In fact, it could be said that they view the confidence we have in the West about controlling our environment as hubris. Therefore, there is a tendency in Afghanistan to focus on the present, rather than the future.

In contrast, Jaeger (1986) observes that OD is weak in uncertainty avoidance. The profession of OD was founded in a more stable environment, one filled with post-World War II hope, enabling a future orientation. OD practitioners promote planning and choice within this assumption of stability. This inevitably led to a challenge in our work to even have a discussion about future possibilities. Many in our client systems knew well that focusing on moment-to-moment tactics was safer and more personally rewarding than railing against uncontrollable forces.
An interesting reaction to this dynamic environment, both on the part of clients and on the part of other development consultants, was a strong emphasis on details, such as those that end up in reports to donors. Typically, in an OD engagement, the consultant will at some point draw their client into a conversation of the big picture — either the future, or the current state, but from a broader, “higher altitude” place where one might seek perspective and inspiration. However, in such an unstable environment, details provided a safe zone where action could be taken without the volatility of ideas. A perhaps unintended consequence of this orientation was that the desired future state became the shadow, meaning that it was either unacknowledged by the client, who knew that no one could predict, nor plan for, the future in such an environment, or overemphasized to the point of unattainable fantasy on the part of development consultants, and in any case hard to manage. As a result, any improvement or change tended to be unacknowledged, as it could not possibly meet such high expectations. In terms of responding to this dynamic, we chose not to get bogged down in details, which had the potential of undermining more valuable conversations, and furthermore, we earned credibility with our clients when we promised not to take data and merely submit a report to them or the donors. Instead, we continued to promote the idea that what we wanted to help them with was hopefully practical and useful, even if perhaps aspirational. We also found that focusing on the tangible, without getting lost in details, led to greater impact and trust with the client, and offered a means to bridge the enormous cultural gap.

Another element of ANC culture related to UA is an emphasis on experts, since experts are in a position to identify what is right and wrong, something valued in a strong UA culture. Entezar (2007, p. 54) notes that many heads of ministries have advanced degrees in the government (though not necessarily in management). OD, reflecting its comfort with the unknown, however, values process over expertise. Thus, although we were granted status by our advanced degrees, there was an expectation from our clients that we would tell them what to do. However, consultants that had previously told clients what to do did not fare well. We interpreted this paradox to mean that although there might have been a cultural expectation to deliver expertise, it ended up being unacceptable to the client since expert advice rarely acknowledged the values and realities of the client system. Consequently, the gap between their expectations and what we delivered led to some confusion. The same gap also existed with some of the donors to the project, who were accustomed to seeing the design and delivery of expert consultation and thus had some difficulty appreciating our approach. This meant that we had to expend effort both acknowledging this difference, and protecting the consulting process through dialogue, education and debriefs.

The Individual and the Collective

In Hofstede’s third dimension, Individualism/Collectivism, (IND), he explores the contrasts between individualist cultures and collectivist cultures. In individualist cultures, “the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family…. (at the other end of the spectrum) Collectivism… describes cultures in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (2005, p. 76). Entezar (2007) places the ANC at the collectivist end of the spectrum, meaning that relationships, especially tribal loyalties, have clear value over task, and Jaeger (1986) places OD in the middle of the spectrum, valuing task, but promoting the attainment of task through effective relationship.

As mentioned in my earlier article (2008), building relationships was key to having any kind of trust or influence. Active listening, reflecting medium IND values, is typically used in OD to enable the practitioner to promote the achievement of a task by building trust with the client. By using active listening, we were able to learn, elicit client confidence regarding our intentions, and earn the right to push back when appropriate.

In a collectivist culture, reputation is one of the few sources of social capital beyond tribal and familial relationships. We were helped by the fact that we subcontracted to a firm with a strong reputation for being a serious player. We were given status and respect merely for being associated with highly skillful colleagues in an organization known for delivering what it promised. It also helped when we complemented the work of a mature, multi-year project. Clients in the government had had the opportunity to get to know players in the project, had engaged in many dialogues over time about what approach best suited the situation, and had benefitted from success across multiple domains of the project. However, we were under pressure from the beginning of our project to maintain the good reputation due to the dynamic shifting of power relationships mentioned earlier.
Related to IND is the observation that Afghanistan is a society that values the oral tradition and verbal communication over the written word. On the surface, this meant that putting things in writing had less weight than it does in the West, and that taking a literal and legalistic perspective, as do many development consultants, bought little influence and could actually backfire. As a result, our contracting with our clients was entirely verbal. On a more subtle level, this meant that stories mattered, and that listening to stories mattered quite a bit in terms of showing clients respect and understanding their worldview better.

Masculine and Feminine

The fourth dimension of Hofstede’s model is masculinity (MAS). Hofstede observes that “a (culture) is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. A (culture) is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.” (2005, p. 120). Entezar (2007) observes that the ANC is a high masculinity culture, where the roles between men and women are very distinct and clearly defined in traditional terms. Jaeger (1986) suggests that OD is a low masculinity culture, promoting less distinction between gender roles and greater equality between the sexes.

Masculinity (MAS)

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<th>Low - OD</th>
<th>High - ANC</th>
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<td>Equality and non-differentiation</td>
<td>Traditional gender roles reinforced</td>
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<td>between genders</td>
<td>Nurturing a role for women</td>
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<td>Nurturing linked to high</td>
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Afghanistan is a male-dominated society (positions of power and leadership are held almost exclusively by men) where women on the whole are asked by society to stay indoors, hidden from the public, raising children and serving their families. The majority of Afghan women who want to be considered respectable, and avoid harassment, must be accompanied by a man in public, and must remain covered by a chadar (head covering) at least, though many still wear a burkha (covering them from head to toe). In acknowledgement of and respect to this high MAS environment, my colleague and I always covered our heads, dressed conservatively and, when walking in public, were conscious of dropping our eyes to the ground and pulling in our energy so as to not draw too much attention (though we did anyway when not accompanied by men).

In meetings with clients, however, we balanced the respect for the high MAS culture we were in with our own low MAS values, using direct eye contact and a confident presence, which we were at some liberty to do as foreigners. We acted in this way because we not only sought respect as individuals, but wanted respect paid to our consulting process. Although many of our clients in the government had been exposed to foreigners, our identity as females created both a helpful and a hindering dynamic. On the one hand, our presence appeared to unsettle some clients, throwing off the usual patterns of comfort that exist in interactions among men. Not too many Afghan men had experience dealing with women in roles of power. On the other hand, some clients seemed to be open to us, and were unusually gracious and hospitable - in an almost protective way. It might be said that they were more willing to talk with us because we were not perceived as threatening to them as other men might be.

OD Orientation: Use of Self and Action Research

I have discussed the differences between the national culture of Afghanistan and the culture of OD through Hofstede’s lens and how it affected our consulting process. The following presents why I believe use of self and action research, key elements of an OD orientation, were essential methodologies in enabling us to have some productive impact in our project work that was respectful of our client’s environment.
Use of self is a practice of consciously raising awareness of one’s own filters, one’s point of view and one’s assumptions, then using such awareness to further the process of mutual learning in a client system. We would not have been able to navigate in an environment like Afghanistan without this practice. On the one hand, the practice of use of self enabled us to be aware of the biases we brought about the use of OD, per Jaeger’s (1986) observations, as well as our general worldview. (We did not, however, use much self-disclosure with clients in this political environment—formality and diplomacy worked more effectively in bridging deep cultural divides.) On the other hand, while we had to adapt, we could not lose ourselves in the process. There was much in the environment that challenged our sense of ourselves, so without a daily practice of reflection and debriefing, we might have been lost. Use of self enabled us to get a handle on our feelings and concerns and manage them in a way that took care of ourselves while serving the client well.

In terms of helping us be open to learning about the client environment, action research (the repeated cycles of contracting, data collection, diagnosis, feedback, and action) was invaluable as a methodology. Action research is to a complex client system what snow shoes are to deep snow—it allows a lightness of step so that one can keep moving. The action research process assumes ignorance regarding the client environment, and uses all data to move from ignorance to awareness. Even more powerful, the client, who also learns what assumptions are at work in their system, ideally mirrors the consultant’s own journey. Awareness, and ideally, consensuality clarity around the underlying assumptions in the client system, may arguably be the single most powerful outcome a client will get from the OD consulting process. Also, by raising assumptions, consultant and client are in a better position to bridge the gaps in their worldviews. Expert consulting, which is predominant in the international development world, assumes too much and is often unaware of its biases to be of broad use in a complex, cross-cultural human system dynamic. We found that an adapted version of action research did indeed work in Afghanistan. We adapted the process to spend much more time upfront identifying the client. In a political system, and especially one with the additional layers of foreign donors involved, the client was not as easily defined as it would be in a more transparent, bottom-line organization. We also spent much more energy contracting and re-contracting, though much of what was understood by us and our clients to be the nature of our consulting relationship remained covert despite our efforts to make it more explicit and negotiated. We also proceeded more carefully and diplomatically with regards to surfacing issues than we might in a US, bottom-line organization or in an environment in peacetime. Action research was effective at raising issues, focusing the attention of the organization, building momentum and unearthing obstacles to change, though it was not always safe to pursue the nature of the obstacles. Use of action research led in one case to unprecedented discussions in one system about mission and vision. Our process was rarely linear nor predictable and thus benefitted from the iterative nature of action research.

Summary and Implications for OD

In our OD consulting work in Afghanistan it was vital to learn about what was unique about our client environment as well as to consciously be aware of our own worldview. Many of the values of OD were in complete contrast with the national culture of Afghanistan, so we had to adapt our approach. However, that which is essential to an OD orientation, use of self and action research, enabled us to bridge the very gap we presented with our presence. What potential does OD have in the world of international development? In a world of answers, OD is at ease with questions. In a world of consultant-centered solutions, OD provides the methodology to elicit client-centered solutions. In a world of well-meaning consultants who are equipped only to handle the relatively well-controlled environment of business, OD consultants are trained to deal with the chaos of human interaction. The application of an adapted form of OD is a powerful alternative to the existing approaches towards change in the developing world.

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References
FROM THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support and contribution to this issue.

We are always looking for more IODA News items from members. To make a submission to the Newsletter, please email Alette Vonk: alettevonk@yahoo.com or silkeaebold@online.de.

We welcome other individuals interested in working with the newsletter team to make sure that the newsletter content is as representative as possible of the interests and activities of the IODA community.

As always, we welcome any feedback that will help us to provide a great newsletter to IODA members and friends.

Sincerely,

The thoroughly international newsletter team

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