

“The sharing of the metaphors between the OD students and the Infographics students was illuminating as the perspectives served to highlight the immense learning to be found in expanding beyond our often limiting ways of experiencing and representing the world.”

The Art of Business and the Business of Art

A Collaborative Studio Visualizing Organization Development

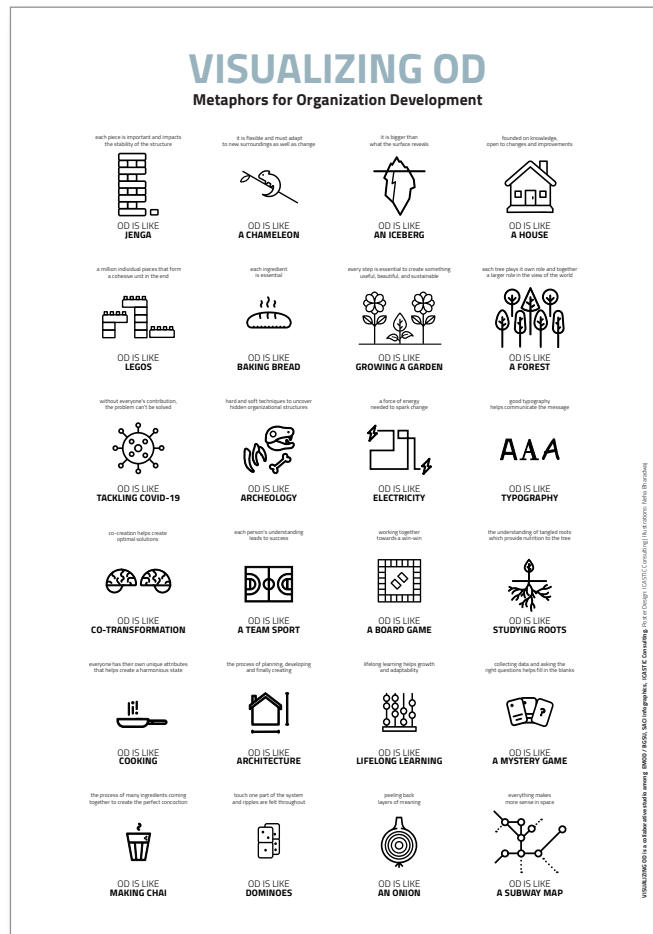
By Deborah A. O’Neil and Camilla Torna

Illustrations by Neha Bharadwaj

In the spring of 2020, the graduating class of the executive Master of Organization Development (MOD) program in the Allen W. and Carol M. Schmidhorst College of Business at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH, USA, and the Infographics students at Studio Arts College International (SACI) in Florence, Italy, engaged in a collaborative endeavor to bridge the seemingly disparate worlds of business and art. This was designed as a face-to-face collaboration in Florence as part of the MOD class, Exploring International Organization Development. However, when the global pandemic upended school and travel plans and major parts of the world went into lockdown, there was a quick pivot to virtual learning across the miles.

The MOD students under the direction of MOD Program Director, Professor Deborah A. O’Neil, and the SACI students under the direction of Professor Camilla Torna, collaborated on assignments with a blend of art, design, psychology, organization development, and leadership. As the OD profession is both an art and a science (Woodman, 2014), and art is the economic and cultural lifeblood of Italy, the opportunity to explore the interdependent nature of the business of art and the art of business, proved to be an exceptional learning experience. In a four orders of design perspective (Buchanan, 1992) we explored what happens when mixing the first order (communication with symbols and images) with the fourth (design of complex systems or environments for living, working, playing, and learning).

The SACI students were provided with an overview of the OD profession and examples of the ways in which OD assists organizations in realizing and achieving their visions. The MOD students were introduced to the SACI students’ and Professor Torna’s designs illustrating tangible and intangible constructs as vehicles to communicate complex topics to multiple audiences.



Poster developed from the collaboration of MOD and SACI students. (See enlargements on following pages.)

VISUALIZING OD is a collaborative studio among EMOD / BGSU, SACI Infographics, ICASTIC Consulting.

Poster Design: ICASTIC Consulting

Illustrations: Neha Bharadwaj

With this basic learning exchange as a foundation, each student was then asked to create a metaphor of their vision of OD. The sharing of the metaphors between the OD students and the Infographics students was illuminating as the perspectives served to highlight the immense learning to be found in expanding beyond our often limiting ways of experiencing and representing the world.

We offer readers four invitations with this short article: First, to view the metaphors of OD generated by the MOD and SACI students; second, to reflect on the

ways in which the students have imagined and envisioned OD (whose definition is a subject of continual debate in the field); third, to create your own metaphor of OD and email to oneild@bgsu.edu; and finally, to consider unique ways in which we can communicate our messages to ensure our intended audiences have the best opportunities to absorb them.

Communicating through metaphor and visual representation can speak volumes about the values and behaviors that we believe to be important in our work. Now it is more important than ever

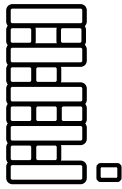
to communicate with each other across multiple dividing lines, boundaries, and structures to work to resolve our shared, global challenges.

If you want to change the world, change the metaphor, change the story.
—Joseph Campbell

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to BGSU MOD 2020 and the SACI Infographics class of 2020.

each piece is important and impacts the stability of the structure



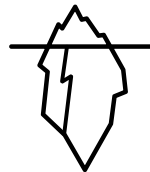
OD IS LIKE JENGA

it is flexible and must adapt to new surroundings as well as change



OD IS LIKE A CHAMELEON

it is bigger than what the surface reveals



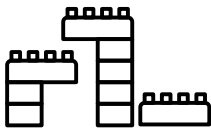
OD IS LIKE AN ICEBERG

founded on knowledge, open to changes and improvements



OD IS LIKE A HOUSE

a million individual pieces that form a cohesive unit in the end



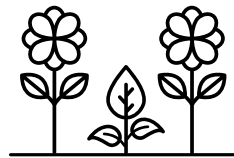
OD IS LIKE LEGOS

each ingredient is essential



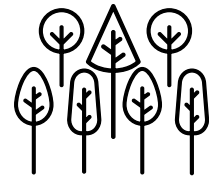
OD IS LIKE BAKING BREAD

every step is essential to create something useful, beautiful, and sustainable



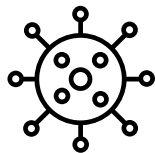
OD IS LIKE GROWING A GARDEN

each tree plays its own role and together a larger role in the view of the world



OD IS LIKE A FOREST

without everyone's contribution, the problem can't be solved



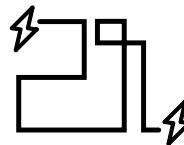
OD IS LIKE TACKLING COVID-19

hard and soft techniques to uncover hidden organizational structures



OD IS LIKE ARCHEOLOGY

a force of energy needed to spark change



OD IS LIKE ELECTRICITY

good typography helps communicate the message



OD IS LIKE TYPOGRAPHY

References:

Buchanan, R. (Spring, 1992). *Design Issues*, 8(2), 5–21. The MIT Press.
Campbell, J. (1988). <https://www.jcf.org/works/quote/change-the-metaphor/>
Woodman, R.W. (2014). The science of organizational change and the art of changing organizations. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(4), 463–477.

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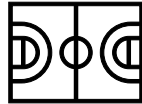
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/neha-bharadwaj-6635b1120/?originalSubdomain=in>

co-creation helps create optimal solutions



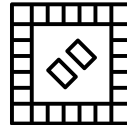
OD IS LIKE CO-TRANSFORMATION

each person’s understanding leads to success



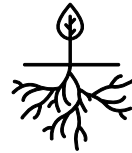
OD IS LIKE A TEAM SPORT

working together towards a win-win



OD IS LIKE A BOARD GAME

the understanding of tangled roots which provide nutrition to the tree



OD IS LIKE STUDYING ROOTS

everyone has their own unique attributes that helps create a harmonious state



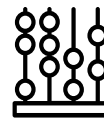
OD IS LIKE COOKING

the process of planning, developing and finally creating



OD IS LIKE ARCHITECTURE

lifelong learning helps growth and adaptability



OD IS LIKE LIFELONG LEARNING

collecting data and asking the right questions helps fill in the blanks



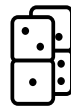
OD IS LIKE A MYSTERY GAME

the process of many ingredients coming together to create the perfect concoction



OD IS LIKE MAKING CHAI

touch one part of the system and ripples are felt throughout



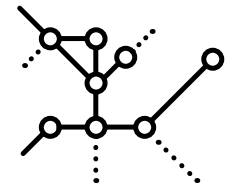
OD IS LIKE DOMINOES

peeling back layers of meaning



OD IS LIKE AN ONION

everything makes more sense in space



OD IS LIKE A SUBWAY MAP