DESIGN GUIDELINES TO ADDRESS GLOBAL CHALLENGES

LESSONS FROM GLOBAL ACTION NETWORKS

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Abstract: Traditional organizations appear to be incapable of adequately addressing critical global issues such as war, climate change, and economic inequality. Addressing these issues suggests the need for organizational innovation to develop global social contracts. Successful innovation must address four integration imperatives: (1) integrate effort and resources across organizational sectors (business, government, civil society) and sense-making, (2) create successful individual to global aggregations, (3) integrate the short and long term, and (4) integrate major issue areas. A new type of organization, Global Action Networks, aims for this integration. Based upon analysis of this new type of organization, five design principles for global social contract organizations are proposed.

Keywords: Organization design guidelines; global problem solving; global action networks

Why are some global issues pernicious and seemingly beyond the reach of substantial effort to address? Think of such things as the persistence of war, famine, economic inequality, biodiversity collapse, and climate change. These will be referred to as "global challenges." There are many ways to frame the reasons for their persistence, from lack of political will or consensus about action measures, to poor incentives, to blocking by powerful actors. These sorts of explanations can be reframed as under-developed institutional capacity to integrate diversity and stimulate necessary action.

A decade of work with a new type of network that is addressing global challenges forms the basis for this article. These networks are placed in the context of organizational evolution to present them as global social contract agents. Four critical integrating problems are identified that must be addressed for the networks' social contract response to be effective. The networks are described in terms of seven strategic characteristics. From this, five design principles are identified for the development of such agents. Hence, this article expands on knowledge about how, from an organizational design perspective, critical global issues can be addressed successfully.

This knowledge must be developed rapidly. Given the environmental sustainability imperative, weapons of mass destruction, pandemics, and threats of famines, organizing effective responses to global challenges must be found quickly, and those responses must themselves enable rapid action. Recent fundamental and subtle shifts suggest a new social contract organizing paradigm that does not place "government," as traditionally conceived, in such a central role. Ostrom (1990, 2000) has taken up the logic of collective action of large groups raised by Olson (1965) to address why people take action in situations when their absence would not seem to make a great difference. Ostrom emphasizes collective action's connection to the production of public goods and won the Nobel Prize in economics for her work in 2009. She notes: "The *problem* of collective action is finding a way to avoid deficient

outcomes and to move closer to optimal outcomes" (Ostrom & Walker, 1997: 427).

In effect, these perspectives challenge the traditional social contract theorists about the role of the state as *the* coordinator and arbitrator of societal interests. As an alternative, Reincke (1997, 1998, 1999) writes about "governing without government". While some think in terms of a supra-national state operating globally as the "solution" to the global governance deficit, others have noted a different sort of response arising in the vacuum, characterized by networks of diverse actors (Khanna, 2011). This includes global public policy networks (Reinicke, 1999–2000), issue networks (Rischard, 2001, 2002), and global governance organizations (Koppell, 2008, 2010).

Pursuing questions about complex large system change, this author has spent a decade working with, analyzing, and writing about these types of networks of diverse actors that he calls Global Action Networks (GANs) (Waddell, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2007, 2011a, 2011b; Waddell & Khagram, 2007). GANs are global, multi-stakeholder, systemic change agents tackling wicked problems (Buchanan, 1992; Churchman, 1967). They include the UN Global Compact; Transparency International, which focuses on corruption; the Forest and Marine Stewardship Councils; the Microcredit Summit Campaign; the World Commission on Dams; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the International Land Coalition; IUCN (with the environment); and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization. Almost all of these networks have arisen since the end of the Cold War, the resolution of which enabled the formation of diverse organizations, which are critical components of GANs, in many parts of the world.

This article crosses traditional disciplinary divides, mingling theories in sociology, political science, complexity/chaos theory, structural holes, organizational behavior, and strategy. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that mingling of disciplines and theories is important to advancing the research and knowledge development agenda regarding global challenges. This assumption arises from a belief in the value of a holistic perspective in developing both the agenda and solutions.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES FROM A SOCIAL EVOLUTION PERSPECTIVE

Despite this multi-disciplinary and cross-theoretical approach, an overarching social evolution theoretical perspective is useful to understand the emerging strategy to address global challenges. Just as the existence of elements of the periodic chart was predicted based on a theory about atomic structures, a social evolution theoretical perspective suggests that the core components of critically important organizational innovation already exist. However, being burdened with traditional ways of seeing the world blinds us to the ability to see what is new. In this case, the networks that are claimed here to be a new organizational form are commonly seen as odd civil society organizations or strange inter-governmental ones. An understanding of social evolution, in turn, frames the design principles.

Evolutionary sociology explains how and why new organizational types emerge. Over thousands of years, civilization has been marked by an inexorable drive toward increasing differentiation (Durkheim, 1966 [1893]; Parsons, 1977). Today this is seen with a growing complexity of identities that are increasingly common and would have been considered unthinkable in the past: consider a black French-extraction Senegalese lesbian Buddhist living in Manhattan and working for an information technology company.

This pace of differentiation can also be seen on the organizational level. At one time the organizing tasks were relatively few: farming, statecraft, trading, religious practice, and cultural production. Production chains were few and characterized by exchanges between producers and consumers with occasional artisans and merchants mixed in. Issues were very local, and life was by-and-large subject to the whims of nature. Today the array of governmental, business, and civil society organizations both in terms of goals and structures is astounding, and the dominant intellectual, if not yet operational, assumption is that man is having a huge impact on the environment.

In the face of this increasing complexity and differentiation arises the pernicious Hobbesian question about social order and what holds society together in the face of "three principal

causes of quarrel" (Hobbes, 1996 [1651]). This question has given rise to a long history of thinking about "social contracts" (Locke, 2011 [1690]; Rawls, 1971 [2005]; Rousseau, 2010 [1762]) as key tools for integration in the face of differentiation. These traditions typically start with three foundational points: (1) there is a hypothetical "natural state" where everyone is equal, (2) the key unit is an individual, and (3) the main organizing entity to respond to order and justice questions is the state.

These three points supported the organizational innovation in the West of "constitutional states" with a core operating principle of one person, one vote and the concept of social contract as a key vehicle of coherence (Locke, 2011 [1690]; Rousseau, 2010 [1762]). The state was distinguished by being the sole agent of legitimate coercive power, which it normatively employed to better the lives of its citizens. After the economic horror of the Great Depression and the physical terror of the Second World War, the state became arbitrator in a model of "big government – big business – big labor," in which the core imperatives were economic and physical security.

Tremendous new organizing power accompanied this process: think of the emergence of corporations with the founding of the railroads that produced commercial organizations coordinating across time zones and functional specialization to produce previously unimaginable large-scale material wealth; governments that developed into welfare states with huge bureaucracies to ensure human dignity, peace, and order; and the rise of civil society organizations that burst out of their religious and labor roots to blossom into an amazing array of environmental, human rights, developmental, and other organizations.

This increased organizing power, and an accompanying growth of new technologies, have diminished the role of geographic distance into the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization has led to a huge increase in population and material wealth, and a previously unimaginable negative impact on the environment. The old organizing model that focused on the state as the core agent of social contract production – premised on organizing principles that include the primacy of the individual and "one person, one vote" – seems oddly out of step and even eclipsed in this new world. How do we develop institutions to effectively address issues in a world of seven billion people with a global diversity of culture and contexts? The environmental and financial crises and the scale of income inequality suggest that something significantly new is needed to organize society globally and develop social contracts – to enhance our integration and coordination power (WBGU, 2011). As one innovation that is responding to this challenge, this paper looks at Global Action Networks (GANs) and the principles behind them.

THE INTEGRATION CHALLENGE

The social evolutionary perspective emphasizes the need for integration in the face of continually increasing differentiation. But what exactly needs to be integrated? There is an enormous literature about organizing strategies to address the needs for global integration. The political science literature focuses on the role of government, particularly intergovernmental arrangements such as the Bretton Woods institutions, trade agreements, and international conventions. Similar attention has been paid to the trans-national and multi-national corporation and to global civil society. Most of these approaches favor intra-sectoral (within one of business, government, or civil society) organizational hierarchies with the key organizing challenge being how to connect from local to global. The concept of "transnational relations" expands the equation to regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent (Keohane & Nye, 1971). Reinicke and Deng (2000) characterize the global integration challenge by two dimensions. One is referred to as vertical, by which they mean local-to-global – for example, connecting local government to global governmental organizations. The second dimension is horizontal, which refers to inter-sectoral and inter-organizational links within sectors, such as city-to-city links. These analyses seem rather limited, however, and under-define the integrating challenge. Four particular integration challenges are proposed to describe the challenge more comprehensively and beyond the traditional intra-organizational focus.

One challenge is to *integrate effort and resources across organizational sectors* (business,

government, civil society) *and sense-making* (mental, physical, emotional). All three sectors influence the global challenges, and those global challenges are of a scale that requires the resources and competencies of all. The challenge of integrating them is particularly significant because of their differences. Distinguishing between these three organizing traditions has deep roots. In the 1920s, theosophist Rudolph Steiner (1999 [1923]) wrote about society in terms of "threefolding" among three distinct "spheres": the political sphere of law-making, governance, and rules regarding how people interact; the economic sphere promoting production; and the cultural sphere, which refers to the free human spirit expression involving thinking, morality, and creativity. Four decades later, sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1961) looked at organizations from the perspective of three distinct forms of power: governmental, in which power is coercive (police, laws, courts); business, which depends upon calculative and instrumental (financial payments) power to achieve its goals; and non-profit, where power is normative and people act based upon shared values. Similar typologies have been advanced by others: those writing to understand the "third sector" have distinguished between prince-merchant-citizen (Najam, 1996; Nerfin, 1986); management theory tradition thinks in terms of hierarchies-markets-networks (Powell, 1990); and economist Oliver Williamson (1991) writes of hierarchy-markets-hybrids. The sectors are distinguished by archetypal roles, with government's role being to maintain order, business' to create wealth, and civil society's to hold traditions and values. The sectors are also characterized by different sense-making modes, with government being dominantly mental, business physical, and civil society emotional (Waddell, 2005b). The analysts' conclusion that the divides are significant is further buttressed by an expanding literature on multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration (Clarke & Fuller, 2010; Gray, 1989; Huzzard, Ahlberg, & Ekman, 2010; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Wood & Gray, 1991).

A second integration challenge is to *create successful individual to global aggregations*. Sometimes this is characterized as a geographic challenge, but this is a rather simplistic framing that suggests the issues are only the rather mechanical ones of coordinating across time zones and distances. There are two distinct and more important dimensions of this challenge. One involves linguistic and cultural diversity, with culture understood as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1993: 89) and produces the Tower of Babel effect of confusion, distrust, and difficulty in collaboration. The more local the level, the more likely people are to share language, values, and culture and the more likely they are to have the repetitive interactions necessary to generate trust to take action (Bourdieu, 1977; Habermas, 1984; Luhmann, 1979). The challenges of collective action associated with greater geographic expanse arising from cultural distinctions are well documented with regard to a range of issues such as ethics, decision-making, leadership, motivation, and individualism versus collectivism. (For a summary, see Tsui, Nifadkar, and Ou, 2007.) The basic impact of cultural differences can be experienced positively, as with the capacity to generate innovation, or negatively, such as the generation of conflict. Different disciplines have specialized in describing the challenge in different ways: political science specializing in inter-state perspective, management science in organizational dimensions, psychology with individual behaviors, and sociology from a societal viewpoint.

This same range of perspective is also associated with the second individual-to-global dimension: organizational and structural. It might be summarized as: How can individuals be connected to global action, and vice-versa, to create mutually robust and meaningful exchanges? Traditional social contract theorists see the state as the critical institution to aggregate individuals. However, our intergovernmental institutions clearly aggregate the interests of states rather than the individuals behind them. We have no meaningful global governance entity that reflects the individual in a way that honors the social contract tradition. Business tends to think of this issue first in terms of strategy, and there is an enormous outpouring of "global strategy" analysis. New ways are emerging to address the need to aggregate diverse voices and interests, notably with new media and novel network strategies (Castells, 2000; Reinicke, 1998; Slaughter, 2004). However, there is a natural difficulty in developing these new entities conceptually and operationally; moreover, traditional power structures resist giving space for new, transcendent organizations.

A third integration challenge is with *time horizons and the need to integrate the short and long term* and develop "…a culture of obligation towards future generations" (WBGU, 2011: 2). Different organizational sectors of our societies are dominated by different temporal logics. These are related to theories of accountability and effectiveness. Our business structures are based on temporal cycles of quarters, reflecting their farming roots associated with seasons. This has been well documented to produce numerous problems associated with "short-termism" since "…the course of action that is most desirable over the long run is not the best course of action in the short term" (Laverty, 1996: 825), such as with investment decisions (Laverty, 1996; Porter & Wayland, 1992). Government institutions are organized around electoral cycles ranging usually from two to five years. This has been noted to influence policy decisions oriented to re-election, which often conflicts with long-term interests (Jacobs, 2011; Leonardo, 2009). The long-term public policy strategies required for issues associated with sustainable development have produced experiments with new approaches to address the election cycle constraints, such as with transition management in The Netherlands (Rotmans, Kemp, & Asselt, 2001). Civil society organizations, being concerned with more enduring values and sustainability itself, tend toward longer cycles, but they are strongly influenced by economic and political cycles. Of course, none of these temporal orientations is "right" or "wrong". However, the sustainability challenge emphasizes the importance of a longer-term horizon than has been historically necessary, and how we can appropriately assert it while not ignoring the value of shorter-term foci is still problematic.

A fourth integration challenge is *across issue areas themselves*. Traditional science and problem-solving have depended on strategies to divide problems into ever-smaller parts – parts that are comparatively easy to address. However, a whole is usually more than the sum of its parts, and such strategies tend to overlook the dynamics of the whole. Today the divisions are seen in the way people talk about issues of health, education, water, agriculture, business, or politics. The global challenges are noted for their *systemic* nature and demand better strategies to integrate effort across them. This has given rise to the increasing popularity of systems theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships among the parts (Bertalanffy, 1968; Forrester, 1968, 1971).

These four integration challenges collectively suggest "messy" (Ackoff, 1974) or "wicked" problems. "Wicked problems are a 'class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing'" (Buchanan, 1992: 15), referring to a citation of Horst Rittel in Churchman (1967).

GLOBAL ACTION NETWORKS

This section summarizes the author's years of looking at networks, forms of collaboration, and large system change processes. GANs are global, multi-stakeholder, systemic change agents tackling wicked issues. Seven major characteristics are proposed for GANs, after much discussion with colleagues and collective analysis aiming for parsimony and comprehensiveness. These characteristics are seen as suggesting an ideal type (Weber, 1904/1949). Many organizations combine a few of these characteristics, but the argument here is that collectively these characteristics define a new organizational form that is as different as business is from civil society and as both of those are from government. As can be expected with a newly emerging organizational form, there are a lot of experimental variations that produce this ideal type. Today there are a few dozen of these types of networks that reflect, more or less, these seven characteristics. For example, some are more regional (it takes time to become global), some focus more on incremental than systemic change, and some treat the "learning" of "entrepreneurial learning" component rather cavalierly. The oldest example that reflects these characteristics is the Red Cross Movement; a few others were created before the end of the Cold War. However, it took the ending of the Cold War and the invention of enabling information technologies for the composite GAN elements to flourish and the GAN form to spread (Waddell, 2011a).

Glocal (global and multi-level)

This characteristic is often associated with the nation state-based model of the United Nations system that is *inter-national* and designed specifically to cross national political boundaries. There are significantly different assumptions behind the concepts of "international" and "global". The distinct assumptions increase with the concept of *glocal*, where the multiple action levels (local, national, regional, global) and sectoral geographic action frames (nations, markets, interest communities) come together. This characteristic was described earlier as one of the four key integration challenges, encompassing cultural, linguistic, and geographic divisions. Global issues are particularly apparent with GANs working on environmental issues, such as the Global Water Partnership, the Forest Stewardship Council, and IUCN. Environmental issues imply an environmental organizing imperative, such as a watershed or bio-diversity hot spot, that frequently crosses political-cultural-linguistic boundaries and requires global approaches.

Systemic change agent

GANs are not status quo organizations, nor are they about simply documenting and disseminating what exists. They are about the most difficult of change objectives: systemic change. For Transparency International, this means shifting individuals' behaviors and understanding what's possible in a world free of corruption, that is, changing social, economic, and political relationships, structures, and processes.

Table 1 presents change as being of three broad types. Many organizations are involved with *incremental* change, often referred to as "scaling up." That refers to the goal of doing more of what is already being done. The *reform* mode of change is also not unusual, although it is less frequent. Often it is associated with legislation, since it involves changing the rules of the game. The most difficult type of change is *transformation*. This involves fundamental questioning about how we think about issues and uncovering assumptions that are not articulated. In contrast to the mediating and negotiating processes of the other types of change, transformation is a revisioning process of how people in society can live together, given the scale of challenge or opportunity that we are facing.

Table 1: Types of Change

Type of Change	Incremental	Reform	Transformation
Core Question	How can we do more of the same? Are we doing things right?	What rules shall we create? What are our mental models and assumptions?	How do we make sense of this? What is the purpose? How do we know what is best?
Purpose	To improve performance	To understand and change the system and its parts	To innovate and create previously unimagined possibilities
Power and Relation-ships	Confirms existing rules. Preserves the established power structure and relationships among actors in the system	Opens rules to revision. Suspends established power relationships; promotes authentic interactions; creates a space for genuine reform of the system	Opens issue to creation of new ways of thinking and action. Promotes transformation of relationships with whole-system awareness and identity; promotes examining deep structures that sustain the system
Temporal Horizon	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term

Source: Adapted from Waddell (2011a: 97).

One reason transformation is so difficult is because it involves shifts in power, usually accomplished by some parties "losing" power to others in terms of traditional zero-sum thinking about power, and reconceptualizing power in a new vision and set of goals. This is certainly true with the integration of transparency into business practices: it inherently suggests that different stakeholders' concerns have to be integrated into the way business functions. It requires fundamentally reconceptualizing the role of business to create a new business model. This is the *transcendent* aspect of GANs' work: encompassing concerns with an innovative higher-level way of interacting.

Systemic change involves all three of these forms of change, and GANs' role is to steward the development of the change. A key role for GANs is to "hold" the diverse temporal horizons to mature transformational solutions. In the case of Transparency International (TI), the change is quite obviously a transformational one. When TI began in the early 1990s, the World Bank still equated corruption with cultural idiosyncrasies. In other cases, such as with the Global Compact and business, the challenge strategically is presented as an incremental one since transformation appears so big and complicated that most would not participate in such an initiative. Rather, the trick is to be able to have participants experience the transformation as incremental change over the decades that are required to realize the peaceful type of transformation that GANs advocate. In such change processes, the very concept of "ownership" is redefined. However, participants must feel that they are "co-owners" of the process if it is to be successful. They must feel the goals are *their* goals, or they will not devote the energy necessary to realize them.

Diversity-embracing

This characteristic reflects the cultural component of the global-to-local challenge, and the challenge to integrate resources across organizational sectors. GANs are formed because traditional organizations' attempts to address wicked issues are inadequate or outright unsuccessful. For example, in development the U.S. had government-led strategies in the 1960s through the 1980s, at which point business-led strategies became the favored approach with the Washington Consensus, which succumbed to other critiques (Williamson, 2002). Today we have the World Water Council and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS as GANs that reflect learning about limitations of government-led strategies. Traditional ethnic, linguistic, geographic, political, and business-government-civil society divisions require integration to be able to address the issues effectively – GANs are a *collaborative* enterprise.

The requirement of integration is obvious with environmental issues. The Climate Group, for example, focuses on bridging business and local government; the Marine Stewardship Council brings together business, technical experts, and NGOs. GANs must demonstrate the ability to integrate into their governance and decision-making structure at least two of the three organizational sectors. Of course, the emerging archetype is that all three be engaged in a "whole systems" strategy.

Inter-organizational network

Networks come in many forms. Organizations are a particular kind of network: they have a hierarchical (vertical) control structure that is legitimized through legal incorporation. GANs are a very particular kind of network: inter-organizational. In their mature stage, they connect a very large number of organizations, with multiple hubs. Table 2 presents definitions for network types that are particularly important for GANs.

A major aspect of GANs is that they are inter-organizational networks composed of many inter-organizational partnerships. These partnerships comprise modest numbers of the network's participants working together around a specific task often bounded by geography and sub-issues. The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, for example, has a Brazilion project on solar water heating.

One role of the whole inter-organizational network is to ensure coherence of the diverse tasks that the partnerships are undertaking. This is particularly obvious with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) as it develops a globally adopted framework for triple-bottom line accounting. Ensuring coherence means creating "interventions" and stimulating certain activities within the network. For example, the GRI undertakes revisions of its framework to continually advance standards. GANs operate with a tipping-point (Gladwell, 2002, 2010) theory of change: when sufficient numbers of organizations begin adopting a business model that integrates the GRI principles, it will become the "normal" business model, and others in the broader system will adopt it without even realizing how it was developed.

Table 2: Types of Networks					
	Inter-Personal	**Organizational**	**Inter-Organizational Partnership**	**Inter-Organizational Network**	**System**
Legally Distinct Entities	Many	One	Few	Very many	All stakeholders
Organization Structure	Informal	Hierarchical	Spoke and wheel	Multi-hub	Diffuse
Organizing Logic	Personal	Administering/ Managing	Coordination	Coherence	Diverse self-direction
Operating Focus	Relation-ships	Organization	Task	System	System boundaries
Participation	Open	Closed	Highly controlled	Loosely controlled	External

Source: Adapted from Waddell (2011a: 25).

Global public goods producer

In economists' jargon, public goods are those that share the quality of non-excludability and non-rivalry (Cowen, 1988; Kaul, 2003). That means that when the good is available to one party, it is available to all, and that the consumption of the good by one party does not reduce its availability to others. "Air" is a classic example. GANs are in the business of developing these types of goods. For GANs, public goods are associated with the development of social and production systems. From this perspective, the Global Compact is in the business of developing a new business model to the point where it is the "normal" business model. This will require new structures and values necessary for it to flourish. This new model will be something available for everyone to use – in fact, they will not even think about whether to use it, since it will be considered so obvious.

Entrepreneurial action learner

GANs cultivate and support action in all parts of the system that they are working to change. They do not depend on a hierarchy of approval, which stifles voluntary leadership. However, successful GANs also emphasize discipline and harvesting of lessons to share more broadly and build collective capacity. Practitioners' actions can be understood in terms of the action research/learning/inquiry (Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Revans, 1982; Torbert, 2010) and even engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) traditions.

The action learning characteristic is particularly important because GAN's challenges, such as eradicating diseases, are *complex* challenges. The adjective "complex" means something quite specific, as Snowden (2005) has described with great clarity. It is distinguished from a *simple* issue, where cause and effect are linear, quite closely related, and well defined. For example, filling holes in a street is something that requires very limited and easily defined actions that can be handled within a municipal government department. *Complex* is also distinguished from *complicated*, which refers to an issue that is relatively definable but requires a much larger number of interactions over a longer time period. A classic example is sending a person to the moon: this requires engaging a large number of organizations and people, but the science and implementation involve quite definable physical challenges.

Complex refers to situations where the answer is not known and is typically difficult to define because it involves many changing contextual variables and a large number of organizations and people. Paths to disease eradication do not follow the types of roll-out processes associated with business scaling-up; success depends on learning in highly contextualized environments. The successes of the Global Fund to Fight AIDs and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization are associated with this GAN characteristic (Paina & Peters, 2011; Stoever et al., 2011).

GAN issues require an approach of planting many seeds and nurturing their development, rather than promoting one or two big solutions as "the answer." The latter will produce results that might be inappropriate in other contexts or quickly be bypassed by new developments. This action learning characteristic builds GANs' ability to integrate all of the four challenges.

How to address the four challenges is not obvious. Answering this question requires action and learning to build capacity throughout the network through explicit learning, codifying, process innovation, and skills development.

Voluntary leader

To realize their ambitious missions around global change, GANs must be collections of those who are truly engaged in realizing their visions of a better future. GANs must be spaces where organizations and people with resources and talent can productively work together for a shared vision that involves systemic change. GANs must be careful not to become trade associations, which are agents of the status quo and particular stakeholder interests. Also, they must not be seen as regulators who are outsiders enforcing rules on others. Both of those types of organizations play important and valuable roles, but they are not GANs. A core tension for GANs is between their need to be led by those who truly are systemic change drivers and the need to engage a large number of participants in a system to realize the tipping point.

Leadership is part of the challenge facing the UN Global Compact (UNGC), which aims to give life to ten universal labor, human rights, environmental and anti-corruption principles with a focus on business. Currently the UNGC aims for 20,000 participants by 2020. It already has over 6,000, so the 2020 goal might not seem like a lot. Quality is also critical, but is 20,000 enough to realize a tipping point? The UNGC and other GANs, being a new organizational form, have only their own individual and community experiences to reflect on. This again emphasizes the importance of having a disciplined action learning strategy. This important characteristic provides GANs with individuals who have the vision to address the four integrating challenges.

Table 3: The Seven GAN Strategic Characteristics and Illustrative Questions

1. Global and multi-level: Are local and global appropriately connected and exchanging? Do the geographic foci within "global" make sense?
2. Systemic change agent: Is the focus on incremental change? Reform? Transformation? Short-term, long-term? How explicit? Are people increasingly empowered?
3. Diversity-embracing: Are the issue stakeholders sufficiently engaged? Is there a culture of respect and mutual understanding?
4. Inter-organizational network: Are organizations realizing value? Are the necessary sub-global and smaller issue organizations involved to realize the goals?
5. Global public goods producer: Are the benefits of the network distributed? Is there a "greater good" ideal driving the process?
6. Entrepreneurial action learner: Is there robust activity throughout the network? Are people "inventing" new approaches and taking advantage of new opportunities?
7. Voluntary leader: Is network leadership shared? Is there a forward-tipping dimension to continually push frontiers? Is there renewal?

Source: Waddell (2011b).

Table 3 summarizes the seven characteristics of a GAN. Taken as a whole, the characteristics describe an entity that aims to do two things in particular that are related to addressing wicked global issues. One is to be a "big tent," in the American vernacular, that embraces a wide variety of perspectives, resources, goals, and values. The other is to act: these are not theoretical organizations but rather ones that value grounded learning.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

GANs are associated with new approaches to governance of the commons. GANs are in the early stages of development as a new organizational form, with actual examples reflecting a wide variety of structures and processes. Extrapolating from what is emerging and building on GANs' strategic characteristics, what are the key design principles to guide structure and process definition? Valuing both parsimony and comprehensiveness, what design principles must be honored to have an effective GAN? Five such principles are proposed.

(1) Design around experience by taking action on an issue versus importing models and solutions. All of the GANs derive their support and legitimacy from effectively addressing substantive issues. Sometimes this is categorically physical, such as with the physical environment or health. Sometimes it is more ethereal but with a clear physical impact, such as defining and giving life to new standards as with certification and standard-setting processes. Organizing around a substantive issue is a way to address the integrating challenges because it brings together diverse parties around objective realities that can be accurately described and analyzed.

When people think "global" with public issues, they almost inevitably jump into a geographic structure mindset with something like local-national-regional-continental-global. This often leads them to get lost in "scale," and to long theoretical discussions about structures and processes. This results in two problems. First, it denies the "entrepreneurial learning" strategy and development of processes and structures that arise out of experience in addressing a substantive issue. The second problem is that it leads to importing inappropriate mental models from other sectors about how to organize – very often with a traditional geographic one mimicking inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). But different strategies and issues have different and multiple "centers of gravity." The Global Reporting Initiatives' key center is an individual corporation – which leads to corporate-industry-global structure with industry the primary organizing imperative, and geography secondary. Transparency International is organized around national chapters as its key unit, in large part because addressing corruption is seen as a national government enforcement issue. However, it has developed organizing strategies around "projects" with corruption pacts such as one associated with the billions of euros to develop the Berlin airport. It works at the local level, such as in Bangladesh, with a large network of local centers to deepen action with people's daily lives.

This principle also emphasizes the importance of thinking of design as a living, ongoing activity rather than a static, set-in-stone model. There needs to be commitment to evolving structure rather than to any particular organizational structure. This implies jettisoning cherished ideas about the value of permanence, as when a GAN founding leader described that he aimed to establish a "permanent organizational structure." This approach denies the need to be responsive to successes and deepening understanding of challenges. As effective learning organizations, GANs need to continually evolve in response to success and deepened learning. For example, the International Land Coalition had significant success with its global-focused activities to realize integration of its goals into international agreements. The development of these enabling frameworks required shifting to implementation and shifting its processes and structures to focus on the national level; regional (continental) levels had less importance since they were not "implementers". Continental regional activities made little sense outside of Latin America, where language and history provided a rationale (iScale, 2011).

This experienced-based approach provides opportunity for participants to come to know each other beyond stereotypes that often separate organizational sectors. As GANs develop with their expansive and systemic view, they come up against other issues and start to learn how to integrate them into their own concerns. Participants experience interconnectedness and learn to think of relationships in new ways.

(2) Integrate complexity and emergence versus linear, simple and defined. Substantive physical issues are contrasted with more process-oriented issues that are often cross-cutting and critical. How GANs go about their work must skillfully draw from the understanding that they are working on complex adaptive systems (Beinhocker, 1997; Lissack, 1999) that require strategies of emergence (Lissack & Letiche, 2002) reflected in the entrepreneurial learning characteristic. This includes structures and processes to realize transformation, create consensual action amongst diverse interests, and create coherence globally. These are critical to GANs' success, but they are not issues that people organize around as with substantive issues.

This approach challenges the mechanical industrial age that remains largely with us, in terms of how the vast majority of people think of organizational design. But the work of GANs is not a linear production process of simple cause-effect, root causes and replication.

Complexity theorists are not just saying human systems are like biological ones – they are saying they *are* biological ones (Beinhocker, 1997). The implications are significant:

> *Complexity thus investigates emergent, dynamic and self-organizing systems that interact in ways that heavily influence the probabilities of later events (Prigogine, 1997: 35). Such intersecting systems are like a 'dynamical zoo' involving changes in patterns that are 'wildly unlike the smoothly additive changes of their simpler cousins' (Axelrod & Cohen, 1999: 14). This complex systems world is a world of avalanches, of founder effects, self-restoring patterns, apparently stable regimes that suddenly collapse, punctuated equilibria, 'butterfly effects' and thresholds as systems tip from one state to another (Urry, 2005).*

This principle shifts the challenge from one of integration of effort to creating coherence of action around the substantive issue. Integration implies an unachievable amount of coordination globally in response to a granularity in consensus that is very unlikely with GANs' wicked problems; given the importance of GANs' responsiveness to a widely diverse range of contexts, integration can actually generate problems.

Coherence is a much higher level of agreement. Lissack and Letiche (2002: 84–85) describe it as:

> *...a field of meaning(s) wherein people share complex structures of cognition and relate to one another from their shared rhetorical circumstance. Coherence entails an evolving, constantly changing, social cognitive situation. Experience of shared situation is crucial to coherence. In any situation, there are multiple possibilities; coherence is not one truth or an inevitable course of action. It is an acknowledged commonality of awareness, of circumstance.*

GANs' design must support living with ambiguity and paradox while creating a common sense of the importance of the substantive issue. This is usually accomplished by creating one or a few common interventions/activities (such as development of Transparency International's "Transparency Index") and by stimulating additional action that is appropriately informed by others' experiences and priorities. This leads to "emergence" of solutions (Scharmer, 2001, 2009).

This design principle creates issues for GANs' development. They have a natural tendency to be very action oriented and to be underdeveloped in thinking about how to take effective action. For example, although they spend enormous resources on collective learning, almost none have learning strategies or senior staff allocated to them. A recent survey revealed that despite the importance of collaborative effort, almost none use collaborative document development, project management, or contact management tools. In effect, they still have to understand and develop core competencies to realize success (Waddell, 2011a).

This principle responds to all four integration challenges. In fact, it could be said that the principle actively embraces the challenges as sources of energy and innovation necessary to respond to critical global issues. The principle stresses that the answers are not "out there" to be purchased but are to be co-developed by learning about others' perspectives and roles in possible futures. People are engaged in forward-thinking and acting to define how the future can be different and better rather than focusing on historic wrongs and conflicts.

(3) Create transcendence rather than a community of disparate interests. To hold together the diverse perspectives over time, a core strategy involves creating transcendence. This refers to the way GANs actually frame their work, to integrate the various objectives of their stakeholders into a coherent mission and vision. For example, business must see its profit-making objectives as part of the outcomes; government its goals of order and security; and civil society its values of justice and long-term community health. There is a longer-term GAN developmental trajectory to continually evolve transcendence that includes actually crossing the diverse issues that may be core to organizing, such as economic development, water, agriculture, health, and human rights. For example, the Global Water Partnerships' success over time is expanding to include much broader environmental and economic concerns, and work with non–water–focused actors.

This work is helped by the complexity principle. "What complexity science metaphors do for an organization, is give its members access to both new words and new possibilities

for action. With the access to new actions comes the potential for new identity" (Lissack, 1999: 122). This "newness" is key to successful transcendence. Transcending emphasizes the importance of GANs' process skills and their ability to create meaningful connections across diverse cultures, objectives, values, and world views. It is core to all four of the integrating challenges. To respond to the temporal challenge, for example, GANs must produce valued outcomes in the time frames of all their stakeholders, but in general they are dealing with long-term systemic change and transformation challenges. Transcending encourages participants to move from their own centricities to understand those of others, which awakens new ways of seeing the whole.

(4) Develop holistic systems rather than islands of success. This principle reflects a true systems and network perspective of the whole that transcends a focus on individuals and organizations by focusing on issues, roles, and exchanges (Allee, 2003, 2008). This is a world well beyond the hierarchical and hub-and-spoke mental models that commonly are implicit or explicit parts of design principles. This is a world of decentralized initiative and "leaderfulness" (Raelin, 2003). Local and global are complementary, not hierarchical and competitive. GANs are about generating robust exchanges between participants who have a particular role in addressing an issue. They are also about bridging and filling in the structural holes (Burt, 1992, 2004) that can be barriers to addressing issues. For example, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership is about addressing capital and knowledge gaps. Verna Allee (2011), the founder of value network analysis, explains roles as:

> *…the many different 'hats' we wear. Those hats are actually different roles that we play. In Value Network Analysis (VNA) these different roles are represented as nodes in the network. In traditional organizations most work is organized around either a process or a job function. The concept of role is quite different, and evokes a different mindset about how work gets done.*

Although organizations and individuals are important, more important is that the roles in the system are fulfilled, and this may be done by one or more individuals or organizations. Organizational health is dependent on the exchanges that occur between those playing their roles.

GANs are always in development as networks, realizing that a core issue they are addressing is underorganization (Brown, 1980). This principle is relevant to all four integrating challenges and leads to the imperative of creating GANs as multi-stakeholder and multi-level initiatives that are sensitive to the relationship between their focal issues and other issues.

(5) Emphasize trust and participation rather than representation and membership. GANs possess one core asset: trust. They are organizations with few, if any, "sticks" to ensure participation; they really depend on carrots. The core carrot is what the GAN can produce of value for participants' collective mission, as well as for an individual participant. Participants must feel their views and interests are part and parcel of the GANs' functioning.
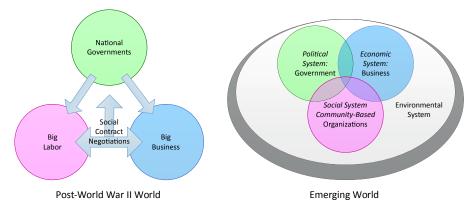
Given the diversity of GANs and their global focus, which means they must engage thousands of organizations for success, ensuring trust is no simple matter. One way is to design governance rules to mandate representation of diverse stakeholders. However, this is a formidable challenge, considering the dynamic nature of how GANs address their issues, and the diversity of stakeholders in a glocal network. As this article has suggested, identity is increasingly a multi-dimensional thing. The answer is to break out of traditional thinking of "representation" and "membership," and to emphasize the importance of maintaining and building trust when developing decision-making processes and structures. Do decision-makers inspire trust from Luhman's (1979) three dimensions – trust in shared understanding, objectives, and abilities? Do they have the respect of system stakeholders? Individuals may reflect a stakeholder group's interests or those of a particular organization, but the expectation that they "represent" them in a traditional sense is usually an unreasonable, confusing, unproductive route. Participants are "voluntary leaders" and personal passion is important; as action entrepreneurs their role is to find ways to develop meaningful action for stakeholders and organizations with whom they associate.
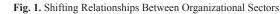
There does need to be some formal legal structure which requires "owners/members." But any legal structure is going to be a great compromise: other than for intergovernmental organizations (which come with their own structural limitations), there is no way to incorporate globally, and a national jurisdiction must be chosen. There is no "intersectoral" structure – in the end a business, governmental, or NGO legal structure will be necessary. We still have to invent the legal structures appropriate for GANs.

Of course, trust also requires openness and clarity in accessing and becoming part of decision-making. But given the dynamic nature of the issues GANs are addressing, these should be experienced as enabling rather than as confining; as open rather than closed; as focused on supporting effective rather than simply functionary action. This principle might be referred to (either negatively or positively) as the "faith" principle: the need to develop and maintain an experienced reality of respect and mutual commitment. The complexity of issues, the long-term horizons in addressing them, and the wide variety of interests and perspectives are more than any one person can "hold." In the end, the sense of a shared understanding and intention is key to addressing the integration problems. We still have to develop the etiquettes, logics, processes, structures, and ceremonies to adequately give life to this principle.

DISCUSSION

These principles are presented as the basis for designing solutions to the four integrating challenges presented by differences in sense-making represented by organizational sectors, glocal focus, temporal span, and substantive issue silos. They are presented as a new way to think about social contract development globally. One part of the shift is represented by Figure 1.

Fig. 1. Shifting Relationships Between Organizational Sectors

This figure illustrates a shift from the "big government – big labor – big business" social contract generator when economic and physical security were the imperatives following the Great Depression and World War II. It suggests that we are now in a world where the state is not in charge, nor is it the representative of individuals' interests (as promoted by traditional social contract theory). Rather, the organizational sectors become key agents in social contract development. Where does this leave the individual, who for 500 years in the West has been seen as the building block for social contract? This is an important challenge to the West, particularly the United States, where individualism is such an outstanding feature (Hofstede, 1993). But does this emerging social contract formulation actually diminish the role of the individual, or considering the diversity of identities such as the one illustrated in the opening of this article, have the options actually been enriched? The description contrasting individualism and collectivism suggests some basic shifts in our concept of "individual":

> *Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1993: 5).*

In this emerging social contract world, where identity is fragmenting and "family" is being significantly redefined (Economist, 2011a, b; Newport, 2011) "individualism" takes on new meaning. Perhaps the GAN strategy to embrace diversity is actually a good reformulated approach for a globalized world. GANs do not challenge the value of individuals. Rather, they challenge the operationalization of value as one person, one vote in favor of an organizational or higher level as the key unit. GANs aim to transcend this operational interpretation while embracing its continued legitimacy for the state and other organizations.

Box 1: Principles for Governing the Commons (Ostrom, 2005)

1. Clearly defined boundaries. The boundaries of the resource system (e.g., irrigation system or fishery) and the individuals or households with rights to harvest resource units are clearly defined.
2. Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs. Rules specifying the amount of resource products that a user is allocated are related to local conditions and to rules requiring labor, materials, and/or money inputs.
3. Collective-choice arrangements. Many of the individuals affected by harvesting and protection rules are included in the group who can modify these rules.
4. Monitoring. Monitors, who actively audit biophysical conditions and user behavior, are at least partially accountable to the users and/or are the users themselves.
5. Graduated sanctions. Users who violate rules-in-use are likely to receive graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) from other users, from officials accountable to these users, or from both.
6. Conflict-resolution mechanisms. Users and their officials have rapid access to low-cost, local arenas to resolve conflict among users or between users and officials.
7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize. The rights of users to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities, and users have long-term tenure rights to the resource.

When the entity is part of a larger system:

8. Nested enterprises. Activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises.

GANs are essentially about developing global public goods (Kaul, 2003) and managing the global commons (Hardin, 1968) with a logic of collaborative governance (Zadek, 2005). Principles for governance of the commons have been developed by, most notably, Ostrom (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, Burger, Field, Norgaard, & Policansky, 1999). Her design principles, shown in Box 1, arise from studies of long-enduring institutions for governing sustainable resources rather than Global Action Networks. The questions GANs address are often more ethereal, and certainly not so obvious or as easy to "touch" as the irrigation systems, forest management schemes, and fisheries that Ostrom focuses on.

Ostrom's design principles provide an interesting comparison to the five discussed here. A quick comparison is useful to deepen understanding of the ones proposed for GANs. Ostrom's principles are broadly complementary to the ones presented here. Ostrom's are naturally flavored by her focus on governance of resources, which may or may not be an issue for GANs. Her principles in general are much more like operational guidelines than organizational design. This means the principles proposed here are somewhat more conceptual, at a higher level of abstraction, and more parsimonious. Both might usefully be read together; the one exception is that Ostrom emphasizes "clearly defined boundaries," whereas the proposed principles suggest boundaries actually shift as an issue develops and evolves. In fact, the local resource pools that are the source of Ostrom's principles might be subsets of a GAN: the GAN principles would embrace them as one particular response to the GAN issue.

CONCLUSIONS

GANs' "big-tent" action approach holds great promise for addressing the four integration challenges. It does not start with the goal of broad-based agreement as a precursor, as do traditional international problem-setting strategies such as ones for climate change and other conventions. GANs provide for action by those who perceive common interest, demonstrating innovative ways to address global challenges until they become a new dominant norm. Unlike many NGO activists, GAN leaders do not spend energy berating the laggards, but focus on creation. Unlike many businesses, they do not simply focus on narrow interests but emphasize the connection between interests.

The organizing principles animating GANs suggest a big shift away from the traditional inter-governmental strategies to address big global issues such as climate change reflected in the Kyoto Accord and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a multi-decade process. More fundamentally, they raise big issues about how we approach the development of social contracts globally as well as sacrosanct assumptions such as the role of one person, one vote. These design principles suggest the need for shifting mental models from several perspectives, as has been articulated in their titles. People coming from traditional organizational structures to GANs often import conflicting mental models. This can have significant negative impacts. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, for example, was initiated on the path of becoming a GAN by its founding leaders. New leaders imported a mental model that eventually produced what today is essentially an international NGO, with hierarchy and geographical offices. That type of organization can still be useful, but whether it will be as impactful as a GAN is doubtful.

Writing about "wicked problems" from a perspective of multiple types of design, Buchanan (1992: 10) comments: "Properly understood and used, [these areas of design thinking] are also places of invention shared by all designers, places where one discovers the dimensions of design thinking by a reconsideration of problems and solutions." This type of design thinking invention is badly needed to address global challenges, respond to societal integration-differentiation needs, and define improved paths to the increasingly important question of how to develop global social contracts. GANs represent one possible path.

This article began with reference to challenges to the emergence of a prosperous, peaceful, and healthy global civilization and planet. With the specters of environmental degradation, weapons of mass destruction, widespread famine, and devastating pandemics, the role of GANs should be broadened into a top priority. The reality is that aside from a few organizations in the health arena (notably the Global Fund to Fight AIDS), GANs are struggling. They are severely resource-constrained (who pays for such global public goods production not controlled by government?) and, quite frankly, not terribly sophisticated in terms of competencies needed for success (Waddell, 2011a). This must change, through new financing mechanisms and increased research and knowledge to support developing the networks' competencies in the context of their complex issue arenas. We must become much more skillful in developing large system transformational change in complex, global arenas.

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