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Research in *Journal Of Organization Design*, 2012–2018

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Abstract

Articles published in the *Journal of Organization Design* (JOD) from its inception in 2012 until mid-2018 are reviewed and summarized according to their type: research, point of view, translational, case study, research primer, and Organization Zoo. Using multiple assessment criteria, JOD's contributions to the field of organization design are identified. Important topics for future research on organization design are suggested.

Keywords: Organization design, Organization design theory and research, Organization design practice

This paper encompasses research published in the *Journal of Organization Design* from its initial volume in 2012 until June 2018. I begin by restating JOD's original aims and research domain. Then, I summarize the research according to JOD's article categories: research, point of view, translational, case study, research primer, and Organization Zoo. Lastly, I assess JOD's contributions to the field of organization design and suggest topics for future research.

Aims and research domain

JOD was established as an open access journal by the Organizational Design Community (www.orgdesigncomm.com) in 2011 and published its first volume in 2012. The overall aim of JOD was inspired by Herbert Simon's (1969) comments on design in his influential book, *The Sciences of the Artificial*: "The natural sciences are concerned with how things are. Design, on the other hand, is concerned with how things ought to be. Design is changing existing situations into preferred ones." Accordingly, JOD seeks papers that focus on the future (how organizations ought to be) and pertain to practice (how organizations can be re-designed and changed).

In the inaugural issue, the founding chief editors invited a group of prominent academics and practitioners to provide statements about the future of organization design (see Table 1). Collectively, those statements defined JOD's research domain and highlighted its relevant research methodologies:

- Expand the traditional focus on individual firms to include multi-firm networks, platforms, communities, and ecosystems
- Examine the implications of new enabling technologies for the design and management of organizations
- Increase involvement in the design process both internally and externally

Table 1 Statements about the future of organization design (2012: vol. 1, issue 1)

Statement	Observations and recommendations
J.R. Galbraith	Organization design will be shaped by three forces: process of concatenation, Law of Requisite Variety, and enabling (largely digital) technologies.
J. Steinmetz, C. Bennett, and D.D. Håkonsson	Based on Royal Dutch Shell's scenario development, organization design must address: (a) greater scope for the HR function, (b) talent management, (c) continuous design processes, (d) external involvement in the design process, (e) balance between global and local design projects, (f) assurance and compliance requirements, and (g) stakeholder engagement.
R.E. Miles	Design is a critical management function and should be a product of an ongoing dialogue between managers and academics.
D.S. Alberts	Given increasingly complex and dynamic environments, organization design must (a) include agility as a component of organizational fitness, (b) broaden its focus to include complex and temporary multi-actor enterprises, and (c) incorporate mechanisms and processes of shared situation awareness.
P. Puranam	To advance as a field, organization design must (a) develop theories that aggregate individual and group behavior in organizational contexts, (b) use research methods such as experiments, simulations, and network techniques, and (c) develop approaches for prototyping new designs before implementing them.
C.Y. Baldwin	The key challenge facing organization design in the future will be how to design business ecosystems composed of self-governing corporations, individuals, and communities.
M. Tushman, K.R. Lakhani, and H. Lifshitz-Assaf	Moving forward, the field of organization design must develop theories of how organizations reshape their boundaries in order to innovate in complex, changing environments.

- Expand organization design theory to include key components of effective designs such as agility and shared situation awareness
- Use research methods appropriate for exploring the future such as simulations, experiments, and prototyping.

Subsequent JOD issues and volumes contained articles in multiple formats, consistent with the chief editors' belief that authors should be offered a variety of ways to present their ideas, research findings, and prescriptions for practice. The original formats were research, point of view, translational, case study, and urgent issues. The urgent issues format was eliminated early on as it did not attract sufficient submissions to maintain it as a separate category. Similarly, JOD Live (videos) was discontinued after a few postings. Beginning in 2015, two new categories were introduced: research primer and the Organization Zoo series. All articles published in JOD's existing formats are reviewed below. (Periodically, the chief editors published editorial statements; those statements are not reviewed here.)

Research articles

During 2012–2018, JOD published 34 research articles. The contributions of these articles to organization design theory and practice are summarized in Table 2. Some general observations can be made about the research articles on organization design. First, the majority of the articles are conceptual: of the 34 articles, 26 are conceptual and eight are empirical (noted with asterisks in Table 2). Second, all the articles focus on theory, but most offer practical implications or recommendations as well. Third, nine articles explore the future of organizations while 25 deal with past situations.

Table 2 Contributions of research articles

Study	Contribution
Galbraith (2012)	Describes the evolution of enterprise organization designs and predicts the next emphasis to be big data
Levitt (2012)	Illustrates how computational modeling can be used to extend the boundaries of organization design theory
Mathews (2012)*	Discusses how supra-firm industrial structures affect firms' economic performance
Waddell (2012)	Discusses how global action networks can address global social challenges
Keinz, Hienerth, and Lettl (2012)	Discusses organization designs for user-centered, open innovation processes
Gallo and Burton (2012)*	Presents a simulation study of how an organization should respond to an environmental shock
Luo and Donaldson (2013)*	Identifies specific conditions under which information processing can compensate for misfit
Langer (2013)	Describes a process for organizations to assimilate young talent from underserved populations
DeWaard, Volberda, and Soeters (2013)	Identifies modular organizing and organizational sensing as main drivers of organizational responsiveness
Kale and Puranam (2013)*	Examines how inter-firm relationships are and ought to be designed
Turkulainen and Ketokivi (2013)*	Examines the mechanisms that link organizational integration to organizational effectiveness
Galbraith (2014)	Discusses the activities of leading-edge firms in developing a big data analytics capability
Berner, Graupner, and Maedche (2014)	Discusses how big data requires the transformation from command and control hierarchies to post-bureaucratic organizational structures
Grossman and Siegel (2014)	Presents a framework for determining how analytics capability should be distributed within an organization
Koufteros, Peng, and Peters (2014)	Examines the effects of organization structure on cross-functional, supplier, and customer integration
Helfat and Karim (2014)*	Presents a normative theory in which the effectiveness of organization design and redesign depends on the characteristics of organizational routines
Nissen (2014)	Discusses the concept of organizational fit in dynamic environments
Cummings and Kiesler (2014)	Applies organization theory to the scientific endeavors of public and private research organizations
Slinger and Morrison (2014)	Argues that big data will change organization structures but not organization design processes
Bøe-Lillegraven (2014)	Examines exploration and exploitation activities in the newspaper industry in order to determine the main causal factors of firm performance
de Waal and van der Heijden (2015)	Investigates the role performance management plays in creating and maintaining a high-performance organization
Keers and van Fenema (2015)	Explores the role of stakeholder values management on inter-organizational design
Brix and Peters (2015)	Presents a case study of how a high-uncertainty innovation project induced changes in the organization's design
Hunter (2015)*	Compares the information processing and social network perspectives on organization structure and its relation to firm performance
Stea, Foss, and Foss (2015)	Discusses the relationship between organization design and managerial delegation
Bobbink, Hartmann, and Dewulf (2016)	Discusses the role of organization design in forming inter-organizational collaborations
Es-Sajjade and Wilkins (2017)	Uses social interdependence theory to examine how design shapes behavior and how behavior influences design

Table 2 Contributions of research articles *(Continued)*

Study	Contribution
Snow, Fjeldstad, and Langer (2017)	Provides a conceptual framework for the design of digital organizations
Koch and Windsperger (2017)	Presents a network-centric framework that helps firms design strategies that achieve competitive advantage in a digital economy
Heine and Kerk (2017)	Discusses the role of arbitration in resolving conflicts in inter-organizational processes
Kadenic (2017)	Develops a conceptual model of transitioning from an economic cluster to a collaborative community
Gaim et al. (2018)	Develops a classification scheme for comparing competing demands in organizations
Burton and Obel (2018)	Argues for a science-based theory of organization design that relies heavily on observation and experimentation
Kang et al. (2018)*	Discusses the role of uncertainty and controversy in the theory of the firm

*Empirical article

Point of view articles

A point of view article adopts a particular perspective and applies it to a design problem or organizational situation. For example, Levitt and Eriksson (2016) adopt the perspective of public-private partnerships and develop a governance model of infrastructure service delivery. During 2012–2018, JOD published 19 point of view articles. These articles are summarized in Table 3 according to the perspective taken and the contribution to organization design theory or practice.

Point of view articles are difficult to evaluate in terms of their contribution to the theory or practice of organization design. As indicated in Table 3, many different perspectives are represented, and none of the articles presents empirical data. Therefore, whatever its message, the typical point of view article is subjective and its contribution lies in the eyes of the beholder. Ten of the 19 articles are related to theory and nine are related to practice.

Translational articles

A translational article takes an existing concept or theory and derives its theoretical or practical implications for organization design. For example, Teece and Linden (2017) apply the concept of business model to the digital environment and derive its implications for the design of digitized organizations. During 2012–2018, JOD published seven translational articles. These articles are summarized in Table 4 according to the translational item and its implications for the theory or practice of organization design.

The true measure of whether a translational article has made a contribution to the field of organization design lies in the subsequent use of the translated concept or theory to improve the design or management of organizations. Arguably, it may be too early to see any of these translational articles being used either in theory building or in practice.

Case studies

A case study article is based on the experiences of a single organization, and this versatile format can be used to introduce a new concept, refine an existing theory

Table 3 Contributions of point of view articles

Study	Perspective	Contribution
Miles and Scaringella (2012)	A "futures group" within an organization (or spanning multiple organizations)	A futures group can help a firm synchronize market and technology development
Levitt (2012)	Agent-based computational simulation	Recommends greater use of computational modeling and simulation in organization design
Ketchen et al. (2012)	Supply chain	Suggests five ways supply chain performance can be improved
Caspin-Wagner et al. (2013)	Interdependencies fit	Organizational performance can be improved by managing internal and external fit
Burton (2013)	Summary of first ODC Annual Conference	Three themes: (1) there are clear fundamentals of organization design, (2) focus needs to expand beyond that of the individual firm, and (3) how organizations can become more agile
Yonatany (2013)	Organizational platform/ecosystem	Develops a model explaining why and where platform/ecosystems exist
Plump and Ketchen (2013)	Virtual team	Identifies potential legal pitfalls of virtual teams
Miller (2014)	University-industry partnerships	Identifies collaborative approaches that could be used to close the big data skills gap
Korhonen (2014)	Requisite organization	A new tool for determining organizational complexity in both strategy and structure
Plump and Ketchen (2014)	Franchising	How organizations can benefit from increased accountability and even benefit from it
Hertz (2015)	Baldrige Performance Excellence Program	Changing guidelines for business excellence
Giustiniano and D'Alise (2015)	Inter-organizational designs	Role of design in networks, clusters, and small worlds
Huber (2016)	U.S. companies' structure	Identifies changes in business environment that are dangerous to traditional U.S. companies and changes in structure of new U.S. companies that are dangerous to society
Levitt and Eriksson (2016)	Public-private partnership	Presents a governance model of infrastructure service delivery based on Australian experience
Håkonsson and Carroll (2016)	Big data	Describes problems and opportunities of big data
Dong, March, and Workiewicz (2017)	Interview of James G. March	Key insights about organizations and organization design based on March's work
Kutz (2017)	Double-bind communications in organizations	Negative consequences of double-bind communications to employees and organizations
Ebert and Freibichler (2017)	Nudge management	How to increase knowledge worker productivity through nudge management
Yonatany (2017)	Platform-ecosystem organizations	Identifies competitive advantages of this form in a highly digitized environment

or concept, demonstrate an application, describe a new organization design, present an unusual or complex design problem in need of analysis, and so on. During 2012–2018, JOD published 11 case studies (see Table 5).

The specific contributions of the 11 case studies are shown in the table. Each of the cases makes a unique contribution, reaffirming the versatility and value of the case study format. Three case studies focused on the future, and eight analyzed phenomena that occurred in the past. All 11 case studies presented practical implications or recommendations.

Table 4 Contributions of translational articles

Study	Translational item	Implications
Carroll (2012)	Exploration-exploitation	All organizations face the challenge of making investments in two very different sets of activities: exploration and exploitation. Four solutions to this challenge are discussed: outsourcing, separation, cycling back and forth, and continuous incremental reconfiguration.
Liedtka and Parmar (2012)	Reflective practitioner	To improve the implementation of a particular design, managers can practice "designing" by generating problem frames as hypotheses, and then testing and refining those hypotheses in the situation
Christensen and Knudsen (2013)	Visual representation of organizational decision flows	By showing how fundamental properties of decisions can be derived from visual representation, a four-step method to analyze organizational performance emerges: visualize, enumerate, aggregate, compare
Donaldson and Joffe (2014)	Fit	Uses the concept of fit to show how to align organizational designs to three important situational factors: competitive strategy, organization size, and task uncertainty
Kates and Kesler (2015)	Activation	Applying the concept of activation in a global context, five activators of a company's global operating model are discussed
Burton, Obel, and Håkonsson (2015)	Matrix organizing	Translating the concept of matrix organizing into action, three conditions necessary for a matrix to work are identified: strong purpose, alignment among major contingency variables, and management of junctions
Teece and Linden (2017)	Digital business model	Develops the implications of the business model concept in a digital environment

Research primers

A research primer introduces readers to a specific research stream or literature and articulates implications for organization design theory and practice. The first research primer, on multimarket competition, was published in 2015, and three more primers, on divestitures, evolutionary psychology, and post-merger integration, have been published since then. The contributions of the four primers are summarized in Table 6.

All four primers offer insights into organization design in the Simon (1969) sense: how organizations "ought to be" and how they can be changed from "existing situations into preferred ones." The primer on multimarket competition alerts us to the fact that nominally independent firms are connected by multiple points of contact in the marketplace, and their respective designs must address the tensions that result. Divestiture involves the removal of one or more businesses from the portfolio of a diversified firm, and the firm must be redesigned for a reduced scope of operations. The evolutionary psychology primer argues that many existing organizations are too complex for their members to cope psychologically, and it challenges organizational researchers and designers to find ways to transform those existing situations into preferred ones. The primer on post-merger integration discusses how an acquiring firm and a target firm ought to combine their resources and how the two organizations can be designed into one.

Organization Zoo

The Organization Zoo focuses on outliers: new, unusual, or rare species of organizations. Each Organization Zoo article addresses a single organization, analyzing its features and behavior in the interest of understanding it. After the case is introduced, expert commentators offer their views, and a richer, more colorful picture of the

Table 5 Contributions of case studies

Study	Case	Contribution
Beer (2013)	HP's Santa Rosa Systems Division	Strategic Fitness Model is introduced to the field
Valikangas and Romme (2013)	Large U.S.-based retailer	Examines the concept of organizational resilience
Engler, Jones, and Van de Ven (2013)—this case includes four commentaries.	Ascension Health	Describes a process for enacting organizational designs suitable for the dynamic healthcare sector
Gabel and Tokarski (2014)	RTI International	Discusses how this non-profit research organization is dealing with the challenges of big data
Schroeder and DeNoble (2014)	SOLO Eyewear	How to design a triple bottom line company
Hossain and Kauranen (2014)	X Prize Foundation	Describes a competition-based process for the development of innovations
Casalini, Fioretti, and Pyka (2016)	iPLON	Develops a novel interpretive framework for looking at the technology of foolishness
Camuffo and Wilheim (2016)	Toyota Motor Company	Describes internal processes that resulted in external misfit
Worren (2017)	FMC Subsea Division of TechnipFMC	Describes how the matrix structure can sometimes be a transitory form
Jordan (2017)	Uber	Suggests four key principles for designing large-scale digital organizations
Luo et al. (2018)	Large Chinese multinational firm	Describes the transition from a hierarchical manufacturing organization to an open platform organization

organization emerges. To date, the Organization Zoo series contains two articles: Valve Corporation and GitHub. These articles are summarized in Table 7.

The main value of cases in the Organization Zoo series is the discussion and debate they engender. Each of these two cases is especially interesting in various ways. Both Valve and GitHub are "boss-less" organizations in the sense that they rely on self-organizing rather than hierarchical mechanisms for control and coordination. After operating for 7 years without a hierarchy, GitHub, for several reasons, decided to install one. Expert commentators are invited to analyze such moves as well as other organizational features and

Table 6 Contributions of research primers

Study	Topic	Contribution
Sengul and Dimitriadis (2015)	Multimarket competition	Identifies various tensions inside a firm caused by multimarket competition (e.g., between headquarters and subsidiaries) and discusses how organizations can be designed to address them
Feldman and McGrath (2016)	Divestitures	Discusses the implications of divestitures for organization design
Van Vugt (2017)	Evolutionary psychology	Many features of modern organizations exhibit large mismatches with human psychology as it has evolved from small-scale societies. By studying evolutionary psychology, researchers and designers can develop designs that reduce such mismatches.
Bodner and Capron (2018)	Post-merger integration	Mergers and acquisitions combine the resources of two organizations into one. By combining the resource reconfiguration perspective with the structural organization design perspective, future research directions on post-merger integration are generated.

Table 7 Contributions of the Organization Zoo

Study	Contribution
Puranam and Håkonsson (2015)	Valve Corporation, a gaming company, does not use a formal hierarchy for control and coordination. Seven commentaries on this case explore what a "boss-less" company means for organization theory and design.
Burton et al. (2017)	GitHub, a software company, operated for 7 years without a hierarchy. Suddenly, it installed one. Four commentaries examine the role of hierarchy in organizations.

managerial processes. The total package of a Zoo case and its commentaries is a rich mix of theory, practice, and opinions about organization design.

JOD's contributions to the field of organization design

JOD is the only peer-reviewed academic journal focused entirely on organization design. Its very existence, therefore, constitutes a contribution to the field. In addition, JOD's contribution is notable in that it seeks to add to our knowledge about both theory and practice. JOD is an open access journal, so the ideas, concepts, studies, and recommendations it provides are freely available to everyone.

JOD has also made contributions to the field of organization design as envisioned by Simon (1969)—that is, a focus on how organizations ought to be and how they can be changed from their existing forms into preferred ones. Of the more than 100 articles published in JOD to date, 12 reflect a focus on the future and 23 examine how organizations can be redesigned and changed. Although these numbers are not large, JOD appears to be on its way to developing the normative science that the field of organization design requires.

Lastly, JOD's contributions to the field can be assessed using the statements about the future of organization design that were published in the first issue.

1. *Expand the traditional focus on individual firms to include multi-firm networks, platforms, communities, and ecosystems.* JOD has published a number of articles about "supra-firm" forms of organizing such as global action networks, supply chains, extended enterprises, platforms, user-driven innovation processes, collaborative communities, business ecosystems, and the modularization of industries.

2. *Examine the implications of new enabling technologies for the design and management of organizations.* Articles published in JOD have examined the following enabling technologies and their implications for organization design: virtual team design, crisis response, visual representation of decision flows, big data analytics, crowdsourcing, technology of foolishness, digital technologies, and nudge management.

3. *Increase involvement in the design process both internally and externally.* There have been only a few articles published in JOD that focus on the design process. Increased internal involvement has been advocated through autonomous teams, virtual design teams, and a futures group. The most thorough description of increased external involvement in the design process is the case study of Ascension Health.

4. *Expand organization design theory to include key components of effective designs such as agility and shared situation awareness.* Several articles have suggested that new variables be added to organization design theory or have emphasized the

importance of certain factors in existing or emerging designs, including resilience, power laws, responsiveness, design thinking, big data, and delegation. In each of those articles, the variable or factor has been discussed but not integrated into a broader theory of design.

5. *Use research methods for exploring the future such as simulations, experiments, and prototyping.* Of all the articles published in JOD, only two involve simulation and one involves prototyping. There are no articles involving experiments. Clearly, articles based on these three recommended methods for exploring the future are lacking in JOD.

Future research topics

Because JOD is a journal focused exclusively on advancing the theory and practice of organization design, any design-related paper that, in the judgment of peer reviewers, adds to the scientific record is a contribution to the field. Now in its seventh year of publication, JOD has published more than 100 articles. This is a much larger body of knowledge on organization design than would otherwise be available without JOD.

Looking forward, and viewing JOD from the standpoint of a former chief editor, I would like to see JOD make greater strides in honoring Simon's (1969) original vision of design. That vision had two underlying thoughts: (1) a focus on the future, or what organizations could and should be, and (2) a practical concern with how designers (along with managers and change-agents) can turn existing situations into preferred ones. Research topics reflecting an orientation towards the future should include the sources and shapes of new organizational forms, the implications of emerging technologies for the design and management of organizations, the nature and effectiveness of collaboration both within and across organizations, and an expanded theory of organization design that incorporates important variables such as agility and shared situation awareness. Topics of re-design and change should include the role of design thinking in change management, internal and external stakeholder involvement in the design process, and case studies demonstrating the application and results of change process models.

It would be especially heartening to see more articles in JOD that employ research methodologies well suited to organization design, namely simulations, experiments, and prototyping. In designing modern organizations, where human and digital actors increasingly collaborate with one another, there are abundant opportunities to conduct research studies that combine concepts and methods of simulation, machine learning, augmented reality, and video games.

Conclusions

JOD is the only academic journal focused exclusively on the topic of organization design. It seeks to bridge the gap between scholars and practitioners, and it offers authors multiple formats to publish their work. Now in its seventh year of publication, JOD is firmly established in the organizational sciences. Going forward, hopefully JOD will put even greater emphasis on the future of organizations and the improvement of management practice.

Availability of data and materials
The data for this article come from the *Journal of Organization Design* and are freely available.

Author's contributions
I prepared the manuscript by myself. I have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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The content of the manuscript has not been published, or submitted for publication, elsewhere.

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