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Who and in What Ways Can Collaborate in Organizational Research?

Maaja Vadi

Review Essay:

Niclas Adler, A. B. (Rami) Shani & Alexander Styhre (Eds.) (2004). Collaborative Research in Organizations. Foundations for Learning, Change, and Theoretical Development. London: Sage, 383 pages, 0-7619-2862-6 (Cloth) £65.00; 0-7619-2863-4 (paperback) £26.99

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Abstract: Collaborative research looks for true partnership between researchers and members of the business society. The book reviewed below combines the efforts of 35 contributors seeking to open up the field and illustrate collaborative research in the Swedish context in the last decade. The present review analyzes the book from the perspectives of innovation, academic rigor, and technical realization. It introduces many innovative aspects in management studies and creates aspirations to follow new paths. It also meets the academic traditions and expectations set for the technical presentation of studies, while showing that the role of shared values and critical attitude is somewhat underestimated in the book. The reviewer makes an attempt to show the role played by values in the process of the exchange of resources between academics and practitioners.

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1. General Introduction

If we accept the view that an organization is in constant interaction with its environment, it follows that the ideas portraying organizational life need to be revised from time to time. *Collaborative Research in Organizations. Foundations for Learning Change, and Theoretical Development* provides good examples of the forces that may activate the search for new approaches and ways that can be considered when academics and practitioners have the will to collaborate in applying innovative ideas to the study of organizations. The analysis of various topics of collaborative research (CR) in organizational studies is a very valuable aspect of this book, showing why and how academics and practitioners may design systematic investigation of complicated problems. It is important to mention that the partnership has found that they need each other and are willing to learn from each other. The message that the two sides believe in mutual benefits is vividly communicated to the reader. [1]

The book consists of four parts featuring the efforts of 35 contributors. Two first parts (half of the book) introduce and analyze CR, while the third part is called *Illustrations* and tells us how CR was performed on the Swedish industry from 1997 to date, and finally, the last, concluding part presents lessons and challenges of CR. The authors could be conventionally divided into two groups—academics and executives, the specific feature of the book being that all the four parts are commented on by the representatives from both camps. This underlines the congruity of the partnerships. [2]

The book raises various problems that are always present when organizations come under scrutiny. For instance, I would like to mention personal experience that opened my eyes to the three dimensions of interdisciplinary and application-focused studies. Many years ago when I was writing the Introduction to one of my books—*Sales Communication* (VADI 1997)—I initiated a conversation with a colleague because I was slightly confused and worried about whether the book was a collection of academic ideas or rather a set of guidelines about the art of selling. My colleague replied, "Don't forget that books have three dimensions—academic, artistic, and handicraft." This remark clarified many matters for me. For that reason, I am going to use the abovementioned three dimensions as the rationale for the following discussion. Thus herein "academic" means that research has critical nature and conforms to established rules, standards, or traditions; "art" refers to an innovative and unique combination of ideas; and "handicraft" connotes merely technically correct repetition of certain activities, skillful use of knowledge and its presentation. Indeed, the borderlines between those dimensions are somewhat indistinct and subjective, but this assortment suits for the following discussions for two reasons. Firstly, CR (or the presentation of research in this book) also seems to be in some measure subjective or placing (excessive) emphasis on one's attitudes, opinions, etc. Secondly, the framework of a similar triad serves in the book under discussion as the skeleton of analysis where the alternative roadmaps of research are compared in order to show the essence of CR. Namely, Chapter 5 by (Rami) SHANI, DAVID and WILLSON exploits HABERMAS' view of the three cognitive interests (technical, practical, emancipatory). The authors want to show that CR enables one to pursue all the three above interests simultaneously. HABERMAS' framework opens well the multidimensional nature of CR and encouraged me to suggest my own triangle for further analysis of the book. [3]

The present review is divided into five main sections. The following section describes the concept of CR and its presentation in the book, three subsequent sections focus on the three abovementioned aspects—innovative, academic, and technical realization—, and the final section summarizes the ideas gained from the book *Collaborative Research in Organizations*. [4]

2. The Concept of CR as a Basis for Understanding the Book

Lately, the concept of CR has been widely exploited in many research areas. For example, the EBSCO database contains 159 items where the words *collaborative research* and *organization* are focal objects (30.07.2004), the first articles dating from the 1980s. The articles involved concentrate on various fields of CR application: for example, COHEN and LEDFORD (1994) demonstrate the value of a collaborative research project in a telecommunications company. In their project, the researchers and clients jointly defined the research questions, study design, and methods. The aspect of technology is likewise considered in the article by HOLMES, DERHAM and TARRY (2004), who investigate how the Small Aircraft Transportation System concept was introduced. Examples could also be found in healthcare (i.e. McINNES, McDONELL & DOWSETT (2004). A third area could be outlined from geography and the article by HERLIHY and KNAPP (2003) giving an overview of how maps are drawn. Several studies address the CR experience in management practice. RAFFERTY and ALANNAH (2000) illuminate the project of collaborative research partnership between a large Australian public sector agency and an Australian management research centre, which joined their efforts in order to improve the quality of their employees' working life while enhancing the success of business outcomes. Taking all these examples together, we can conclude that it is necessary to systematize CR because of a large variety of its applications; the authors' initiative in tackling CR is, therefore, very welcome. The editors point out that the book is meant for a wide audience—students, academics, and executives as well as specialist staff professionals, managers, and unions (Preface). This could be interpreted as an attempt to (re)establish a link between different stakeholders or reconcile theory and practice. [5]

What is CR? In the index, the authors of the book differentiate between two catchphrases—collaborative management research and collaborative research, but the boundaries of the terms are not clear. Thus, the definitions touch both abovementioned terms and I found a number of ideas revealing the essence of CR. Herein, I would point to two of them. First, (Rami) SHANI et al. (Chapter 5, pp.83-84; emphasis in the orig.) determine that "In the context of this volume collaborative management research is viewed as *an emergent and systematic inquiry process, embedded in a true partnership between researchers and members of a living system for the purpose of generating actionable scientific knowledge*." Second, in the following paragraph they define true partnership by saying that it refers to the dynamics of equality and integration—based on values, actions, processes, and consequences—around a shared goal or vision for the creation of something (scientific or actionable knowledge) by two or more entities. [6]

These two assertions describe the characteristics of CR well and I started to think about the elements of definitions in the context of the studies analyzed in this book. Most aspects are systematically described, but there is one surprising result as well. Namely, the aspect of partners' shared values is not opened, although this is important for understanding the basis of CR and research networks in general. For example, according to MAYRHOFER (2000 p.298), in the Cranet network, cooperation is based on three values: "(a) the basic importance of HR issues in organizations, (b) the significance of international comparative research and (c) the non-hierarchical, peer-oriented way of cooperation within Cranet-E." In a similar vein, one would expect partners' values to be explained in the book as it would enable one to appraise the nature of integration between academics and CEOs. Values cannot be taken for granted or as self-evident. Hence the definition of values is an important stage in any co-operation. Sometimes partners are under the illusion that they have common values, which is actually not the case. [7]

The advantages of CR are presented in several respects. It is shown that this method is flexible, oriented towards applicable knowledge, and can serve as a framework for binding together different groups and their efforts. As mentioned above, the role of CR is well analyzed. This is a complementary relationship by nature and means that there are conditions in which people can "complete" each other. It could be considered as an indication for exertion of CR into organizational studies. The message "Just do it!" is well communicated and encourages others to follow this path. Thus, the book is a valuable source for those who wish to benefit from collaboration. [8]

3. (Innovativeness)^2

Creativity is important in today's over-standardized world as it enables us to generate ideas about how to overcome sets of formal and informal rules that we have designed for various reasons. The organizational world likes rules because organizational design presumes regulation of activities in order to gain goals. The book presents innovative/creative approaches in two areas—organization of research and ways of investigating organizational (managerial) issues. [9]

The empirical studies of the book rotate around experience gained through 15 years of research centers/programs: *Arbersvetenskapliga kollegiet*, the Gothenburg Center for Work Science, and the expansion of the previous phases of the FENIX research program. There are two impressive aspects in the organization of these projects. First, the organizers have a number of different sponsors and the budget of the project seems to be abundantly funded in comparison with many other researchers' projects, indicating their creative approach to the generation and use of resources. The reader may find it surprising that I emphasize this aspect of the budget in my review, but it is in line with the overall spirit of the book whose authors devote a whole section on research funding. The latter issue seems to become one of the preconditions for research in general. The value of research ideas has to be proved to bureaucrats and one must be innovative if s/he wants to secure financial support. Hopefully, this does not generate mediocrity in the academic world! [10]

Second, the list of participants (persons and organizations) involves academics with outstanding experience as well as CEOs of high status. The participants' academic credibility (which also appears from the overview of the contributors) plays an important role in this project. Re-reading the book several times, my impression was that the partners enjoyed being elitist, which could also be considered as one of their similarities. [11]

However, one skeptical remark with regard to partnerships in collaborative research is relevant. Who are the partners? Are they institutions (i.e., academy and industry), organizations (i.e., university, consultancy and business firms), representatives of certain professions (i.e., academics, consultants, and managers), or concrete persons? The title leads us to support the aspect of organizations, while the book mostly focuses only on the managerial and leader's roles. It is useful to maintain that there are many positions in organizations, but in various chapters of the book this issue is considered differently. I would like to argue that the title (... *in Organizations*) is too broad for the content of the book. The suspicion that the authors focus more on management than organization is also supported by the fact that they start from an attempt to rethink management (HATCHUEL & GLISE, Chapter 1, *Rebuilding Management*). Indeed, *management* and *organization* are interrelated but not synonymous concepts. In summary, some clarification and unification of the terms would have helped avoid some misunderstandings. [12]

Another issue of innovativeness is related to the study itself. I really liked many parts of the volume and would suggest the following four ideas. Firstly, "jam sessions" (BJÖJESSON & FREDBERG, Chapter 8) reflect a novel approach to organizational studies. This is a method of CR that has been developed from the jazz metaphor by trying to formulate what has remained unformulated, or establish a continuous dialogue in the interaction between the academy and companies. Jam sessions are workshops where people communicate at an equal level when discussing the issues. Three results of jam sessions—identification of research areas, communication of results, collection of data for knowledge creation—are mentioned by the authors. Jam sessions explain the problems that are treated in the process of research; the authors regard them as a kind of experimental learning. [13]

Secondly, the treatment of CR in Part II (Some Lenses and Mechanisms) combines several insights into the conceptual frameworks; here I would like to spotlight *Alternative Roadmaps* ([Rami] SHANI et al., Chapter 5) which exposes the reader to the place of CR among other methods of investigating organizations and *The Dual Role of the Insider Action Researcher* (ROTH, SUNDBERG & SVENSSSON, Chapter 7) where academics, consultants, and representatives of practice share experienced dilemmas. The Chapter re-examines the researcher's role in general as well as being a prelude to the following parts. [14]

Thirdly, the illustrations of realizing academy-industry partnerships give new insights for the audience. One might call them cases, but the given title obviously matches the content better than the word case would do. Illustrations are differentiated on the basis of topics which cover the various areas of knowledge, such as creativity, innovation, and management of those fields. In the context of innovativeness, Chapter 16 *The Collaborative Development of Leader@site* (KYLËN, MULEC, WICKENBERG, ROTH & SUNDGREN) is especially interesting, thoroughly illuminating how insider/outsider participation perspectives are affected in the process of designing a new Leadership Development Program. Participants also experienced experimental learning through establishing a two-way link for binding general management science and local organizational traditions together. The abovementioned chapter is truly original, but several others are also worthy of praise. All the chapters of the third part have both common features as well as their own highly original takes. [15]

Fourthly, the Executive Ph.D. Program is described as a tool for binding partners together and motivating them to work systematically. The scheme of Ph.D. studies is well described (HART, KYLËN, NORRGREN & STYMNE, Chapter 6), providing an example for those curriculum developers who want to follow a similar path. One of the requirements for Ph.D. candidates is "four or five" articles, all of which should be "publishable", that is, having the academic qualities that would enable them to be published in double-blind, peer-reviewed journals. At least two papers must be accepted for publication by refereed journals before the thesis may be defended (HART et al., p.107). However, the results of the completion of the process and papers are left undisclosed by the book. [16]

Note that the heading of this section has the square sign in order to underline that organizing competence and research competence amplify each other. This is a leverage mechanism of resources. It is important to mention it in the light of the fact that collaborative research is one the targets of EU funding (see *British Journal of Adminstrative Management*, Issue 39, regarding "Funding research and development" and the contribution, "Easier Access to EU Funding" in *Engineering Management*, 2004). [17]

Economic mechanisms and practices are vigorously intervening in the academic world today. It reminds me of the thoughts expressed by ALVESSON (1995) about the reasons for the popularity of the concept of organizational culture.

> "The increasing interest in organizational culture is to some extent a consequence of the way in which the idea is marketed. Consultants, described by Czarniawska-Joerges (1988) as 'merchants of meaning', are especially important here—the management consultancy company McKinsey, for example, sponsored the best-selling book of Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982), apparently in order to improve its market position against competitors such as the Boston Consulting Group.—In summary, the recent interest in organizational culture can be understood variously as a response to frustration over the dominance of positivistic approaches in American organization theory, a strategy confronting the marketing problems of management consultants, and a by-product of technological, social, and organizational change." (ALVESSON 1995, p.5) [18]

The quote is a kind of a round-up of the book under discussion and the underlying study as well, while the author's ways of dealing with the problems are innovative. [19]

4. Academic Rigor

What is CR from an academic point of view? We find an answer from Chapter 5, where (Rami) SHANI, DAVID & WILLSON explain:

> "... our goal is to advance collaborative management research as a paradigm that revisits and combines the rigor and standardization of the inquiry from the outside orientation with emergent discovery, reflexivity, and action qualities of the inquiry from the inside orientation" (p.85). [20]

This is an ambitious task because according to KUHN's (1970) central idea, a paradigm is a single consensual model of discipline that most members of the entity accept. Does it mean that the authors suppose a wide consensus about collaboration in management research or in organizational research in general? The word paradigm was probably used in the context of other meanings—a model to demonstrate all the possible functions of CR or experimental design or ...? I was not able to find a definitive answer to this question and, therefore, some clarity about the relationships between the concepts of *method*, *methodology*, and *paradigm* would be helpful for a fuller understanding of the role of CR. [21]

Despite the remark that CR is probably not a paradigm, I'd like to point out several topics related to innovation, creativity, and learning as they contribute valuable knowledge and guidelines for future research. The Academic Commentary in Part III by HUFF also gives the key for opening the authors' aspiration from the academic perspective. She says: "The distinction between 'classic' academic research design and consultancy—between theoretical interests and knowledge for action—may help readers and potential researchers to connect the work reported in this section to other more familiar projects" (p.134). It seems that the authors dread academic rigor in some respects. I would say: Don't worry! Their book undoubtedly is an academic study and thus their presentation naturally has to follow the respective rules. [22]

(Rami) SHANI et al. (p.97), also admit that CR does not replace other empirical approaches but rather includes them. The presentation of the cases involves a section on data collection as well. For example, Chapter 18 (MOHRMAN, Jr. & MOHRMAN, pp.322-323) mentions interview protocols and a questionnaire which was administered to a random sample of a corporation's entire management and professional workforce, with more than 2,000 responses (the response rate exceeding 80%). This is an outstanding result from the academic perspective but, unfortunately, it does not help a student or professional who wants to investigate how to design a Performance Management System. They will not find any clues to what was asked in the interviews and survey. Indeed, it is impossible to present all the materials of such extensive studies, yet examples of tools would be beneficial. An explanation follows below to illustrate what aspect of academic rigor would be helpful in better understanding the results as well as learning from the presented studies. [23]

As an experiment (mirror of the valuable Chapter 12 by MAGNUSSON), I showed the book to one student who knows one of the authors (X) well. I asked his opinion and the reply was: "X is a very active person and usually deals with useful things. I think that his part reflects his ideas, although I don't like that his contribution as well as those of some others contain too much spiel." Now my question is this: "Do you believe me? How should one interpret these expressions?" Indeed, the interpretation depends on the task that I set to the student. This was: "Please estimate to what extent X's contribution reflects his own ideas!" Those who have ever conducted interviews know that you get what you ask for and those who observe something experience that you find what you are looking for. Therefore, the description of the researchers' intentions and the basic concepts of the empirical study and research tools enable us to understand and interpret the results. [24]

This experiment was triggered by the part in the book (STYMNE, Chapter 3) which analyzes the antecedents of CR. The author writes "... SIAR[1]-co-workers developed a certain mastery in being able to extract much information in a short time as well as to generate explanations and hypotheses in the dialogue with the interviewees" (p.43). Indeed, this thought characterizes the research, which was conducted a long time ago, but there are still some doubts about the effectiveness of short-term research. I have personal experience with a consultancy that is highly praised worldwide, but whose consultants were not able to show what questions they had asked when they received certain information. Hopefully, the information for the developed cases is trustworthy; however, for keeping a critical attitude towards the results, clarification would be necessary. [25]

The next similar question arose when I read the following:

> "From the scientific standpoint, it is of vital importance to be able to find out how, with what legitimacy, and up to what point the researcher should design and prescribe the transformation of an organized system as well as under what conditions the knowledge stemming from the intervention may be considered scientific" ([Rami] SHANI, DAVID & WILLSON, Chapter 5, p.96). [26]

In the subsequent chapters these issues are not coherently stated and, therefore, the question about a critical attitude remains. [27]

It may happen that researchers and practitioners together do not map anything outside their own practice and the practice is not always the criterion of the truth. Organizations can run into problems when they depend too much on the practitioners or academics who believe that the way in which they are acting is beyond reproach. Practice may be generalized or not. For example, we can raise the problem: what attitude should be taken in a CR situation towards the fact that many firms limit training costs when they have hard times? Can we generalize this evidence as acceptable practice for the management's behavior if the firm survives? Certainly not! I found an answer to this question in the book as well.

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ADLER and NORRGREN (Chapter 4, p.56) argue that "Collaborative research approaches by definition focus on short-run rather than deep-seated processes and will not be able to carry a true scientific discourse over time." This leads us to the idea that CR in one organization produces (generalized) material for thinking about other organizations and thus the matters of information collection and schemes of activities help keep a critical attitude towards transfer of understanding and knowledge. [28]

5. Technical Realization

The studies are suitably presented and here I want to dwell on three aspects. First, the structure of the book is logical and transmits main ideas. It is by no means an easy task to pull together approaches that are so different. I have only one remark in respect of the structure. One would expect the concluding part to be more voluminous than it actually is (less than 10%), especially if an attempt is being made to develop a paradigm. Second, the book is full of (very good) tables, although this issue should rather have been mentioned in the previous section than in the one about technical realization. Most tables make it possible to compare ideas; this means that the authors are able to differentiate between various concepts, presupposing skilful ability of abstraction. Third, the style is attention-grabbing and compels one to read. The vast material is presented rationally, yet sometimes overly emotionally. The section, *The Knowledge of the Business School* (STARKEY & TEMPEST, Chapter 2), serves as an example where the gap between research and practice is emphasized. This is probably the best way to show the urgent need for CR, but the selected examples and citations overemphasize useless business research. Paraphrasing the authors' citation about the one-way street as a metaphor of the skewed influence of academic sources (p.29), I would say that the antagonism between academics and practitioners is often shown only partially in this book. [29]

I would also add a fourth point in respect of some details. The reader finds information that the CRANET has been run down (KNIGHTS, Academic Commentary on Part 1, pp.71-72). Is it true? I saw them recently behaving as a clan and discussing the future and standardization plans. Another problem is related to the Index, where some information is missing. For example, SCHEIN and WEICK are mentioned in the book more times than the Index reflects. However, these observations do not lower the level of technical realization. [30]

6. Conclusions and Interpretation

Two kinds of knowledge—explicit and tacit—are differentiated within the sociological perspective of knowledge management. Due to its nature, tacit knowledge cannot be shared as easily and as consciously as explicit knowledge, which is often presented in traditional organizational studies. This is obviously a disadvantage, a complication for communication when we need to achieve knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners. CR may create significant changes in knowledge production because it involves the tacit knowledge of participants. The expression by JACOB, HELLSTRÖM, ADLER and

NORRGREN (2000) in Chapter 8 provides an important idea for explaining these changes: "New principles of knowledge production have led to a shift in the relations between the academy and industry from *sponsorship to partnership*." Below I will draw some conclusions and expound on the ideas gained from the book. [31]

In the first place, I would like to thank the authors for such a good book. It kept my mind active for half a year and accompanied me on my travels like a teddy-bear of some sort. Every chapter aroused fresh thoughts and even more, made me ask questions. I apologize to those authors whose names were not mentioned in the review. Undoubtedly, their contribution was no less valuable. Secondly, the book carries energy and encourages one to find new approaches. It demonstrates the ways in which different resources can be bound together. We can find answers to questions about who can collaborate and how, if they want to study an organization. Thirdly, when traditional academic rigor cannot be pursued, the development of a critical attitude becomes even more important than in studies considering the established rules and standards. If it is ignored or if the presentation of the study does not give a picture about how the subjectivity of the approach was minimized, the reader may be skeptical. Fourthly, if we talk about unregulated activities, the role of values becomes important. Value is a term used to define recommendations which have an impact on the choice of objectives, means and manners available, and is used as a criterion in assessing various phenomena. This aspect has been underestimated, either by the study or its presentation. [32]

In addition, the book triggered thoughts about the resources that scientists and practitioners share when they collaborate and would like to show the role of shared values in this process. Scientists and practitioners present different roles (as also shown in Chapter 7, ROTH et al.). According to an extreme viewpoint, a theorist tries to find universal relationships, while for a practitioner the most important matter is the (best) performance result. Sometimes theorists need practitioners' experience and practitioners need theorists' opinions about how to develop management. It is at this stage that they start to exchange their resources. The problematic aspect is enhanced by the situation in which the parties fail to systematically analyze either their available resources or their expected resources; in simple terms, they fail to know themselves, their partner and each other's expectations. The first step of successful collaboration between theorists and practitioners is, therefore, to become aware of their own resources and start seeing them in the light of their partner's interest. If we want to bring about constructive cooperation opportunities, there is a need to proceed from the basis that there are three types of relationships: complementary, symmetrical and parallel. [33]

A complementary relationship is based on a difference: one partner has something that the other needs and vice versa (Figure 1).

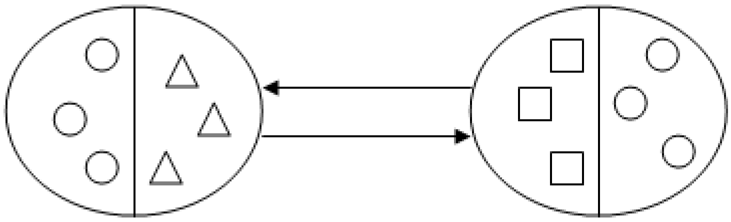

Figure 1: Complementary relationship (rings denote the partners' similarities, while tetragons and triangles mark their differences) [34]

Figure 1, for example, depicts a situation when a theorist needs to gather information for studying motivation, i.e. s/he needs employees' opinions and a practitioner would like to know how motivated the members of the organization are. In this case the practitioner can offer possibilities for research and, on the basis of the results of the research, the theorist can then make a survey of the motivation level. Here a list of aspects differentiating between a theorist and a practitioner can be presented. An analysis of these aspects might show some ways how these two partners can complement each other. The source of many problems is the rate of risk and abstract nature of their activities, their different influence and status in society, and their often different background and education. The complementary relationship can be very efficient, however, it will not function in a situation where differences prevent understanding. On the other hand, certain problems also emerge in situations where the partners start to depend too much on one another. For example, if a theorist can only prove his/her status in society with the practitioner's approval this may set limits to the development of theory. Or on the other hand, if the practitioner starts to believe that profound theoretical research can foresee all possible failures (the Coca-Cola[2] case in 1985, HARTLEY 1997); this means that the complementary principle has been trusted too much. [35]

A symmetrical relationship is an orderly and balanced exchange of resources based on similarities (Figure 2).

2 Coca-Cola decided to change its product. The decision was based on a wide customer research. The innovation failed despite profound research and a costly advertising campaign. The customers did not get used to the new taste. Later discussions have suggested that the reason for failure could have been unpredictability of human behaviour. Obviously, Coca-Cola represented a symbolic value for customers and the change was not accepted on emotional grounds. Also the fact that, in product trial conditions, sweeter taste is often preferred, which is not usually the case with everyday consumption.

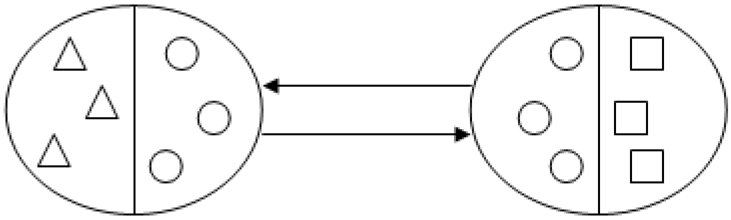

Figure 2: Symmetrical relationship (rings denote the partners' similarities, while tetragons and triangles mark their differences) [36]

A symmetrical relationship can also be based on such relations when both the practitioners and theorists perceive responsibility for society. They deal with interpersonal influence and in their work they need generalization of experience. The situation may seem ideal, however, there is a danger that it might lead to group-thinking. Group-thinking is a phenomenon that occurs when reaching consensus becomes norm which then starts to prevent consideration and comparison of alternative activities. Group-thinking is a way of thinking when for the sake of unity realistic assessment of alternative activities is ignored (JANIS 1982). Because of group-thinking, not all possible solutions are considered and decision-making is based on selective use of information, whereas the risks are not realized. [37]

An analysis of both relationship types reveals that they both have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore one should also study the third opportunity—a parallel relationship (Figure 3).

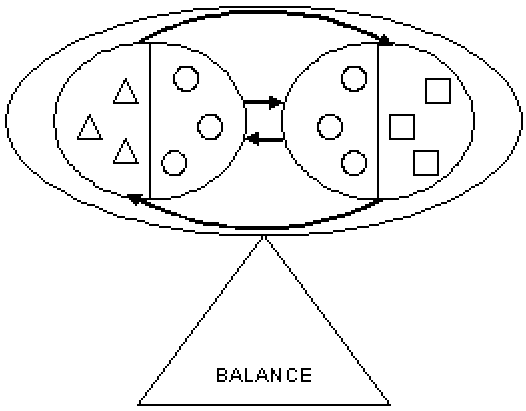

Figure 3: Parallel relationship (rings denote the partners' similarities, while tetragons and triangles mark their differences) [38]

A parallel relationship occurs when a complementary and symmetrical relationship are combined. This flexible type of relationship enables fast adjustment to a new situation. The realization of a parallel relationship requires a sense of balance between phenomena and, therefore, mutual trust becomes essential. Figure 3 clearly shows all the advantages involved in this type of relationship. However, it has to be pointed out that this type of relationship is more vulnerable when balance is not perceived. The ground for a successful parallel relationship is awareness and consideration of the factors that create balance. Here a common concept of values fits into the context because it establishes the criteria for selection and assessment. It also reveals the partners' differences and similarities, which in turn will create an acceptable balance. Therefore one can say that the process of finding common values is time-and-energy-consuming; moreover, sometimes the process itself is considered more important than the final result. In view of the latter understanding, theorists and practitioners should participate in discussions that would enable them to point out issues that both parties consider important, i.e., common values. [39]

The confrontation of scientists and practitioners derives from their different roles in society. Nowadays we need closer integration of these roles and, therefore, it is essential to find such ways of cooperation that would create synergy. In order to reach the desired objective, one should start from analyzing the resources of the present relationship and their basic principles. Relationships can be complementary, symmetrical and parallel. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. Cooperation between management theory and practice will become stronger if the relationships are based on common values. [40]

One can ask why some knowledge holders choose to share knowledge more often and more willingly than others? It has to be admitted that everyone has her/his own priorities. However, understanding the values of and value differences between parties is likely to give a better picture of the reasons why knowledge sharing sometimes fails to work as well as expected. [41]

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Author

Maaja VADI is Professor of Management in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Tartu (Estonia). Her research area covers organizational culture and its related topics such as values, collectivism, service quality etc. Recently she edited the book *Organizational Culture in Estonia: Manifestations and Consequences* (Tartu University Press 2003). She has also published numerous books on organization and management in Estonian, including the book *Managers on Management: the Estonian Experience* (1998 and 1999), which is based on 59 interviews with Estonian CEOs and high government officials.

Contact

Prof. Maaja Vadi

University of Tartu
Institute of Management and Marketing
4 Narva Road
Tartu 51009
Estonia

Phone: +372-7-376-323

E-mail: Maaja.Vadi@mtk.ut.ee

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