Taking stock of the JOD Conference:

What we have learned and where we go from here

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JOD Conference: New Trends in Organization Design

"In private as well as public organizations we see changing organizational forms, growing importance of ecosystems for competitive advance, the emergence of platform organizations, the increase in hybrid organizations, and many different experiments with flat organizations (absent hierarchy) - The field of organizational design is undergoing a renaissance, and **the Journal of Organization Design (JOD) conference is devoted to explore new trends in organization design, including new themes and methods within the field**."

Conference program

Session 1
Puranam, *Grand challenges in organization design research*
Joseph, *The co-evolution of JOD and the field of organization design*
Snow, *Research in JOD, 2012-18*

Session 2
Kolbjørnsrud, *Collaborative organizational forms*
Klingebiel, *Organizing innovation under uncertainty*
Lauche & Moorkamp, *Temporary organizing and the challenge of achieving resilience*

Session 3
Torras, *Where you sit matters*
Lee, *Can reconfiguring spatial proximity between organizational members promote individual-level exploration?*
Rios, *R&D organization structure, intrafirm inventor networks and innovation*

Session 4
Miric, *How it looks like if you dare to care*
Sump, *How costs shape attention and search*
Colnar & Dimovski, *Organizational design challenge in social work centers*

Session 5
Billinger, *Discretionary mechanisms and cooperation in hierarchies*
Baldwin, *The value structure of technology*
Baumann, *Regulating organizational search*

Session 6
Larner & Walldius, *The platform review alliance board*
Worren & Christiansen, *Using an algorithmic approach for grouping roles and sub-units*

After 3 keynotes, 14 papers (and 14 commentaries),

What have we learned? Where do we go from here?

Questions, mechanisms:
Something old, something new

Questions asked

Examining the link between organizational structure and search & innovation was the most central theme

Structure

(groupings, hierarchy, modularity, authority structure)

Resource allocation process

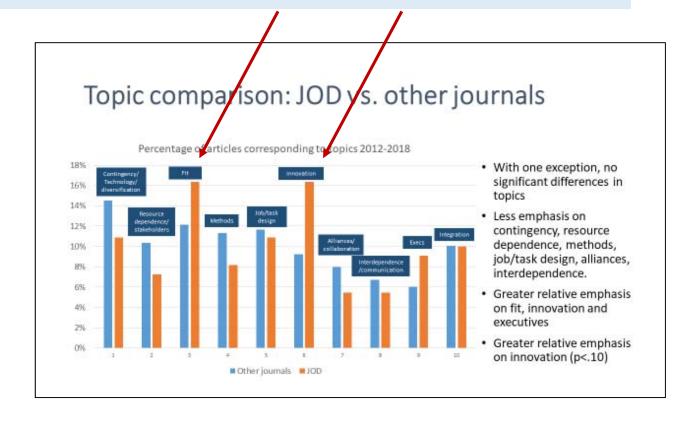Micro-geography

Search/Exploration & Innovation

Efficiency

Cooperation

Interactions

Performance

Questions asked

This is aligned with the JOD's, and more broadly organization design community's, emphasis on *fit* and *innovation*

Topic comparison: JOD vs. other journals

Percentage of articles corresponding to topics 2012-2018

- With one exception, no significant differences in topics
- Less emphasis on contingency, resource dependence, methods, job/task design, alliances, interdependence.
- Greater relative emphasis on fit, innovation and executives
- Greater relative emphasis on innovation (p<.10)

Something old, something new

Deepening our understanding on fundamental design questions, focusing on un(der)explained mechanisms

For example:

- How allocation process, physical space, authority structure affect innovation outcomes?
- What drives quantity (and quality) of interactions within firms?
- How are attention structures are formed
- How are social enterprises / social centers organized? (or should be?)

"Novel but classic"

Something old, something new

Deepening our understanding on fundamental design questions, using various methodological approaches

- Experimental x4
- Conceptual x3
- Cases x3
- Secondary data, econometrics (inc. natural experiments) x3
- Computational x2
- Field study
- Survey

An encouraging range & emphasis, departing from the past practice

"JOD is receptive to papers based on traditional research methods such as surveys and experiments but also encourages papers that are based on future-oriented approaches such as simulations, thought experiments, scenario development, and Delphi studies."

More methods are listed than the number of papers presented; there were multi-method papers

Something old, something new

Deepening our understanding on fundamental design questions, across a variety of settings

- Diversified corporations
- Fintech firm (startup)
- E-commerce firm
- Military
- Multinational
- Social enterprises
- Social work centers
- …

Corporations (of various forms and shapes) have been the bread and butter of organization design research.

There are a lot to learn about/from other organizations, such as NGOs, governments, or other non-profits.

Some opportunities moving forward

A few thoughts, reflecting on the presented studies

- Overwhelming focus on value creation; value capture concerns (agency, influence, "loss prevention") should be a part of the picture
- Organization design is composed of multiple elements that interact with one another in complex ways
- Multidimensionality of individual elements of organization design can have important implications –both theoretically and empirically
- The organization-individual interface; not task-individual fit but as contingencies; link to micro-structures
- Organizational goals (and their multiplicity) cannot be decoupled from the fundamental questions of organization
    - How things are vs. how things ought to be

"We may not be able to teach you what you want or even what you need. We can only teach you what we know. After that you can do what you like with it."

Chinua Achebe

When descriptive reality does not match
normative prescriptions…

Emerging organizational forms & outliers

When descriptive reality does not match
normative prescriptions…

- Learn from the reality observed

- Devise (and/or revise) our theories of organization

(not necessarily in that order)

Learning from the field

Field work is invaluable both descriptively and for grounded-theory building.

- There is also some value in large(r) sample 'just-the-facts' studies (but challenging to execute well)

In addition to qualitative research, JOD has two relevant article formats:

Case studies
- *Outliers:* a counter-example to prevailing theory, stimulating further inquiry demonstrate the need for a new concept or theoretical perspective
- *Fine-grained dynamics:* closely examine actors' motives in a particular situation, the main variables in play, and the processes and relationships that drive the organization's evolution

Organization zoo
- curate new or unusual forms of organizing
- examine them to learn more about what particular they can do as well as their drawbacks; thinking carefully about what makes them atypical may improve our understanding of the typical case

Devising (and/or revising) theories of organization

A central motivation for this conference was to the observation that "*in private as well as public organizations we see changing organizational forms, growing importance of ecosystems for competitive advance, the emergence of platform organizations, the increase in hybrid organizations, and many different experiments with flat organizations (absent hierarchy) - The field of organizational design is undergoing a renaissance.*"

This entails not only understanding "what", but also devising new theories of organizing, in search of a paradigm, and/or revising the existing ones
- Situating the emerging forms within the broader theoretical framework
- Understanding where they differ and, as importantly, where they do not
- Unearthing the mechanisms through which they function

Relevance:
Practical implications

Relevance

"JOD seeks to be relevant as well as rigorous...[R]igor and relevance do not represent a trade-off. JOD wants to publish valid research that will be used by the designers and managers of organizations."

"JOD seeks to bridge the gap between academics and practitioners by publishing articles that have practical implications for the designers and managers of organizations."

"Hard to solve in practice"

Pondering the practical implications in each study is helpful in understanding the validity and boundary conditions of the studied perspective.

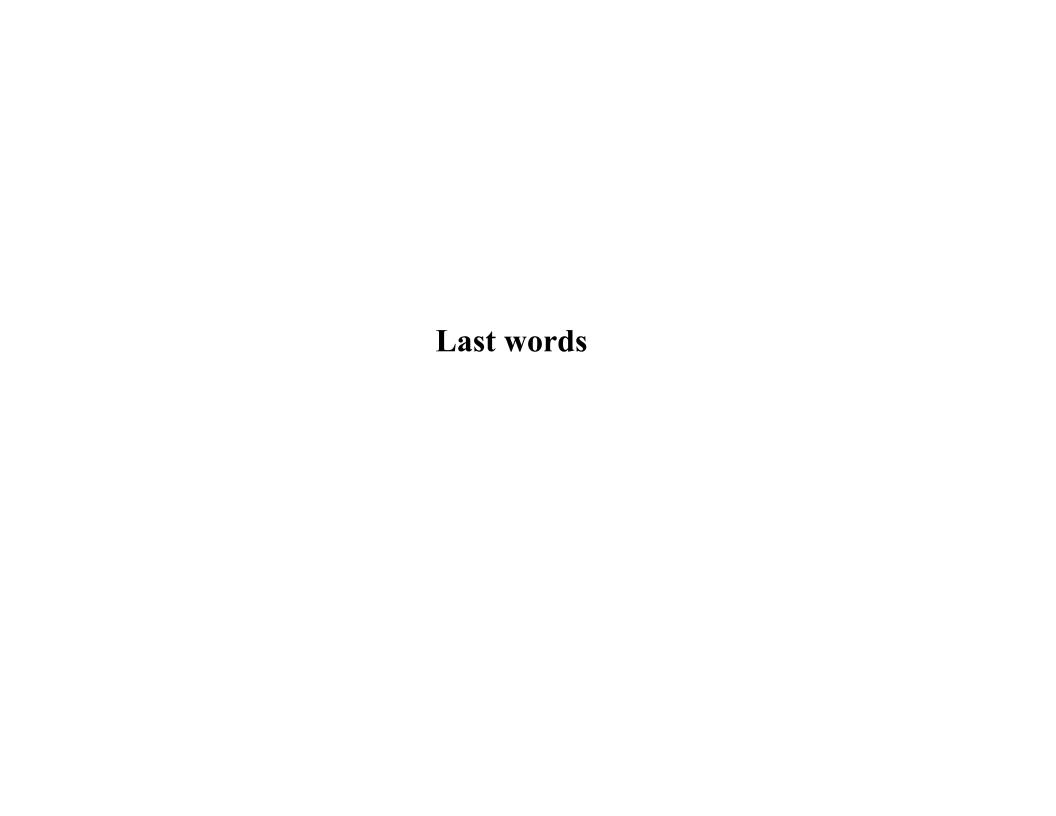Application is an essential part of organization design and redesign.

Relevance

In addition to pondering the practical implications in each study, JOD has two relevant article formats:

Case studies
- presenting examples of new or key organizational phenomena; relevant examples and detailed descriptions are crucial to the ability of designers and managers to apply organizational concepts and theories

Translationals
- taking an existing concept, theory, or study and deriving practical implications for organization design: using theories drawn from scholarly work, they address practical questions and situations faced by managers and offers solutions that managers can use to improve their organizations and decision making

Last words

Last words, goals, wishes

This conference was aimed at celebrating previous achievements of JOD and anticipate those to come.

JOD has indeed achieved a lot in the past
7 years!

→ Dedicated journal of the field

Co-evolution of JOD and the organization design field (John's work):

- JOD evolution is largely consistent with that of the field – though not entirely

- Greater relative emphasis on fit; greater relative emphasis on executives; greater relative emphasis on innovation

- Suggests some room for JOD to influence field - offer a somewhat distinct agenda (different relative emphasis)

Key objectives

1. Continue JOD's tradition of offering a variety of formats reflecting diversity of disciplines, theories, and methodologies in the field of organization design.

2. Expand the editorial team by appointing new Associate Editors and Editorial Board members, with a continued effort to give voice to scholarship from a variety of fields and ensure high quality and timely feedback.

3. Grow JOD's efforts to produce special issues (collections) on new theory and emerging phenomena.

4. Increase JOD's impact, aiming to get approval for an impact factor from one of the major third-party institutions.

5. Increase social media presence to provide better visibility to JOD articles and authors.

As the members of the broader community of scholar who work on organization design, we encourage you to

- Contribute

- Become a member of Organization Design Community

- Participate

THANK YOU

All conference participants

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All those has given life to JOD, starting with Borge and Chuck

•

and

The conference organizers

Borge, Dorthe, Erik, Rich, and Inger