

“Our hope is that the participants from all parts of the world can return home intellectually enriched by the cross-fertilization and committed to continue many of the collaborative efforts begun at the Summit.”

---

# Co-Creating a New World of Organizations and Communities — Dialogue and Action

## OD World Summit in Hungary

Interview with Imre Lövey  
by Tamás Avar

*In August 2010 Hungary will host the Organizational Development World Summit (ODWS), an event that will be the first ever to assemble many of the global OD professional organizations. The main organizer of the conference, the Hungarian Association of Organization Developers (Szervezetfejlesztők Magyarországi Társasága (SZMT)), expects around 500-700 participants in Budapest, primarily OD professionals, CEOs, HR leaders, organization professionals, researchers, and leaders of non-conventional organizations from around the world.*

*The initiative provides a unique opportunity for those involved in the world of OD to create new professional relations and collaborations while refreshing and reinforcing old ones. It is an event not to be missed not only by those belonging to the profession, but also managers, CEOs, and HR professionals.*

This is how Dr. Imre Lövey, the chair of the ODWS organizing committee, recalls the birth of the idea, the movement it gave life to, and the work done so far:

*“The World Summit is an initiative of the SZMT, a group formed in the spring of 2006, whose members had in common rather extensive networks of international professional relations. Most of the group were committee members of the International Organization Development Association (IODA) World Summit, organized with great success in Hungary in 1997.*

A brainstorming process started about what kind of projects we, the Hungarian

Organization Development community, could undertake, or in more general terms, how we could more fully integrate into the international professional networks.

Eventually a thought surfaced and then crystallized, energizing the group to a large extent. Its essence was the realization of the fact that the international Organization Development profession was basically fragmented.

There are a number of international professional organizations or groups that often overlap one another in their applied methodology and membership. Yet, they essentially follow their own guidelines, focus on unique perspectives, implement individual methodologies, have their own beliefs, maintain a kind of independent identity, and what’s more, most of them hold their own annual conferences.

A huge, yet untapped opportunity lies in the fragmented nature of the OD profession. Therefore, our team decided to bring together the creative mass of professionals from the various schools and organizations. All this is for the purpose of getting to know better and to learn from each other’s diverse methods, approaches, and experiences, and possibly to create something new via synergetic collaboration. Our hope is that the participants from all parts of the world can return home intellectually enriched by the cross-fertilization and committed to continue many of the collaborative efforts begun at the Summit. This is how the first two of the three base pillars of the OD World Summit, “cross-fertilization” and “global and social impact”, were manifested.

Continuing the brainstorming, we also realized that the correct approach for us, Hungarians, is not to organize a world summit for these international professional organizations to our own taste, but, keeping in mind the basic principles of the OD profession, to form and create the conference title, content, and structure with the active involvement of the members of these organizations. In other words, to develop it together.

The Hungarian organizers' task differs from that of the international colleagues

**The Summit date jointly agreed upon became August 22–26, 2010. It was also during this joint brainstorming that we concluded that we do not wish to simply organize a one-time, four-day long conference, but we would prefer to set into motion a movement, which will have started, due to international and joint planning, before the summer of 2010, and would extend into the distant future following the conference.**

only in that they are the ones who facilitate and moderate the whole process.

The Summit date jointly agreed upon became August 22–26, 2010.

It was also during this joint brainstorming that we concluded that we do not wish to simply organize a one-time, four-day long conference, but we would prefer to set into motion a movement, which will have started, due to international and joint planning, before the summer of 2010, and would extend into the distant future following the conference.

The fate of the movement depends greatly on the success of the Summit. We sincerely hope that after the 2010 August Summit there will be other enthusiastic professionals who, continuing in our footsteps, will organize the next ODWS within the framework of the movement. This could thus become an important cradle of knowledge and experience-exchange, and even innovations for the OD profession.

After forming the concept, we started identifying and contacting the relevant international professional associations that are key in international OD circles.

One characteristic of the OD profes-

sion is that there are several definitive professional communities or groups that have not been registered anywhere and do not have a headquarters. The members' connection is basically supported by a common perspective and their jointly used methodology. Contacting them was not easy due to the aforementioned reasons, but we succeeded in overcoming the difficulties thanks to our extensive network of connections.

We soon realized that we had managed to come up with an idea, and then a

comprehensive concept whose success the larger part of the international professional community considered to be worthy of pursuit.

By 2007, we had succeeded in setting up a diverse international team, who worked together to create the title of the Summit, the theme, and the agenda through several iterations.

Thanks to the effective world-wide network of those committed to the movement, by September 2009, most of the renowned international professional organizations stood behind the initiative one after the other. Several of them, with IODA in the lead, decided to hold their yearly conference within the ODWS framework in Budapest. Here is the alphabetical list of these organizations by the end of September 2009:

- » Appreciative Inquiry—AI ([www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu))
- » Change Facilitation Associates Network—CFAN ([www.change-facilitation.org](http://www.change-facilitation.org))

- » Future Search Network—FSN ([www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net))
- » Gestalt Center for Organization & Systems Development—GOSD ([www.gestaltosd.org](http://www.gestaltosd.org))
- » Gestalt International Study Center—GISC ([www.gisc.org](http://www.gisc.org))
- » Hungarian Organization Development Society—HODS ([www.szmt.hu](http://www.szmt.hu))
- » International Organization Development Association—IODA ([www.iodanet.org](http://www.iodanet.org))
- » Nexus for Change—NFC ([www.nexusforchange.org](http://www.nexusforchange.org))
- » NTL Institute—NTL ([www.ntl.org](http://www.ntl.org))
- » Open Space—OS ([www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org))
- » Organization Development Network - OD Network ([www.odnetwork.org](http://www.odnetwork.org))
- » Society for Organizational Learning—SoL ([www.solonline.org](http://www.solonline.org))
- » The World Café—TWC ([www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com))

Besides determining the framework and developing the agenda, the majority of the members of the international organizing committee found it extremely important to find a title that would truly address the profession, appeal to representatives of the profession, and make the event something not to be missed.

It is not up to us to decide whether we have reached this goal or not, but we have certainly striven to set the expectations high for ourselves.

Around spring 2008, our world-wide correspondence list perked up during the heat of the creative dispute concerning the possible titles. Everyone added or withdrew their own ideas, praised and criticized, argued and brainstormed until the title, proudly worn by the ODWS today, was finally born and made the organizers feel that 'something has really been set into motion':

## “Co-creating a New World of Organizations and Communities—dialogue and action”

The whole team came to a consensus that this title defines everything that the conference and its framework-giving ODWS movement would like to achieve, the way in which it would like to do so, and show this to the organizational world.

At this point, let me go into some detail, providing a more complete picture about what this initiative is really about from our point of view.

### Co-creating: establishing, creating together

As has already been mentioned, it was part of the basic concept from the very beginning that, in accordance with the profession's principles, we would like to establish, plan, realize, and make use of everything that this community is capable of creating, and that is achieved only through collaboration and within the ODWS framework.

Every continent, generation, gender, race, approach, and methodology can represent itself and is represented by us. The ODWS welcomes all kinds of organizations, regardless of whether they are tiny or giant, governmental or non-governmental, for-profit or nonprofit, etc. We await everyone involved in the organizational world, leader or owner, lecturer or researcher, external or internal practitioner, consultant, HR or other type of expert. In other words, each and every one interested and wishing to participate in this creative process is warmly welcomed.

### New world of organizations and communities

The ODWS defines the world of organizations and communities in the broadest sense. Apart from traditional organizations, it includes even non-institutionalized groups or communities that are connected by some common goal, concept, or mission. The governing idea is that the present operation of organizations and communities and the function of organizational and communal/social life, in many cases,

**It was this worrying thought, this creative doubt, that motivated us enough to form and clarify the concept forming the *third base pillar* of the ODWS, the idea of including *non-conventional organizations*. These organizations are the ones that can hopefully show us the right direction, and in themselves already carry that something new that could be the breeding ground of the redefinition and, at the same time, a catalyst of the desired change.**

lacks foresight and is chained down by old paradigms.

What are the organizations and communities for the 21st century?

What should they be like in order to reach their goals? How can the people creating them feel successful, productive, important, and valuable?

We think it is extremely important for this redefinition to take place and to take place in as wide a circle as possible. However, we may question what guarantee there is that we can come up with and create something NEW.

It was this worrying thought, this creative doubt, that motivated us enough to form and clarify the concept forming the *third base pillar* of the ODWS, the idea of including *non-conventional organizations*. These organizations are the ones that can hopefully show us the right direction, and in themselves already carry that something new that could be the breeding ground of the redefinition and, at the same time, a catalyst of the desired change.

We, the organizers, believe that those organizations, which, for many today, still seem to function in perhaps strange and irregular ways are already present among

us—even if only at an embryonic stage—and will constitute the main trend in 10–30 years time. In the future, many of these will be seen as being typical.

It is our task to identify these organizations, to find their founders and leaders and to invite them to the Summit in order to learn from them. We would like them to tell their stories, to introduce us to the paradigms that helped them build and operate their organization or their community. They can share with us what they have learned and what obstacles they have encountered while they were creating their operational system, whatever it may concretely be. They can tell us what they do differently, what they find important and functional, what they emphasize, what worked well, and what turned out to be a dead-end street.

How absurd it may have seemed when Ford first developed the mass-production assembly line method, which was first scorned by most people, only then to become the typical form of production one to two decades later.

IKEA developed the idea that people should take their purchased furniture home in pieces to assemble those pieces themselves. Low-budget airlines can provide transport for people at a much lower price unimaginable in an earlier business paradigm.

If we take into consideration all of these and numerous other possible examples, then we can see that there have always been models, or forms of operation in the history of organizations that seemed absurd and unrealistic at a given time, to later become the defining method of operation in a given business area.

Our goal is to invite as many as possible of these founders and leaders of organizations presently considered strange or radical, in order to learn from them and they from each other, and, finally, from us as professionals dealing with organizations.

We believe that new organizational models can evolve from these novel concepts as a result of collaborative brainstorming and workshops, so that eventually even those concepts, leadership, management, and organizational methods that are today still considered radical will be

**We organizers believe that if the collective intellectual fertilization and understanding of those new methods and models is effective, then as the visiting leaders, consultants, professionals, experts, and lecturers scatter throughout the world, enriched by all this new knowledge, experience and ideas, they can set into motion the positive global social change that the ODWS would like to achieve.**

accepted in a similar way as those we can observe throughout history. All this serves as a very important aspect of *co-creating* as well as *cross-fertilization*.

Although we have mentioned all three pillars of the ODWS, as a conclusion I would nevertheless like to share one or two thoughts about the expected effects of the conference and the movement providing its framework, namely about the *global & social impact*.

We organizers believe that if the collective intellectual fertilization and understanding of those new methods and models is effective, then as the visiting leaders, consultants, professionals, experts, and lecturers scatter throughout the world, enriched by all this new knowledge, experience and ideas, they can set into motion the positive global social change that the ODWS would like to achieve. We hope that the ODWS, both as an event and as a move-

ment, will not only launch this—as we see—necessary process, but will also help in realizing the changes already in progress in a much quicker and effective way.

If everything happens this way, then our dream might also come true: that this world will not be the same as it was before the ODWS, or as it would be without it. With all of our help it will become a more liveable, empathetic, and human-centered place.

The organization of the World Summit is continuously in progress, to this very day a large number of people have contributed to making it become what we, the committed organizers, would like to transform it into, namely, not only a prominent, unprecedented professional event, but the catalyst of a positive global social change.”

If you would like more information about the initiative, please visit our homepage: <http://www.odworldsummit.org>.

**Imre Lövey, PhD**, is the founder, a management consultant, and managing partner of CONCORDIA Organization and Management Development Ltd. He is one of the pioneers of OD and experiential training in the management field in Hungary. Some of his clients include FORD Motor Co., General Electric, Hewlett Packard, Visteon, Nokia, MOL, T-Com (Deutsche Telecom), Allianz, Sara Lee, Maktel (Macedon Telecommunication Company) L.L. Bean - USA, etc. His books include: *The Joyful Organization: Understanding Organizational Health, Diseases and Joy* (M.S Nadkarni and Eszter Erdélyi, co-authors) and *How Healthy is Your Organization?* (M. Nadkarni and Erdélyi Eszter, co-authors). In 2007 he received the Richard Beckhard award for his outstanding contribution developing the OD profession internationally. He can be reached at [ilovey@concordia-od.edu](mailto:ilovey@concordia-od.edu).

**Tamás Avar** is currently the operational organizer and the secretary of the OD World Summit 2010 and working as an R+D project manager at Corporate Values Ltd. He is an economist and analyst of European politics with a specialty in international relations. He studied diplomacy and foreign affairs at the Diplomacy School of Madrid where his principal area of interest was conflict management. He can be reached at [tamas.avar@gmail.com](mailto:tamas.avar@gmail.com).