

# RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Edited by** Debra A. Noumair  
Abraham B. (Rami) Shani  
Danielle P. Zandee

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CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

**VOLUME 30**

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RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND  
DEVELOPMENT VOLUME 30

**RESEARCH IN  
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DEVELOPMENT**

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**Philip Mirvis** is an Organizational Psychologist whose studies and private practice concern large-scale organizational change, the workforce and workplace, and business leadership in society. An advisor to companies and NGOs on five continents, he has authored or edited 16 books including *The Cynical Americans* (social trends), *Building the Competitive Workforce* (human capital investments), *Joining Forces* (human dynamics of mergers), *To the Desert and Back* (business transformation), and *Beyond Good Company* (social responsibility). His latest are *How to Do Relevant Research: From the Ivory Tower to the Real World* and *Sustainability to Social Change: Lead Your Company from Managing Risks to Creating Social Value*. Mirvis is a fellow of the Academy of Management where he received a career achievement award as "Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner."

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# PREFACE

Volume 30 of *Research in Organizational Change and Development* is unique in several ways, not the least of which is that we are celebrating the 30th volume and ushering the enlargement of our editorial team. Danielle P. Zandee from Nyenrode Business University has joined us as we are moving into the fourth decade of ROCD. Danielle's addition to the editorial team represents a commitment to maintaining the high quality of work that many of you have come to expect from this publication platform.

As this Preface is written, humanity is confronting the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating war in Europe, and social and environmental sustainability challenges. Coupled together, we are experiencing forceful waves (that some view as tsunami waves) that are challenging the sustainable future of the globe and humanity. Framing and reframing the state of the field of organization development and change (OD&C) within the continuously evolving world context has been a key tenet of the field and the ROCD series.

As proposals for possible contributions to this volume arrived at our desks a year ago, we picked up some common themes of reflections and insights. As developmental editors and staying true to our mission of nurturing meaningful and rigorous research, we noticed that many of the contributions were driven by either personal or conceptual reflections on the state of the field, the evolving knowledge creation paradigm, and the role that engaged scholarship can play in expanding the field's impact. How to move forward with the OD&C field during this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) period? Precisely now while many people around the world are focusing on their mere survival, we urgently need to ask the question how to "create a better world together?" This timely, well-chosen theme for the upcoming Academy of Management Annual Conference (Seattle, 2022) raises the bar for the OD&C field which is so firmly grounded on humanistic, democratic, emancipatory, and participatory values.

Creating a better world together raises the bar for the ROCD series as well. The authors of this volume heeded this call of our time in writing their thoughtful, collaborative, reflective, and future-forming chapters. Taken together they address some key questions for our field: Who do we need to be as OD&C to help create a better world and under what relational conditions can we do such work? What research and theorizing do we have available, and what thought-action repertoires need further development? What robust OD&C methods do we have, and which new methods are needed to be truly helpful in the creation of a better world together? The chapters for this volume are written by senior scholars in the field of OD&C who share their insights from a long-lived, continuous engagement with both theory and practice. This shows in their

expansive time horizon when reflecting on the field and how they personally navigated through it. Their seniority also shows in their commitment to help bring the field forward while trusting that others may appreciate and continue their legacy. Most of all, and especially endearing in current times, the authors show the joy and strength of collaboration with kindred spirits in inquiry, learning, and writing.

Before introducing each chapter, we note that throughout this volume, authors refer to organization development (OD), organization development change (ODC), and organization development and change (OD&C). While the choice of referent is in the purview of authorship, as editors we view these terms as falling within the domain of organization change and development, the high-level focus of the series and hence, the title.

Our first chapter by *Sue Mohrman and Jean Bartunek* combines two different perspectives, experience of four decades, and expertise to identify questions that must be and are starting to be addressed by the field of ODC. They consider some of the tensions and key issues for ODC and ask the pivotal question how to build a sustainable future for both the world at large and our field. They argue that ODC needs to recontextualize its frameworks and methodologies to be helpful in handling the urgent challenges that humanity is facing. What, for instance, does sustainable development mean in the contextual complexity of such challenges with conflicting interests and aspirations?

*Phil Mirvis* reflects on the knowledge creation process in the field, based on his four decades of work, as an integral part of the philosophy of science and addresses foundational questions such as: Is it better to use methods that focus on phenomena that are empirically manifest or to get inside phenomena to grasp their existential meaning? Am I researching a determined or indeterminate world? Should my own impressions, interpretations, insights, and reflections be considered “data”? And is practitioner knowledge and language relevant to the scientific study of organizations and change?

*David Coghlan and Rami Shani*, while focusing on their collaboration during two decades, argue that collaborative partnership is a capability that develops over time. Its quality is an outcome of the collaborative context, the alignment of purpose, the development of work and learning processes, and the development of shared language and success stories. The authors engage in a metalogue where their shared reflection on the formation and development of their collaborative scholarship in the field of organization development and change is itself an instance of a process of shared scholarship. By adopting the format of a metalogue, they intertwine the voices of their individual thinking and their reflective conversation in order to offer an expression of the process of theorizing to scholars who wish to embark upon or study shared scholarship.

*Tom Cummings and Chris Worley* bring to the forefront the role and insights from the field of management and organization theory to the study of change. The authors argue that understanding organization change is a stable subject in management and organization scholarship, and the singular focus of change management and organization development practice. The authors explore how management and organization theory informs organization change practice

and suggest ways in which theory can be more helpful to practice and how practice can better inform theory.

*Mike Beer*, based on five decades of working at the boundaries between practice and theory, presents a grounded and actionable theory of a sustainable (adaptive) organizational system of organizing, managing, and leading which managers and consultants can use to plan and carry out organization development and change. Focusing on the top leaders' role of change, he argues that successful leaders are the ones that lead honest, collective, and public conversations about the system's efficacy in achieving its direction and then, based on what they learn, lead systemic change. These leaders have the courage and the skills to advocate a new direction and to inquire in order to learn the whole truth about their organization's current system.

*Cliff Oswick and Yuan Li* explore how discourse, as a process concerned with the production and consumption of talk and text, has been embraced within the field of organizational change and development (OCD). The authors present six ways of thinking about the role of discourse in OCD, namely as component, process, analysis, method, mindset, and style. Although the advent of dialogic OD has raised awareness of discourse, the authors demonstrate that it remains a marginal and underutilized area of interest. A more expansive role for discursive modes of analysis and engagement within OCD are advanced.

This volume concludes with a contribution by *David Coghlan and Paul Coughlan*. Reflecting on 25 years of collaborating in action learning research initiatives in interorganizational settings, the authors share three key theoretical contributions: (1) the development of a formula for action learning in networks, (2) the notion of action learning research, and (3) the application of action learning research in networks. The authors provide insights into the process of theorizing by showing how these insights emerged through inquiry into experience and how they were consolidated through collaborative action as practice-based research, research as practice, and practice as research toward designed-in impact.

All authors of this volume show how, in their own ways, they embrace the value of engagement and collaboration. Indeed, unlike other academic disciplines, engagement and collaboration have been key tenants of the field's identity, discovery process, and action from its origin until today. Taking the liberty to slightly modify the classic statement by March (2003, p. 206), we capture the current state of the OD&C field as: "a place where learning, collaboration, action and scholarship are revered, not only for what they contribute to personal or social wellbeing but also for the vision of humanity that they symbolize, sustain, and pass on."

In their editorial statement to the first ROCD volume published in 1987, Bill Pasmore and Dick Woodman stated that the purpose of the series was to help produce a shift in thinking about the field in service of expanding the scope of the then current approaches to organization development (Pasmore & Woodman, 1987). Thirty-five years later, this volume is true to the initial vision of the series. Collectively, the chapters are a call to arms to stem multiple, simultaneous global crises. Authors look back and think forward to ensure that current approaches to

organization development leverage foundational knowledge while also leading change to address grand global challenges.

Our role as academics, researchers, practitioners, insider researchers, and engaged scholars offer hope for making a difference in creating a better world together. The reflections captured in many of the chapters about the state of the field, the knowledge that it generated during the past five decades about change, about changing, about development, about developing, and about impact suggest that the field can serve as a leader and a major asset in enhancing a more sustainable future. From our editorial perspective, it is our hope that as you read through this celebratory, timely, and stimulating volume you will consider your own thoughts and practice and possible contribution to the field and the community, and you will contact us to suggest topics or themes for future volumes.

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# HOW CAN ODC HELP ACCOMPLISH A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE? A JOINT REFLECTION

Susan Albers Mohrman and Jean M. Bartunek

## ABSTRACT

*The field of Organization Development and Change (ODC) is facing the same tensions as those confronting humanity more broadly: how to build a sustainable future. There is an urgent need to preserve the viability of our species by changing our relationship to the natural environment and slowing the ravages of climate change and the degradation of the earth's resources. Simultaneously, technology advances are changing our lives, work, institutions, and culture in unpredictable ways. Social upheaval and geopolitical tensions are exposing deep fissures in values, preferences, and beliefs about what constitutes a just society and how to govern. The development needed for a sustainable future must enable us to operate in ways that are fundamentally different from the status quo – not just increase our effectiveness in the way we currently operate.*

*ODC will have to recontextualize its methodologies and frameworks that currently focus primarily on individual organizations to deal with the complexity and urgency of the challenges humanity is facing. In this Reflection, we consider some of the tensions and key questions that ODC faces: What does, and might, sustainable development mean in a globally intertwined world where divisions at both the macro and micro levels reflect conflicting interests, tensions, and fundamentally different aspirations for the future? How do ODC methodologies and frameworks need to change to help develop sustainable ecosystem level transformation cutting across hierarchies, institutions, geographies, and cultures? How does ODC need to design itself to operate differently with different outcomes? We suggest some possible next steps forward in addressing these tensions.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable development; dialectics of change and adaptation; discontinuous change; recontextualizing ODC; ecosystem development; learning

We are grateful for the opportunity to offer a joint Reflection. We do not have a long history of collaborating with each other in research and writing, and our scholarly approaches and trajectories have differed. However, we have interacted throughout our careers, as we are friends and have overlapping concerns and interests. We present some of this background first, as a context for our Reflection. We then move to the major part of our chapter, a summary depiction of our world at the time we are writing and a challenge and invitation for Organization Development and Change (ODC).

We began our collegial relationship and became friends 30 years ago when we served together on the executive committee of the Organization Development (OD) division of the Academy of Management. We were among those involved in convincing the Board of Governors of the Academy to allow a change in name to the Organization Development and Change (ODC) division, reflecting the perspective that the development of organizations is integrally related to their ability to change to fit the evolving nature of work and the contexts in which they operate. What seemed to us to be a simple change in name to reflect the nature of the scholarly work the division's members were doing received considerable pushback from some other Divisions who thought that large scale "Change" belonged to them and OD was very narrow in scope. We continue to believe that development and change are inextricably interlinked, and even more so today, when sustainable development has become a focus of great concern to organizations and the world.

Our foci throughout our careers have been globally similar while differing in particular emphases. Jean has extended both theoretical and practical understanding of the dynamics of organizational change and development, with particular focus on the multiple meanings, conflicting perspectives, and dialectics manifest in such initiatives. Sue has engaged in collaborative research to apply, test, and extend social science knowledge useful to organizations that are designing and implementing solutions to address the substantive challenges and opportunities they are facing.

Throughout our careers, we have advocated for an increased relevance of Management and Organization Studies (MOS) Research to practice, and have voiced our convictions that this can best be achieved by integrating the perspectives and experiences of practitioners in our theories, our research methodologies, our understandings, and our practices. In this way, we have often been swimming upstream against the dominant and well embedded currents of discipline based, scientific research aimed at extending objective and generalizable propositional knowledge that is primarily aimed at other academics. This focus on relevance has placed us in the midst of two dialectical exchanges, one between academics with opposing perspectives on knowledge and relevance, and the other

between scholarly concern for contributing to generalizable knowledge and the pragmatic concerns of the people who comprise and enact organizations.

We have taken different approaches and inhabited different institutional settings. Jean has been a professor in the Carroll School of Management at Boston College since 1977 and is a Fellow of the Academy of Management. Sue has been a research scientist in the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) in the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California. CEO is an applied research center that carries out systematic research to generate theoretical and practical knowledge in collaboration with organizations. During the past 40 years, we have carried out our scholarship largely in parallel, although we have also been consumers of each other's work, and sometimes included each other in edited volumes and special issues examining issues of research relevance, collaboration, and partnerships (e.g., [Bartunek & Schein, 2011](#); [Mohrman, 2017](#)). We have also discussed our values and beliefs and our concerns about the issues facing our society and our world, and how and whether MOS in general and ODC in particular are helping to address these issues. Perhaps most importantly, we have learned from each other's personal journeys and how each of us has navigated the tensions we have faced.

We have both experienced personal learning processes of realizing that we as human beings do not have to accept the precepts, structures, power relationships, and constraints of our contexts but, rather, that we can position ourselves to influence what we care about as individuals and members of humanity. Throughout her career, Jean has continually dealt with the dialectic involving her life as a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, an International Roman Catholic women's religious order, and as an academic concerned in particular with intellectual rigor ([Bartunek, 2006](#)). Sue, in early experiences teaching school in the late 1960s in an area of Cincinnati, Ohio, that had been burned out and devastated by riots, experienced the stark conflict between how the school was organized to operate and the needs of the traumatized children who came through the doors to be educated. She addressed this tension by going to graduate school to develop knowledge about how to increase organizations' effectiveness in delivering on their mission to society and its members. And later, when she became an academic and experienced the profound tension between the requirements of the standard academic path and her other mission as a mother, wife, and member of a community, she withdrew from her tenure track position to be able to concentrate on organizational effectiveness research with direct relevance to organizational practice. Through our own proactive processes of crafting lives where we could deal with tensions we experienced, we each became interested in understanding the processes and designs of organizations that can be crafted to hear and incorporate the voices and needs of many stakeholders.

We share a belief that scholarship and practice related to developing organizations has to evolve to fit the changing context in which organizations operate, and to deal with challenges that are increasingly global, complex, and interrelated and that involve fundamental change in the nature of society. The challenges include the ravages of global warming and the depletion of resources, the fundamental ways in which technology is changing behavioral norms,

expectations, and the way we live and work, the social unrest stemming in part from global awareness of the huge gaps in wealth and access to resources, and geopolitical tensions that threaten to upend the uneasy global order. These challenges have developed in part as a result of the ways business organizations have functioned, and the outcomes they have sought and for which they have been rewarded. Their societal mandate has been to generate wealth, grow, innovate, provide jobs, and provide services and products that meet societal expectations and that lead to a higher quality of life for relevant populations – all good things, – while at the same time often not being held accountable for externalities such as pollution and degradation of the natural world, and negative impacts on communities and families.

The fields of ODC and more broadly MOS have played important roles in generating knowledge and developing behavioral and organizational interventions to help organizations adapt, grow, and prosper as the industrial economy has developed into the knowledge economy and then into the global economy. That very success offers hope ([Janoff, 2022](#)) that we can play a needed role in creating a sustainable future. This will require learning more about how our institutions can be reconfigured to focus on an expanded set of purposes and outcomes and how to adapt the frameworks and methodologies of ODC to organizing challenges presented by the context in which we find ourselves today.

A sustainable future will differ in fundamental ways from today's status quo, and one challenge we as a field face is how to help achieve a global transformation of this depth and magnitude. [Senge \(2007, p. 132\)](#) suggests that “The juxtaposition of vision (what we want) and a clear picture of current reality (where we are relative to what we want) generates what we call ‘creative tension’: a force to bring them together, caused by the natural tendency of tension to seek resolution.” Our situation is complicated by the diversity of visions of the desired future, and the diversity of perspectives and understandings of the current reality.

As a field, we face the challenge of helping build a new future when there is little common understanding of the present and diverse values and aspirations guide preferences for the future among the people whose lives will change fundamentally – and how to do this quickly in a world where even the perceived legitimacy of institutions is eroding, where geopolitical tensions are growing and are intertwined with quite different perspectives on governance, the rule of law, and the desirability of liberal democracies, and where fear and anxiety about the future is widespread. In fact, several days before this Reflection was submitted for publication, Russia invaded Ukraine, an act of aggression that is already causing a realignment of political and economic connections around the globe. Although this will not be our primary focus in this Reflection, it is certain to make the work of creating a sustainable world even more challenging.

Building a future with more sustainable outcomes will entail many dialectic exchanges inherent in achieving systemic understandings of the current situation and of future possibilities, and then in arriving at resolutions of the tensions sufficient to move forward. Such a dialectical perspective is obviously not new – indeed, it is inherent in many frameworks of development stemming back to Plato, who applied it to interchanges between people in which new

understandings emerge through the process of back and forth debates between opposing views (Fink, 2012). Hegel (1974) applied it to the logical process of confronting of different frameworks of understanding, or consciousness, leading to breakdowns of each and the emergence of a new more sophisticated consciousness that is a resolution of the initial understandings. We adapt the concept and define dialectical thinking as viewing issues from multiple perspectives to recognize the validity of seemingly contradictory information and postures (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016), and developing new understandings from their joint truth. We believe that bringing this ability out of the background of understanding that has underpinned many dialogic approaches to development (e.g., Bushe & Marshak, 2014) and into the foreground of focus may help us to better understand how to enhance ODC's contribution during a volatile time when there are many contending voices, perspectives, and interests acting to shape organizations and society.

The challenges faced in today's world will not be resolved through rational exchange alone. We must recognize the deep emotions that are embedded in people's worldviews and motivations. There are many that we have observed in our studies, including attachment to one's identity, fear of the great amount of uncertainty in a world characterized by simultaneous changes that are moving in unknown directions and seemingly beyond the control of any of us, and distrust of institutions that are changing our life contexts in ways that may threaten our security, livelihoods, and comfort. Senge (2022, p. 109) has pointed out that to deal with the challenges we face today, "we must move beyond trivializing complex issues and yet not be paralyzed."

In its history, ODC practitioners have often acted to build on hope and possibilities more than do other planned change approaches (e.g., Hornstein, Bunker, Burke, Gindes, & Lewicki, 1971). Guided by humanistic values and a deep understanding of inclusive approaches to change, and a commitment to find integral solutions despite conflicting preferences and perspectives, ODC is well positioned to develop and apply frameworks to help human systems learn to operate in ways that address the needs, interests, and hopes of multiple stakeholders, including the earth itself.

In the material below we will suggest some contemporary global challenges with a view to understanding the depth of the dialectical thinking that will be required to move to a more sustainable future. While we will emphasize the challenges, we will also suggest signs of hope associated with each one.

We will then, in the spirit of working with creative tensions, suggest some steps that ODC can take to define a new future for itself – one that intertwines with and helps shape transformation to a sustainable future. The opportunity to write this reflection offers us a chance to share our thoughts, concerns, and hopes for ODC going forward.

## CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND DIALECTICS

ODC developed largely during the post-World War II era, simultaneously with the expansion of international economic and political institutions that largely reflected western liberal economic and democratic values. These perspectives had taken shape in the west during the Industrial Revolution and continued to guide the growth of the global economy in the twentieth century and beyond. After World War II, western nations saw the development of strong, capitalistic economies in the developing world as the route to prosperity and to a transition to democratic regimes that would make unlikely a repeat of global upheaval of the order of magnitude just experienced, and provide an ever-expanding landscape for economic expansion.

The unfolding of the global economy has generated great wealth, and moved hundreds of millions of people around the world out of poverty. Technological breakthroughs have enabled a steady stream of innovations that have led to new industries and services, new forms of communicating, organizing, and working, and contributed to improved health and longevity and to increased quality of life for many. But the economic framework where the interests of capital are privileged over all other considerations has also, in the eyes of many (e.g., [Picketty, 2014](#)), contributed to an escalating concentration of wealth in small numbers of people. It also has led to an imbalance between the power of the private business sector, government, and civil society, while decoupling businesses from responsibility for the externalities of their operations (e.g., [Adler, 2019](#); [Henderson, 2020, 2022](#); [Mintzberg, 2022](#)).

A sign of hope is that there is accelerating multisectoral attention to the need to reset our trajectory to build a sustainable future. For example, global attention has been catalyzed by the United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development's description of sustainable development as: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" ([Brundtland, 1987](#)). Subsequent multinational and multisectoral UN-sponsored initiatives have built a network of inclusive forums to generate sustainable development goals and support and spur action toward them. The agendas of the World Economic Forum have increasingly identified issues of climate change, social and geopolitical unrest, wealth inequality, and cyber threats as pressing threats to a strong, global economic order. Investors are increasingly demanding evidence that businesses are attending not only to financial performance but also to social responsibility goals. Many businesses are demonstrating concern about making a difference for good in the world and incorporating sustainability into their core missions (e.g., *Business as an Agent of World Benefit*; <https://weatherhead.case.edu/centers/fowler/>). Social entrepreneurs are building socially and ecologically oriented companies from the bottom up. A new language has developed, capturing concepts like conscious capitalism, the triple bottom line, benefit corporations, social justice, zero emissions, closed-loop supply chains, and eco-friendly, to name just a few. Sustainability has

become a field of inquiry and teaching in many universities and specialized research institutes.

While there are many serious and urgent sustainable development challenges, we single out two domains of special concern – climate change and technology. These domains make us realize that we are in the midst of change of such magnitude and intensity as to cause rapid and discontinuous transformation in the ways we live and work, a reshaping of the patterns of connection and organizing principles of our society, and perhaps even changes in core understandings of purpose and identity. We discuss each briefly below.

### *Climate Change*

It is now generally recognized in the science community and beyond that the burgeoning of both the world's population and the globally intertwined economy have contributed to potentially cataclysmic ecological impacts of climate change and the depletion and degradation of earth's resources and ecosystems. We are now living in the Anthropocene – a geologic epoch in which human activities are altering the earth's ecosystems (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2013). What Hoffman and Ehrenfeld (2015) have referred to as the first three waves of environmentalism (regulatory, strategic, and focuses on reactive and fragmented sustainability initiatives) have all occurred within prevailing economic and societal frameworks based on exploitation of natural systems for the purpose of economic growth. What is needed to create a sustainable future for humanity and the earth is to see ourselves as part of the natural system and our flourishing as deeply interdependent with the flourishing of the natural world. This change of perspective, they say, will be a cultural shift similar in magnitude to the enlightenment. The fourth wave of environmentalism will be a period in which the norms of management science and practice are in flux. Our cultural frameworks and our business models will have to be reconfigured to reflect this new understanding,; so might our understandings of the possibilities of capitalism (Henderson, 2022).

Global warming and the degradation of the environment and the earth have long arms that are intertwined with many of the societal challenges that we all face. The well-being of entire communities and populations has been based on the deeply interdependent aspects of an economy that has been grounded on the production and consumption of fossil fuels. Although triggered primarily by economic growth in developed nations, poor people and nations have been disproportionately affected by climate change that is at least in part an outcome of that economy. Broad shifts in climatic patterns have contributed and are expected increasingly to contribute to accelerating patterns of migration as large parts of the earth become inarable and even uninhabitable, adding to the current trends toward populism and nationalism. Armed with evidence of social and economic inequality and historical and present repression, identity politics and culture wars increasingly command attention and lead to deep fissures among those with opposing views of what constitutes just and viable societies and about the nature of and appropriate response to the sustainability challenges we face.

Some show reasons for hope during this period. [Lehman, Loberg, Wilson, and Gorham \(2021, p. 5\)](#) note that “Accompanying our domination and disruption of the planet has begun a conscious awareness of the magnitude of our powers to help guide us to prudent paths into the future. Ours is the first species to become aware of our global scope, the first to organize global communication and satellite monitoring of the planet as a whole, and the first consciously to consider how to create a sustainable planet. . . . It may seem unimaginable that we can learn to manage consciously the entire planetary ecosystem. We should, however, remember that throughout our relatively short history, the unimaginable repeatedly has morphed into the commonplace.” As one of many examples, referring specifically to advances in the application of digital technology, a prominent conservationist, [Butler \(2014\)](#) stated that he was finally finding reason to be optimistic about the future of tropical forests, in part because. “There are more tools than ever before to monitor deforestation and support forest protection.”

### *Technology*

There is no question that advances in science and technology are core to our ability to deal with ecological and societal challenges and that advancing the capacity to generate such knowledge and apply it rapidly, efficiently, and equitably is of paramount importance. This is both a social and technical challenge. The case of digital technology, in particular, is a pressing matter commanding much attention due to its centrality in the lives and livelihood of the world’s population, in almost all aspects of how economies function in today’s world, and in how our societies are structured and governed. The accelerating and largely unregulated development of digital technology has enabled an increasingly connected global economy and has fostered entrepreneurialism and the emergence of countless businesses. It has also spawned new professions and enabled new ways of working, new forms of organization, and significant changes in the psychological contracts of workers and organizations.

Large technology firms now represent an outsized portion of wealth generation, and their products and platforms are shaping transitions in the culture of work, life, civil society, and the polity. The products and the platforms that they invent and control are driving much of the growth in the economy, fanning consumption, shaping the behavior of consumers, and redefining how people get information and knowledge, and how they engage with society. For better and for worse, digital technology is disrupting cultural understandings and core aspects of the way we live and work, is leading to new forms of organization, and is reshaping the relationship between business, government, and civil society. It has also been weaponized. Cyberattacks have become a way of weakening other economies and polities, and cyberwarfare is a new way of waging war. Meanwhile, technologists are generating and implementing technologies to support starkly new visions for humanity and human society, e.g., the Metaverse, without broad input from those who will be impacted.