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POINT OF VIEW

Organizing for good—using organization design to take on grand challenges

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Abstract

Over the past decade, scholarly work has surged around grand societal challenges, such as climate change, public health, and poverty, often framed by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These complex and global issues demand innovative organization design solutions. The "Organizing for Good" campaign, launched by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Organizational Design Community (ODC), aims to spotlight, curate, and stimulate research and practices contributing to the SDGs. This introductory essay serves as a prologue to a special issue in the *Journal of Organization Design*, which closely aligned with the campaign's objectives. It delves into the concept of organization design as a tool for addressing these challenges, viewing organization designs as problem-solving systems for collective action. Furthermore, it provides an overview of how the SDGs intersect with the scholarly community focusing on organization design, previews the content of articles featured in this special issue, and raises questions for future research.

Introduction

The past decade has seen a surge of scholarly work on grand societal challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, public health, poverty, exploitation, and more—often organized around the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (George et al. 2016; Howard-Grenville et al. 2019; Kunisch et al. 2023). These challenges are inherently complex and large-scale, often global in scope with localized implications (Ferraro et al. 2015; Pop et al. 2023; Voegtlin et al. 2022). Addressing them implicates diverse actors, requires short-term actions with long time horizons, and entails collective action beyond traditional hierarchies. In short, it requires organization design (Puranam 2023; George et al. 2024).

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Organizational Design Community (ODC) partnered to launch the "Organizing for Good" campaign (https://orgdesigncomm.com/Organizing-for-Good) in April 2021, the tenth anniversary of ODC, a global network of academics and practitioners working on various organization design issues.[1] The overarching objective of the "Organizing for Good" campaign is to spotlight, curate, and stimulate organization design research and practices that can contribute to advancing the SDGs. Many ODC members have since taken

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[1] https://www.orgdesigncomm.com/Organizing-for-Good/.

the initiative to organize webinars and social media projects in support of this campaign.

Joining the campaign, this special issue aims to advance our understanding of organization design to address grand societal challenges. It conceives of organization designs as *problem-solving systems that enable the collective action necessary to address complex challenges*.[2] This encompasses not only design choices essential for implementing initiatives within existing organizations but also novel approaches to organizing that respond to the opportunities and challenges presented by the escalating focus on these issues (Davis 2016a, 2016b; Marquis 2020; Joseph and Gaba 2020; Gartenberg and Zenger 2022). In essence, if our current organizational frameworks prove inadequate for forging a sustainable future for humanity, what new forms of organizing must emerge to fulfill this imperative?

There has never been a more challenging time for organization design than right now. The basic tools and building blocks of organization design—methods of communication, collaboration, hierarchy, markets, and their mix—have all seen massive transformations in the past few years. Consider the way that the smartphone, launched in 2007, has fundamentally transformed some industries and created new industries from the ground up—from ride-hailing apps and on-demand labor platforms to organized teams of shoplifters who can now fence their takings on Amazon (Jordan 2017; Chu and Wu 2023). Just since the time we commissioned this special issue, generative AI has risen from a curiosity to a tool used every day in enterprises and universities around the world (Csaszar and Steinberger 2022; Balasubramanian et al. 2022; Jia et al. 2023; Vanneste and Puranam 2023).

On one hand, all this ferment among tools and building blocks implies that some of our old work may no longer be a reliable guide to the future of organization design. In a world where work-from-home contractors can be assembled into a team, design a product, and disassembled in an afternoon, ancient truths about the virtues of the multidivisional form may no longer be a useful guide to action. On the other hand, the world has never needed thoughtful methods of design as a prospective science more than today. We have grand new challenges, and we also have an armory of new tools. How can organization design best meet this moment, without being shackled by the past?

To enable these new tools, we may have to rethink the enterprise of social science. Our hope is that the articles in this special issue provide forward-looking guidance to young scholars (cf. Simon 1969). Our focus on grand challenges and the achievement of the SDG is a purposeful choice. When the world is filled with new opportunities and hazards, it helps to have guardrails in place. For us, the SDGs provide a suitable North Star for the future development of the science of organization design.

[2] See recent reviews of the organization design literature (Joseph 2018; Joseph et al. 2018; Burton et al. 2020).

'Organizing for good: what do/don't we know' survey

Survey design and implementation

To create a terrain map of how the SDGs intersect with the scholarly community around organization design, we launched a survey inspired by Science's special 125th-anniversary issue titled "What Don't We Know?" The journal polled its editors and writers, aiming to assess the current state of knowledge regarding the world of nature and the nature of human societies, and to map out scientific puzzles steering fundamental research across diverse realms of science, technology, and policy (Kennedy and Norman 2005; Omenn 2006). In our case, we solicited insights from the organization design research community focused on the pivotal question of how research in organizational design can actively contribute to addressing grand challenges.

In October 2023 we distributed the 'Organizing for Good: What Do/Don't We Know' survey to associate editors and members of the editorial review board at the Journal of Organization Design, in addition to the participants of the 'Organizing for Good' conference organized by the Organization Design Community (ODC) and received 47 responses. Next, we provide a concise overview of the survey results. The complete survey is appended in Fig. 1 for reference.

Relevance of organization design

The initial query centered on the significance of knowledge in 'organization design' for addressing each of the UN's sustainable development goals. As illustrated in Fig. 2, respondents expressed varied perspectives on the importance of 'organization design' knowledge across different SDGs. Notably, over 90% of participants highlighted the very high importance of this knowledge for SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Similarly, respondents emphasized the relevance of 'organization design' for SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). However, the findings also indicate that respondents perceive 'organization design' knowledge as less pertinent to certain SDGs, such as SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Approximately half of the respondents indicated 'not applicable' or 'not very important' for these particular goals.

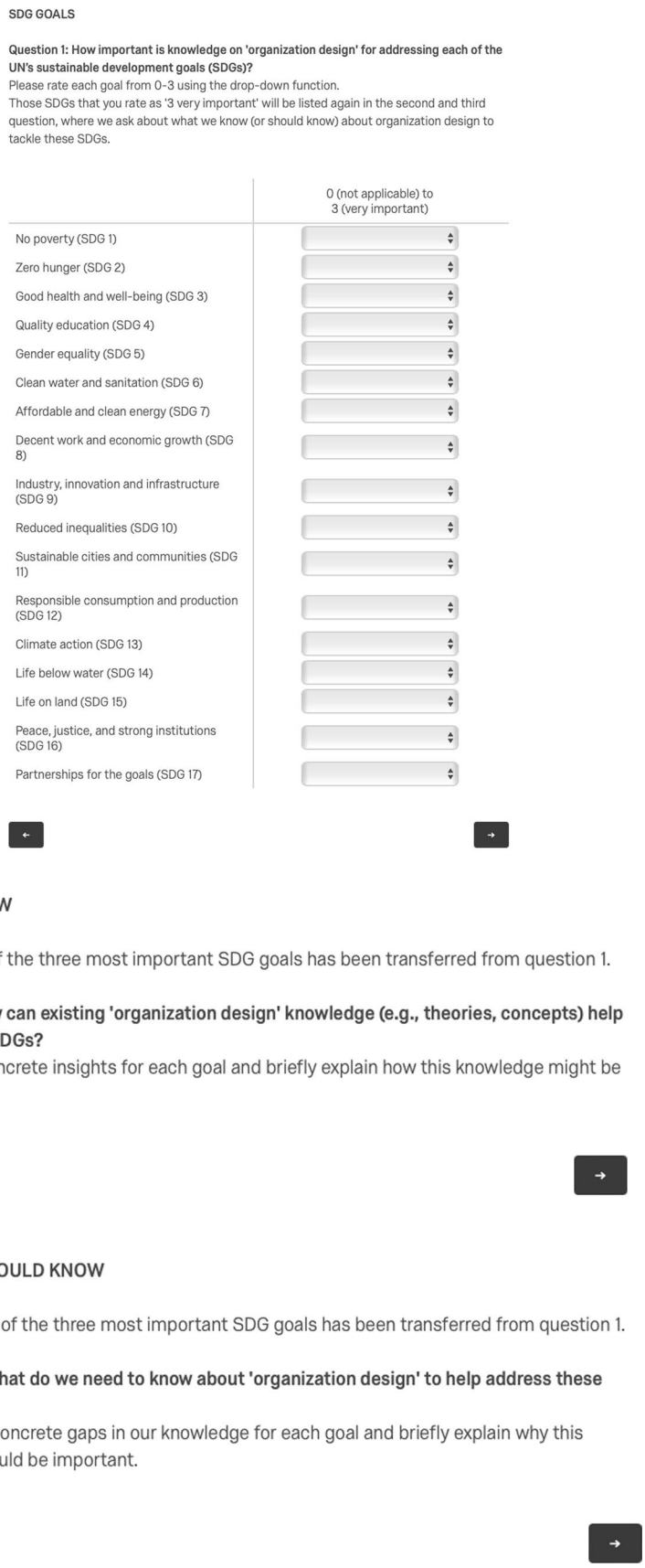

Fig. 1 'Organizing for Good: What Do/Don't We Know' survey screen shots. Outreach text: "Thank you for taking the time to participate in this short survey on how organization design research can contribute to addressing grand challenges. We highly appreciate your support and would like to thank you very much for your efforts in answering the following three questions! We intend to publish the survey results in an editorial article as part of the upcoming special issue on 'Organizing for Good' in the *Journal of Organization Design*. Best regards, Oliver Baumann (U of Southern Denmark), Jerry Davis (U of Michigan), Sven Kunisch (Aarhus U), Jiao Luo (U of Minnesota), Brian Wu (U of Michigan)."

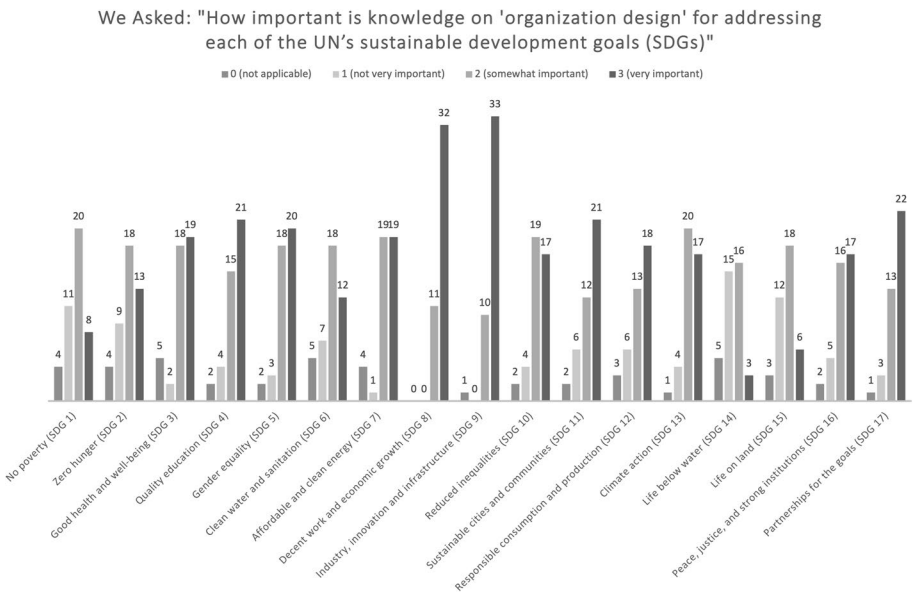

Fig. 2 Results from 'Organizing for Good: What Do/Don't We Know' survey

What do we know?

The second query asked participants to describe how existing 'organization design' knowledge can contribute to addressing the SDGs. Responses predominantly centered around several key aspects, including the management of multiple objectives, the allocation of decision rights, information, and resources, comparative governance, the role of networks, and strategies for organizing innovation. We will provide a concise overview of each of these aspects in the following discussion.

Managing multiple objectives

Addressing the challenge of managing multiple objectives is a fundamental concern in the context of SDGs. The complexity stems from the sheer number of SDGs and the simultaneous presence of financial and other business objectives that firms must navigate. Firms inevitably find themselves in the position of pursuing multiple objectives, leading to potential tradeoffs between them (Birkinshaw et al. 2016; Obloj and Sengul 2020; Albert and Csaszar 2023). Survey respondents highlighted this issue, offering insights such as, "[d]esigning the workplace while keeping economic growth in mind is fundamentally an organizational problem. Put simply, how to design an innovative organization that both copes with and generates economic growth." Besides recognizing the tradeoffs, respondents also stressed that effectively managing a scenario where multiple objectives are pursued is a classic organizational design problem. As one respondent articulated, "[w]e know how to design organizations to support goals and strategies. From the perspective of decent work and SDG, we can apply the traditional design principles but with different goals and strategies. The goals may be based on the triple bottom line." Moreover, insights from the survey indicate a consensus that responsible production aligned with sustainable goals is achievable through enhanced organizational designs. Participants emphasized the role of organizational design in incorporating multiple goals, aiming to preserve the environment for future generations. The sentiment was echoed in statements such as, "[o]rganizational design can incorporate multiple goals to preserve our land for its use by generations to come," and "[d]esign of purpose-driven organization; Design for integrating societal goals into companies."

Allocation of decision rights, information, and resources

Another challenge within the scope of SDG goals revolves around the allocation of decision rights, information, and resources (Sengul et al. 2019; Albert 2018, 2023; Raveendran 2020; Eklund 2022). A critical aspect of this challenge is the information problem, where a consensus is lacking in measuring social impact and identifying responsible parties for such assessments. Survey respondents aptly recognized this complexity, stating, "there's always a question about how we measure some of these social impacts and who measures them?" Additionally, the challenge extends to evaluating specific projects aimed at assisting specific stakeholders. As respondents expressed, "how do we evaluate potential initiatives, and how do we decide whether they're actually effective, and who gets to decide that?" Insights from survey participants further underscore the connection between information flows and organizational design. They emphasize that healthcare systems, for example, are fundamentally driven by information processing and the

specialization of competencies. This perspective is echoed in statements like, "[h]ealthcare systems are fundamentally driven by information flows (information processing) and specialization of competencies to advance research, treatments, and care. All these topics are at the center of org design." Additionally, the role of organizational design in addressing biases and ensuring fair resource allocation processes is acknowledged. One respondent noted, "[d]esigning a workplace in which explicit or implicit biases are avoided and eradicated is, at least in part, an org design problem. It is also a question of (dis-)aggregation of individual preferences to firmwide behavior." Furthermore, respondents highlight that the need for effective governance and the delegation of decision rights is common across various SDG goals. Organizational design offers valuable insights into balancing distributed versus centralized power, allocating resources, and managing systems.

Organizational form and comparative governance

Organizational form and comparative governance take center stage in the insights provided by survey respondents when tackling grand challenges (Levitt and Eriksson 2016; Kaul and Luo 2018; Kolbjørnsrud 2018; Luo and Kaul 2019). These classic yet vital considerations are brought to life through statements like, "[c]omparative governance of education institutions—public vs. private, etc.," shedding light on the significance of understanding and harnessing diverse governance structures, particularly in the realm of education. Additionally, respondents emphasized the exploration goes beyond traditional for-profit organization and commented that, "[d]esigning organizations to preserve and support life on land, e.g., forest conservation orgs, environmental non-profits." Furthermore, the imperative of collaboration between private and public entities for social goals is articulated in the quote, "[[e]quality and diversity are important for peace and justice. Private and public institutions working together are essential in these goals. We need more research on these joint institutional actions."

The role of networks

Expanding upon the last point, collaborations are indispensable for many SDG initiatives. The success of such collaborations depends not only on individual relationships but also on the overall structure of relationships among various stakeholders (Koch and Windsperger 2017; Anjos and Reagans 2020; Hasan and Koning 2020; Koçak and Warglien 2020). Survey respondents delve into this complexity, noting, "[o]rganizations foster the emergence of informal networks, heavily influenced by the organization's structure. These networks have played a pivotal role in information dissemination, career advancement, and influence." Essentially, this quote underscores the multifaceted nature of collaboration within and across organizations, highlighting the vital role of networks in both their formal and informal dimensions. Moreover, when considering cross-organizational aspects, social structures come into play. The arrangement of these social structures has profound implications for the effectiveness of solutions and strategies. The success of initiatives hinges on their seamless integration into the broader social fabric, underscoring the necessity for a deep understanding and effective management of the social dynamics in play.

Organization of innovation

The organization of innovation emerges as a critical aspect. Many of these SDG challenges inherently require the exploration of new frontiers, be it in the form of innovative business models, technologies, or other paradigm shifts (Burton et al. 2017; Baumann et al. 2018; Luo et al. 2018; Billinger and Workiewicz 2019; Choudhury et al. 2020). Respondents aptly recognize this need for development, as articulated in statements like, "[o]rganization of innovation to develop green technologies; technology diffusion of green tech." Insights from survey participants extend beyond this immediate context of green technology, delving into broader theoretical frameworks. The integration of theories from the literature on organizational learning, competition, and industry evolution is identified as instrumental in fostering innovation and regulating industries. This idea is exemplified in statements such as, "[t]heories and insights from the literature on organizational learning, organization of innovation, competition and industry evolution will be useful to encourage and support innovation." Moreover, the geographical aspect of innovation is highlighted, acknowledging that innovation often thrives in diverse clusters. The organizational challenge then becomes how to effectively organize a wider ecosystem, a central inquiry in modern organizational design research. As one respondent notes, "[i]nnovation often takes place in geographical clusters of heterogeneous participants. How to organize a wider ecosystem is a core question of modern org design research." Finally, the literature on meta-organizations, ecosystems, and modularity is recognized as a fount of valuable insights into the dynamics of innovation. Understanding how innovation unfolds or encounters obstacles based on design parameters is crucial, as encapsulated in statements such as, "[t]he literature on meta-organizations, eco-systems, and modularity provide important insights into how innovation unfolds or stifles depending on design parameters." In essence, the organization of innovation demands both theoretical understanding and practical strategies to foster the development of groundbreaking solutions to SDG goals.

What don't we know?

In the last question of the survey, we posed a pivotal question to our survey respondents: "What do we need to know about 'organization design' to help address these SDGs?" The responses illuminated two distinct dimensions, shedding light on aspects where knowledge is lacking and areas where existing organizational design insights could be leveraged for SDG advancement.

In exploring the first dimension, several inquiries emerged. The aggregation of individual attitudes within organizations, a facet often overlooked in comparison to skills and tasks, surfaced as a critical unknown. This issue is magnified further still when the individuals involved themselves serve as representatives of other groups or identities—think here of steering committees for consortia, or meta-organizations such as the United Nations. Additionally, the integration of job design into the organizational design landscape, particularly in the context of the transformative impact of General Artificial Intelligence (GAI), emerged as a fertile ground for exploration. Questions surrounding the future of work in an era of virtual and dispersed firms and the impact of workplace design on organizational reactions to economic growth and innovation presented themselves as challenges demanding deeper understanding. The intricate interdependencies among actors in ecosystems and optimal design strategies to navigate these interconnections also stood out as areas requiring further exploration.

Conversely, our accumulated knowledge in organizational design offered tangible solutions that could be tailored for SDGs. The design of educational institutions, as evidenced by the Danish case, emerged as a crucial lever for impacting the quality of education and the well-being of faculty and students. Known methodologies for designing tasks and incentives surfaced as potent tools to support gender equality. The inherently linked dynamics of work conduct, happiness, and fraud to modularity opened avenues for adapting modularity to address societal challenges. From the utilization of technology for supply chain transparency to the imperative need for intrinsic commitment from top managers to responsible production practices, existing organizational design insights showcased a spectrum of solutions that could be harnessed to propel SDG objectives forward. The call for more research on collaborative efforts between private and public organizations and the imperative of cross-institutional coordination emphasized the role of organizational design in fostering collective action for sustainable development.

Overview of special issue contributions

The first article of this special issue, Freeman and Koçak's "Designing Inclusive Organizational Identities," deals with the social dimension of organizational design and serves as a research primer on creating inclusive workplaces. The authors define an inclusive organizational identity as the belief that inclusivity is a defining characteristic of an organization, and that the organization intentionally incorporates diverse individuals into its governance, operations, and outputs. The authors argue that organizational identity can be a key tool in building organizations that employ individuals from diverse social groups and create inclusive workplace cultures. They suggest that to create inclusive identities, designers will need to address trade-offs around whether to make identity claims, claim inclusivity as an identity feature, and affiliate with ideologies of inclusion. Drawing on a comprehensive review of literature in psychology and sociology and citing examples from prominent organizations like Delta, Netflix, and Patagonia, the authors provide practical insights for practitioners seeking to shape inclusive organizational identities and guidance for scholars interested in supporting such endeavors. It highlights the need for managers to act as stewards of the organization's identity, facilitate employee participation to define inclusivity, and be transparent about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) efforts. Notably, they argue for a bottom-up approach to identity claims, allowing for the coexistence of members with different backgrounds. The creation of a superordinate identity spanning various social groups is highlighted as a means to attract and retain diverse members.

In "Purpose-driven Transformation: A Holistic Organization Design Framework for Integrating Societal Goals into Companies," Carballo delves into the challenges faced by traditional companies as they try to incorporate societal goals into their operations. Employing an adaptation of the star model, which encompasses strategy, structure, processes, rewards, and people, Carballo introduces a comprehensive framework. This framework elucidates four distinct stages of societal hybridization, highlighting the degree to which a traditional company aligns its organizational structure with the dual objectives of profit and societal impact. Furthermore, the article offers practical insights into the progression through these stages, drawing from real-world examples such as Nespresso and Etsy to illustrate the transformative journey of organizations.

In "Designing a Deep-tech Venture Builder to Address Grand Challenges and Overcome the Valley of Death," Romme, Bell, and Frericks discusses the problem of Europe's limited capacity to transform technological inventions into successful new companies that can address SDGs. The article highlights that Europe has long struggled to transform scientific breakthroughs and technological achievements into successful ventures and companies. There is an abundance of scientific breakthroughs and innovations developed by European universities and research institutes, but many of them never get applied to societal solutions. This limited capacity implies that Europe continues to lag

behind in developing technological solutions for SDGs in areas such as climate change, energy production, poverty, health, hunger, and so forth. The main contribution of this study involves a comprehensive system design for building deep-tech ventures that help solve the SDGs, one that is grounded in the literature on technology sourcing, entrepreneurship, ecosystems, entrepreneurial finance, and talent acquisition and tested in a major European venture builder.

In the article "Incorporating the Choice of Centralized vs. Decentralized Resource Allocation into Sustainability Frameworks", Solberg addresses the relationship between the organization of resource allocation processes and firm sustainability practices such as those targeting the SDGs. His key argument revolves around how different approaches to allocating resources—centralized or decentralized—may help avoid or mitigate challenges in finding and selecting practices, which can help firms improve their sustainability practices. The paper integrates these arguments in a framework for practice.

Gil, Sousa, and Massa's article "Harnessing Self-management to Tackle Grand Challenges: The Points-based Participation Architecture of São Paulo's Housing Movement", proposes that hierarchical organizations can foster and maintain the collaboration of a large number of autonomous actors by establishing self-managed, mission-aligned collectives. This proposition is based on preliminary findings from an ongoing study of the housing movement in São Paulo, Brazil. The study finds that hierarchical Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) have incentivized broad-based voluntary engagement in protest actions aimed at formulating new housing policy. They do this by educating and encouraging low-income families to join collectives tasked with developing and self-managing new housing projects. The sustainability of this participation architecture is traced to an SMO-designed, points-based system, which functions as an integrating mechanism. The article discusses the challenges of addressing SDGs, and argues that the grander the challenge, the more engagement is necessary from autonomous and heterogeneous actors that lie outside the boundaries and managerial control of a single organization.

Moving from the organizational level to system level design, the article "Fit for Solving the Grand Challenges? From Organization Design Choices to Ecosystem Solutions" by Ambos and Tatarinov explores the role of different organizational designs in addressing SDGs. The authors argue that while different organizational designs can be viewed as problem-solving systems, they are skeptical about the ability of any single design to foster the collective action needed to solve these complex challenges. They propose a categorization of organizational designs based on their goals (social–profit), scale (local–global), and decision-making processes (agile–bureaucratic). The article emphasizes the need for cross-sector collaboration and ecosystem-based approaches to address the grand challenges. It suggests that contrasting different organizational designs can help understand their strengths and weaknesses in solving these challenges and how complementarities between organizations can be harnessed. The authors conclude that organizations may align their strengths in versatile ecosystem collaborations to address the complexities of the SDGs. They highlight the project Giga, jointly led by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), as an example of such a collaborative ecosystem solution.

The article by Tinguely, Lee, and He, titled "Designing Human Resource Management Systems in the Age of AI" discusses the increasing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in human resource management (HRM). The authors propose a typology of HR–AI collaboration systems based on task characteristics and social acceptability. They highlight the importance of AI explainability, the impact of AI in high stakes contexts, and the potential threat AI poses to employees' professional identities. The authors argue that AI is reshaping HRM practices, with AI machines performing cognitive functions such as learning, interacting, and problem-solving. AI has been increasingly integrated into various HRM functions, including recruitment, selection, coaching, training, performance management, and compensation. For instance, AI is used to personalize employee learning paths, taking into account their skills, job tasks, and career plans. The paper introduces a typology of HR–AI collaboration systems, which provides design principles to foster social acceptability among HR professionals and stakeholders. The authors argue that while previous work has focused on structural dimensions of human-AI collaboration, social dimensions are crucial for the acceptance and adoption of these systems. The authors also discuss the implications of HR–AI collaboration systems for "organizing for good", which involves improving organizational effectiveness and fairness while preserving the vital role of HR professionals in the design of HR–AI collaboration systems. In conclusion, the authors suggest that organizations need to carefully reflect on design principles that mitigate critical concerns to enhance the viability of HR–AI collaboration systems. They also suggest potential avenues for future research in this area.

This special issue also features an article that highlight unique organizational models in achieving the SDGs. In the article "Klima DAO: A Crypto Answer to Carbon Markets," Jirásek discusses the innovative approach of Klima DAO, a decentralized autonomous organization (DAO), in addressing societal challenges through the adoption of carbon credits. Klima DAO leverages blockchain technology for its governance and product delivery, offering unique solutions to universal problems. It operates with a high level of decentralization and promotes transparent carbon credit

trading with low transaction fees. Despite challenges such as the pseudo-anonymity of its leaders and its aggressive initial funding strategy, Klima DAO has significantly impacted carbon markets within its first year. The organization represents a novel form of organizing in its blockchain governance, differing from cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, and in its product delivery, which differs from traditional players in the carbon market. However, its limited transparency has attracted criticism, and its market valuation has decreased sharply. The case of Klima DAO contributes to our understanding of DAOs as a distinct organizational form embedded within the crypto world, serving as a model for future organizations seeking greater transparency and flatter governance structures. Klima DAO serves as a model for organizations seeking to make a global and rapid impact. It also illustrates the opportunities and challenges associated with the organizational category of DAOs.

Discussing the case of Klima DAO, Foss and Xu in their article "Unveiling the familiar in the unconventional: the case of Klima DAO" provide a critical perspective on whether Klima DAO truly represents a novel, flat kind of organization. Rather than focusing on the novelty of the organization design adopted by Klima DAO, the commentary "Klima DAO—an intermediary in a nascent market" by Dobrajska focuses on the intermediary role of Klima DAO in a nascent market, discussing the broader question of whether design, objectives, technology, and incentives are in fact aligned. Finally, Puranam and He, in "Some challenges for the "New DAOism"—A comment on Klima DAO", argue that while the generalizability of Klima DAO may be limited, the case still offers useful insights about decentralized organizing.

Looking ahead

We are encouraged by the papers in this special issue, as they demonstrate how organization design as a research domain has much to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. What would it take to encourage more work of this sort? We explore the perspectives of both journals and researchers.

As we mentioned at the outset, journals have traditionally favored quantitative empirical studies that often involve time-series data stretching back years or decades. But the kinds of organizations and organizing that this issue's papers highlight are often, in effect, speculative fictions, such as the DAO. We need contemporary qualitative and experimental work on new kinds of organizing (Kadenic 2017; Hasan and Koning 2020; Koçak and Warglien 2020; Lee and Nythruva 2022). Moreover, we need more design-oriented work. Perhaps we could learn from the scholarly folkways of other design-oriented science such as architecture, engineering, and computer science. Consider an original article by Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page that described a new large-scale search engine they designed that combined low-cost web crawling and insights about social networks to yield an effective way to locate information on the "World Wide Web" (Brin and Page 1998). Would the equivalent article on a new kind of organizing find a home in our journals? [Perhaps computational models of organizational design serve as a potential proof of concept here (Csaszar 2018; Marengo et al. 2023)].

Now, shifting our focus to the perspectives of researchers, as demonstrated in Fig. 2 and discussed earlier, our survey results reveal a diversity of opinions regarding the perceived importance of 'organization design' knowledge across various SDG goals. While certain goals, notably SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), are widely recognized as having a clear connection to organizational design, other goals may not receive the same attention. Nevertheless, by framing organization designs as problem-solving systems that facilitate collective action, we assert the universal applicability of organization design thinking across all SDGs.

Even for goals less commonly associated with organizational design, such as SDG 14 (Life below Water), the approach remains crucial. Consider the issue of overfishing, primarily driven by for-profit organizations. Crafting solutions for sustainable fishing practices and the conservation of aquatic biodiversity necessitates not just technological and ecological expertise but also effective organizational structures and governance models. An organization design approach can also serve as a catalyst for fostering collaborative partnerships among diverse entities (Chatain and Plaksenkova 2019; Szerb et al. 2021), such as governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and local communities, addressing challenges like pollution and illegal fishing and contributing to the achievement of SDG 14.

Similarly, addressing the complex challenge of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) also requires consideration of various organizational factors. Hunger is influenced by supply-side issues tied to employment and wages, which, in part, result from business decisions. In the US, food deserts, where residents lack access to nutritious food, often stem from firm decisions on outlet locations. To comprehensively address hunger, a coordinated approach involving collaboration across the entire value chain (Bobbink et al. 2016)—from agriculture to production and distribution—is vital (Zhang and Wu 2023). While governments and nonprofits play crucial roles, effective and innovative solutions necessitate collaboration with for-profit entities, highlighting the pivotal role of organization design thinking (Levitt and Eriksson 2016).

In essence, every SDG presents unique organizational challenges, whether related to environmental protection, marine life, or hunger. Recognizing organizations as a common thread, the application of organization

design thinking becomes imperative for comprehensive problem-solving (Sorenson 2021; Puranam 2023). The examples of SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) underscore the interconnectedness of for-profit organizations with these global challenges and the potential of exploring these topics as an organizational design researcher. It's not merely about acknowledging firms as contributors to problems; rather, they possess the resources, capabilities, and expertise necessary to manage complex systems. Designing and governing collaborative endeavors with for-profit entities are not only beneficial but are instrumental in developing innovative and effective solutions to address the multifaceted dimensions of these SDG challenges.

For organizational design researchers interested in SDGs, we believe that abundant research questions lie ahead. First, there's substantial potential in the realm of comparative governance—exploring optimal organizational and institutional arrangements. We propose expanding the scope of organization design beyond the enhancement of for-profit entities, which has been the predominant although certainly not the exclusive focus of prior work. It should encompass a broader set of organizational forms, including cooperatives, government agencies, nonprofits, and hybrid entities like social enterprises (Kaul and Luo 2018; Kolbjørnsrud 2018). This expansion prompts us to contemplate how, drawing upon design principles, we can formulate the most effective solutions for these challenges. Rather than solely tweaking existing organizations to enhance their performance, the emphasis shifts towards designing new organizational forms or strategically matching existing forms to specific problems (Luo and Kaul 2019; Pop et al. 2023). This approach encourages a departure from conventional practices and fosters a mindset focused on innovatively designing institutions and organizations that align more seamlessly with the unique demands of addressing complex global issues.

Secondly, our focus revolves around recognizing that many of the SDG challenges at hand necessitate collaboration across geographical boundaries, communities, and diverse organizational structures (George et al. 2024; Pop et al. 2023). Building robust partnerships between different entities becomes and cultivating organizational capability to orchestrate these exchanges become paramount in addressing these systemic issues (Klarner et al. 2008; Heine and Kerk 2017; Moschieri and Blake 2019; Xu et al. 2021; Puranam 2023). At their core, these are challenges that span the entirety of systems, requiring the integration of entities from various countries and different types of organizations with distinct problem-solving capacities. The question then arises: how do we intricately connect these disparate elements to effect systemic change? The emphasis shifts towards designing more effective cross-organizational partnerships and enabling collaborations across sectors, recognizing their unique role in solving the complexity of these global challenges.

For example, how can we help design more productive international organizations to address global crises such as pandemics and climate change (Välikangas et al. 2022)? Without collaborations, especially among the biggest countries (e.g., the US, India, and China) it will be impossible to materially meet any SDGs, given the sheer size of their populations and economies. On a positive note, fostering collaborations on common goals can catalyze more dialogue and expand collaborations to other areas. The key is to work together to create a sustainably growing pie while considering long-term perspective. How can we promote more international exchange programs to enhance mutual understanding among diverse cultures (Vanneste and Yoo 2020)? Furthermore, how can we address pressing issues such as discrimination, hate, McCarthyism, and hypocrisy before they escalate into uncontrollable crises?

Our emphasis on collaboration also includes how can we foster more genuine conversations on organization design across different disciplines? For example, what if the literature in economics has extensively examined social welfare pertaining to different stakeholders but missed the significant progress made in the management field, and vice versa? Given this possibility, we need to engage with the most recent literature from different disciplines, rather than fixating on historical figures or debates, such as Milton Friedman from a bygone era, or dismissing insights from other fields. If we do not look beyond our discipline not only will social and intellectual resources be wasted but the long-term viability of initiatives intent on making positive changes will be undermined, degenerating into hype.

Thirdly, we also need to think about what happens within specific types of organizations. How can we ensure that these entities remain adaptable and do not become entrenched in static practices? How can we introduce dual objectives or redesign existing organizations to enhance their flexibility (Birkinshaw et al. 2016; Albert and Csaszar 2023)? Consider a scenario where we determine that a for-profit entity is necessary to address particular issues. In such cases, the question becomes: how can we best equip for-profit organizations to fulfill this role effectively? This consideration extends beyond collaboration or fitting into a broader institutional framework; it necessitates a meticulous examination of internal motivations, measurement systems, and operational processes within these organizations.

Fourthly, we need to consider the role of technological advancements, and how to effectively manage both business model innovation and impact model innovation to address the challenges posed by the SDGs. How can we harness emerging technologies such as AI or blockchain to more efficiently tackle these issues (Hsieh et al. 2018; Raj and Seamans 2019; Csaszar and Steinberger 2022; Hsieh and

Vergne 2023; Heo and Yi 2023)? Many of the solutions to our current problems are rooted in older technologies, so it's essential to ensure that we harness the potential of these general-purpose technologies that we are developing to better address these challenges. This involves pushing the technological envelope or simply applying existing technology more effectively to achieve our goals.

At the same time, we face the parallel challenge of dealing with new problems created by these emerging technologies. Issues like fake news, privacy concerns, and the potential threats posed by AI are not adequately reflected in the UN SDGs but are emerging as significant consequences of technological progress. Additionally, we must explore ways to enhance the governance of technology development (Klarner et al. 2020, 2021). For instance, in the context of AI, we need to ask whether "Team Capitalism" has triumphed while "Team Leviathan" has fallen short in addressing the AI landscape. Recent events, such as the leadership upheaval at OpenAI, underscore the importance of organizational structure and governance in addressing alignment concerns. OpenAI's hybrid nonprofit/for-profit organizational form, and the leadership chaos it enabled, highlights the need for robust governance frameworks. It is crucial to acknowledge and address these new challenges as new organizational designs emerge and proliferate. This means that our efforts should extend beyond the existing SDGs. Organizational design plays a crucial role in aligning the interests of businesses and society.

To conclude, organization design thinking holds great promise for advancing the SDGs. By embracing contemporary research methods, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a forward-thinking approach, we can unlock the full potential of organization design in contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future.

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