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Reflective Hybrids in Management and Consulting

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The Journal "*Challenging Organisations and Society . reflective hybrids® (COS)*" is the first journal to be dedicated to the rapidly growing requirements of reflective hybrids in our complex organisations and society of the 21st century. Its international and multidisciplinary approaches balance theory and practice and show a wide range of perspectives organised in and between organisations and society. Being global, diverse in thinking and acting outside the box are the targets for its authors and readers in management, consulting and science.

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Editors' Comments: How a Reflective Hybrid Approach Can Change how We Think about and Take Action in Our Work

Our primary goal in this issue of COS is to respond to the challenges management and consultants have to cope with due to the growing demands of a complex global world and an uncertain future¹. The purpose of this issue is to support understanding by individuals, organizations, and society and help them to take more effective and sustainable action.² We wanted to focus specifically on how managers and consultants can interlink theory and practice or different interests and disciplines through a multidisciplinary reflective approach to derive new sustainable actions. Thus hybridity can be seen as a multi-perspective reflective approach to deriving new sustainable actions.

So whether you are trying to transform society or an organization, introduce a new change initiative, manage an existing program, better deal with interpersonal communication and transpersonal or develop yourself and the organization a reflective approach is helpful in order to deal with complexity.

We use the term 'reflection' to refer to a constructionist view³ of the world in which individuals and leadership systems consciously

1 Baecker (2009)

2 Battilana / Dorado (2010)

3 Dewey (1933), Schön (1987), Weick (1995)

think about, reconsider, and make sense of their experience in order to understand its meaning and provide space for the future.

At a deep level of reflection -underlying assumptions can be revealed and challenged, and with openness to the future new courses of action can be encouraged to emerge. We use the word ‘hybrid’ to denote a crossbreeding or combination of perspectives that may create new synergistic actions greater than the sum of the parts might suggest. Our authors believe a reflective hybrid approach is helpful in moving from a monistic or dualistic orientation to an alternative pluralistic orientation that opens up new possibilities. Essentially, our authors explored how they conceptualize and use a reflective hybrid approach to better understand self, organizations, and society and thus become more effective in their professional practices.

When commissioning this collection of articles, we asked the authors to make their interpretation of reflective hybrids informative for readers yet congruent with the central theme of using reflection to inform a multi-perspective approach like theory and practice or different interests and disciplines. Our authors reveal how they as individuals, in partnership, or as a whole system observe, collect, analyse, and interpret data emerging in the system in unique ways, and then how they consider assumptions, develop frameworks, utilize theory, make decisions and take actions, and finally, how they begin the transformation cycle anew. More simply stated they reveal in their articles what is happening to them and their systems. They do not merely recount the chronological facts of the emerging interpersonal, organizational, or societal issues, although obviously that is central to understanding the context. Rather they use a reflective writing approach that provides insights into the interconnectivity of theory and practice in developing integrated multi-perspective sustainable solutions to complex problems.

In this issue:

In “Creating learning and change through reflective conversations,” Tom Brown, Gary Wagenheim and Alexander Crispo posit that engaging in shared reflection helps to challenge assumptions and cre-

ate new meaning that can lead to alternative actions. They suggest that reflective conversations can become scaffolding for the developmental steps necessary when moving from technical competency to professional artistry in one's professional practice. The authors utilize the same reflective approach in writing about a particularly difficult and painful teaching incident that they use in their reflective conversations.

In "A Case Study of Social Entrepreneurism: A Model of Practice – Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories," Jacqueline McAdam explores what led her to start and operate a social business in Africa. She reflects on how her early personal history and values informed the choices she made as a social entrepreneur, namely building social capital for others and making a positive and sustainable contribution towards addressing economic and social problems of the urban poor in Africa.

In "Reflective Hybrids in University Continuing Education. Illustrated by using the Example of Communication and Management Education," Silvia Ettl-Huber and Michael Roither look at the hybrid programs, teaching forms, teaching staff and tasks found in university continuing education programs designed to equip people to deal with their constantly changing workplaces and meet the shifting challenges of their careers. Hybridity is seen as a key criterion in ensuring that programs meet their basic objectives of providing people with high quality education on both an individual and a professional level for their roles in business and society.

In "Hybrid and reflective into an uncertain future. Considerations for a dynamic stability of organization as challenges for leadership," Maria Spindler discusses the consideration that organisations go through processes of differentiation and hybridisation in which they lose their old selves and form themselves anew. They transform themselves through their own power when leadership as a system creates future potential. The extent to which future potential can be developed depends on the one hand on the ability for reflective distancing and on the other hand on self-referentiality with the future self. Long-term consulting case studies underpin the discussion.

In “Forward, Reverse or Neutral: Which gear are we operating in with our 21st-century approach to Global Diversity and Inclusion?” Helen Turnbull and Ralph De Charbert, consultant and client, explore how their different social identities and perspectives impact their working relationship and the diversity and inclusion work they are doing together. They conclude that in its early years the work was often incredibly painful and that it has evolved to a kinder, more supportive place with less blaming and more inclusion. They realize they have to commit just as much to maintaining the same courageous conversations about race and gender in their relationship as they ask of their participants.

In “Out of the ivory tower, and into reality. Intervention research as a mediating element between theory and practice,” Ruth Lerchster and Larissa Krainer illustrate intervention research organisation as a process in which the people concerned can use knowledge, experience and scientific research results to take the action necessary for their own practice. This article focuses on theoretical *and* practical challenges in intervention research and on their mediating role as a go-between. To do so, it is useful for scientists and practitioners to cooperate in this process, establishing reflected hybrids to reach the best-considered and most reflected decisions possible.

We hope this special issue on *Reflective Hybrids* sparks interest among managers and consultants to consider reframing how they think about their work; to interlink theory with practice and to use a reflective multidisciplinary theoretical approach to generate new sustainable solutions to today’s complex problems. We further hope it generates critical dialogue and encourages the development of practices that span the divisions across individuals, organizations and societies and brings them into new alignments that synergistically unite us. If this issue facilitates new thinking, dialogue, and practices the prospect of a better future is bright.

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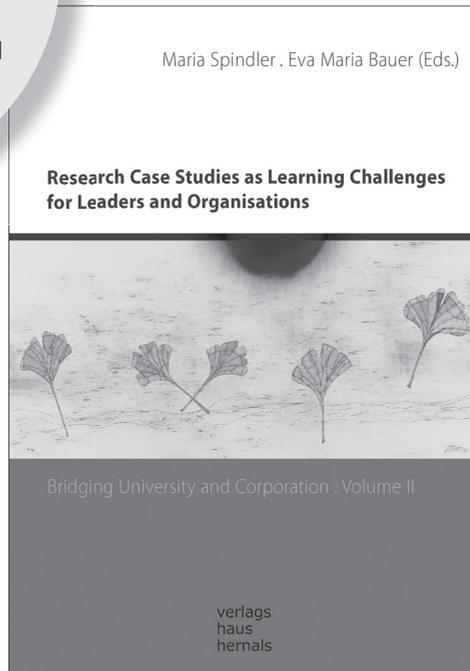
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