



# Business Book Review™

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## Navigating the Badlands

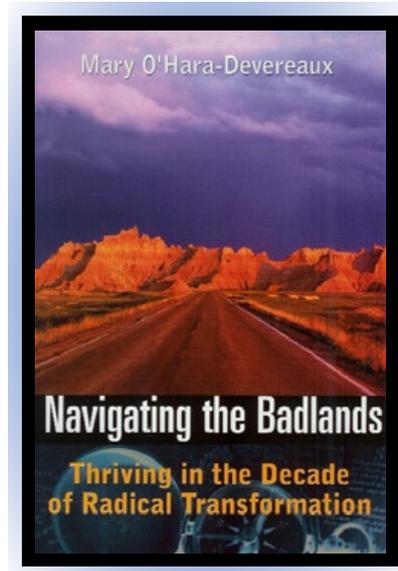
*Thriving in the Decade  
of Radical Transformation*

Mary O'Hara-Devereaux

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*Reviewed by Leslie Johnston*

## Introduction

Business forecaster and author Mary O'Hara-Devereaux borrows a metaphor from the old American West, “navigating the Badlands,” to describe the journey that business and industry finds itself on in the current transitional period between the end of the Industrial Age and the complete realization of the Information Age. It is a journey that is expected to last into the second decade of the twenty-first century. Navigating the Badlands requires creating a bridge between the past and the future. It is a time of major economic and social shifts, when former economic and social foundations have become obsolete and new values and structures are not yet firmly in place.

## THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE BADLANDS

As the twentieth century ended, the world crossed over into the Badlands as the transformational effects of the Information Revolution began to take hold. In making this transition, organizations face inevitable “pains” and they must develop new capabilities to navigate this transitional, and therefore uncertain and turbulent, environment; they must adapt to the new economic and social structures, or risk their continued existence. These challenges are not those of the natural ebb and flow of the business cycle or the stock market. These challenges are the powerful driving forces that are transforming the entire context of business. The new global context requires that organizations innovate to create and grow tomorrow’s businesses and industries. It will also require new underlying or supporting social institutions. It is within this macro context that business leaders and organizations are journeying and transforming.

We are, according to the author, now at the entry way to the Badlands and facing at least a decade more of volatility. This is the point at which maximum turbulence is experienced; the churning of society, politics, and the economy is causing stress and strain on old systems and will ultimately break them down. Journeying through the Badlands arouses emotions and fears, which are caused

by organizational and individual pains that surface and resurface as leaders navigate their way through this era of transition. A Badlands pain arises, the author notes, when the shifting environment forces organizations and individuals to make strategic choices and changes in direction, structure, or relationships in order to progress and move ahead. These pains are signs of what needs to change and change quickly.

Pains are difficult to resolve and much like physical pain, can reoccur. Often the viability of a solution will not be revealed until a choice has been made, acted upon, and the results are known. The journey will require flexibility;

*When cycles of disruptive innovations result in major structural shifts across all economic and social dimensions, as they are doing today, they create enormous transition costs as society struggles to move from one era to the next.*

organizations and their leaders will be constantly engaged in moving forward and backtracking, in recalibrating and moving on. Ultimately, the pain will fade away as new capabilities replace old competencies. These new capabilities will support the organizations that result from the transition, which lie in the new context of the future.

The first phase of the journey involves confronting the need for change, which requires releasing old patterns, mind-sets, and behaviors that have no place in the Badlands and beyond. Releasing these thought patterns and behaviors prepares leaders for the middle phase of the transition, a confusing phase in which nothing feels solid or familiar or seems or provides continuity. This is the stage in which leaders learn to begin anew. It is in this phase that they make new social choices and experience the results, both the successes and the failures. Leaders must push on, making and accepting trade-offs in a still ambiguous and uncertain environment. In doing so, they begin the third phase of the transition, which is a process of successive approximation that builds the foundation of the new beginning and which requires patience and courage.

Throughout the journey, four major themes resonate, themes that are distinct but nevertheless interlinked. These are 1) globalization, i.e., understanding that the big picture is no longer optional; 2) the new leadership crucible, understanding that the journey through the Badlands requires nothing less than a hero’s journey; 3) organizational metamorphosis, understanding that “partial

## About the Author

**Mary O’Hara-Devereaux** is the CEO of Global Foresight and an internationally recognized business forecaster and strategist. She has been a consultant for numerous global corporations, including ChevronTexaco, Coca-Cola, Motorola, Procter & Gamble, CITIC Pacific, Ericsson, Skandia, and Cable and Wireless, as well as for government agencies in the U.S. and in China. She has more than twenty years of experience on the cutting edge of globalization in more than fifty countries on seven continents. In addition, she has been a senior faculty member at the University of California, the University of Hawaii, Peking University, and the Institute for the Future.

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responses” are fatal; and 4) social choices, stepping up to the plate to make the right social choices to create a “global commons.”

## GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is an emergent phenomenon, and as such it is extremely uncertain. However, its driving forces are known, which means that their impact can be anticipated and prepared for. Together, these driving forces have already created the structural economic shifts the world now faces, ushering in a networked knowledge economy that is becoming the dominant economic model, replacing the former industrial model.

Perhaps the most important of these forces is the rapid aging of populations, not just in the advanced countries, but in the developing world as well. This development will have a powerful and widespread impact on the workplace, from increasing cross-generational workforces to establishing new work arrangements. Concurrently, the rapidly growing number of educated young people, particularly in Asia, will facilitate the expansion of knowledge work and will result in a redistribution of high-value jobs to emerging

*The impact of aging, women's longevity, and a decline in dependency ratios on the global workforce will be huge, and it will be felt in the economies of both developed and developing countries.*

economies, such as China and India. By 2010, China will produce more scientists and engineers than the U.S., with India not far behind. This trend will inevitably lead to more offshoring of high-end jobs to these two countries and can be expected to continue at an accelerated pace as skills become available in the new emerging markets in which transnational corporations want to acquire market share.

Global transnational corporations will extend their reach geographically and will adapt their structures and work arrangements to take advantages of resources in new locations. Advanced economies, like the U.S., will be under increasing pressure to reinvent themselves through innovation, largely the result of massive job shifts caused by the continual introduction of new technology. Global competition will increase among small and large companies enabled by a networked economy that levels the playing field between advanced and emerging economies. The wealth gap between and within countries will increase; the Information Age polarizes global populations because

the right skills are needed to be successful and many will not have them.

As women go to work around the world, the traditional concepts of a household break down. The change in women's roles worldwide has more impact than any other social trend and will redefine marriage, motherhood, the family concept, as well as business and consumption. Globalization also means a new geopolitical context. Existing government mind-sets, rules of engagement, and institutions are both too big and too small for global problems that develop out of a global economy. And, power around the world is being redistributed as countries like China and India surge forward economically. All of these changes mean uncertainty and risk for business.

The author predicts, however, that globalization will continue to push forward despite some recent problems and doubts—such as 9/11, terrorism, the movement of jobs abroad, persistent unemployment, and the recession—in the U.S. Trade will continue to drive global growth and globalization will continue to transfer wealth through trade, the growth of transnational corporations (from the advanced economies and a group of developing economies

that benefited from world trade in the 1990s), and the flow of global capital. Increased economic growth from transnational corporations' investments and their interrelationships with small and medium-size firms can be expected to stimulate needed economic growth in emerging economies.

Vast global trading arrangements that the author terms the Global Silicon Network (GSN), with its worldwide framework of information and communication technologies, will serve as the infrastructure for both large and small organizations to engage in an infinite number of wealth-producing eco-webs, with advantage coming not from who you are, but from who you are connected with. This GSN, it is predicted, will operate independently of any one country and will control a rapidly increasing share of the world's gross domestic product.

The context for globalization will, admittedly, remain volatile. Additionally, very few global standards exist, meaning that intellectual piracy and fraud are easy to commit, and the lack of existing global standards also extends to safety and environmental concerns. The uneven flow of benefits and capital also carries with it the potential

for havoc as global capital flows where it is most likely to pay off and leave quickly if that does not happen.

### LEADERSHIP—THE BADLANDS AS A CRUCIBLE FOR THE HERO'S JOURNEY

This changing environment, with its diverse challenges, requires leadership from as many people as possible. It is an environment in which hierarchy loses its traditional supremacy as the defining structure of leadership. The global environment provides the opportunity for potential leaders—worldwide—to begin what will amount to a hero's journey, leaving behind old ways of doing things and learning through thoughtful action what works, not just for themselves, but for everyone. The far-flung interconnectivity of a global economy, with its overlapping networks and flow of people and knowledge will change the reference points of leadership.

Many of today's leaders perfected their leadership skills in the relatively stable environment of the late "Industrial Plains." The journey through the Badlands will be a hero's journey because it requires courage to move from the old order to a new, uncertain one. Leaders will be searching beyond the ordinary to attain a new global identity for themselves and their organizations. This crucible, the author notes, will form leaders in ways that traditional methods (executive development courses, MBA programs, etc.), cannot.

Leadership will now depend on self-motivation and personal choice and will be self-initiated rather than dictated by a formal role and title, thus opening the way for many people in an organization to lead. Organizations will increasingly depend upon people to lead themselves. The capacity to lead will not be based as much on skills as on attitudes and mind-sets that allow leaders to see in new ways and to inspire others in the face of organizational and market uncertainty and changes.

This time of transition will transform leaders—or leave them behind if they do not adapt. One of the first pains that will be experienced is *leadership insecurity*. Those who exhibit adaptability and curiosity will realize the new capability of *leadership readiness*. Leaders who embrace the new context and adapt by developing new competencies to match the shift in the environment will not only survive, they will thrive. Leaders must deal with

disruptive innovations, which will include new technologies and new competitive models.

A successful journey through the Badlands requires eight principles of transformation for guidance: 1) scan, scout, steer; 2) act with integrity; 3) seek collisions; 4) learn rapidly; 5) engage cultures; 6) innovate radically; 7) make decisions fast; and 8) execute with discipline.

Leaders must remain flexible and adaptable, scouting for opportunities while steering around sudden pitfalls for themselves and their organizations. The primary purpose of scanning and scouting is to gain accurate near-term and midterm foresight that keeps strategies properly aligned and ensures that an organization finds its opportunities—before its competitors find them. This means constantly keeping the big picture in view while scanning for shifts. Leading in uncertain times demands strength of character and integrity. Integrity is much more than an abstract leadership

*Leaders will find strategy and foresight much more complex in the Badlands because of the need to manage complexity with great skill, understand patterns that emerge from multiple variables, and then act on that understanding.*

quality; it implies connectedness and wholeness and is best summed up as the capacity to remain integrated in the midst of uncertainty and even disorder.

Once in the Badlands, organizations will need a diversity of people to ensure continuous innovation. Diversity will bring about "collisions," and will allow leaders to have encounters with others who bring different ideas and thoughts. Leadership means spending time with people who may make top leaders uncomfortable. However, people on the fringes of an organization are the ones who know the organization's competitive weaknesses, who know the big obstacles to progress because they know the external environment. It has often been acknowledged that innovation comes from the fringe, not from the center. It has been said that leaders do not know what they do not know. Collisions can help them with this, and at no time is this more crucial than in the Badlands environment.

Leaders cannot lead without learning—and power will come from learning over and over again. In the Badlands, there will be a continuous flow of lessons available, and part of the hero's journey is to take these lessons whenever and wherever they are found. Leaders/heroes must learn to

extract wisdom from challenging experiences, which can produce an adaptive capacity necessary for a successful journey. These are qualities that will allow leaders to work successfully with the challenges engendered by multiculturalism and globalization. Engaging other cultures fully is essential. If leaders do not have knowledge based on experience, they will create frameworks based only on their own culture and will fail in customizing products and services and in segmenting markets in different countries.

In the Badlands, it is less dangerous to experiment with radical innovations (in a core business) than it is not to. To keep up with the emerging business environment, some of an organization's innovations must be radical ones. Indeed, the business models of the future are built upon what may initially seem to be radical innovations. Building the capacity for innovation is not easy work; innovations, however, do not have to be huge, they just have to be different. While volatile conditions make decision making difficult, it is critical to make decisions that accelerate action as quickly as possible. Leaders must nurture and promote an action-orientation throughout their organization. If good leaders make mistakes, which they always do, they fix them fast, and keep moving forward. Decision-making will be enhanced in organizations with a free flow of information and access.

In the slower, more stable culture of the "Industrial Plains," great ideas which were nevertheless handicapped by poor, or slow, execution, did not necessarily represent a loss for the organization. The situation in the Badlands, however, is much different. Survival here requires disciplined, forceful execution. Ironically, this environment is one that requires disciplined implementation that leads to, or has the potential for, radical innovation. Upon entering the Badlands, it is not uncommon for leaders to find gaps between what they want to achieve and what their organizations are able to deliver. Leaders must understand how transferable core competencies are to new opportunities and what an organization's most valuable and unique benefits are that it can deliver to customers. Closing competency gaps will solve many execution problems.

It also requires a new leadership paradigm to anchor those principles. At the center of this new paradigm is the importance of being a leader in multiple ways and accepting

that leadership is neither a solo act nor a celebrity role. Leadership must be shared across generations and across cultures.

### ORGANIZATIONAL METAMORPHOSIS

To successfully navigate the Badlands, organizations must not simply change, but undergo a *metamorphosis*. Many business organizations, the author notes, made half-hearted or partial changes in the 1990s, when the business environment first began to change. Now, as the churn in the economy and in society are getting closer to their peak, and the remaining structural shifts take place, the mismatch between organizations and the needs of the economy and of society will become obvious. It cannot be business as usual if organizations want to survive and thrive. Being successful in the Badlands requires skills and

*Seek out heretics and mavericks to ensure you optimize your opportunities for radical innovation. Beware of your leaders of old competencies, who will work hard to divert resources from vital new endeavors in order to maintain their power.*

mind-sets different from those that brought success in the "Industrial Plains." It is harder to create and sustain profit performance given the pace of technological innovation (which can very quickly make products and processes obsolete) and the global nature of competition.

As they begin their journey, leaders will have a natural tendency to default to old behaviors and mind-sets, a kind of *competency addiction*, a defensive response that leaders who have been successful with the old competencies and products will use to convince themselves and others that the old way of doing things is still the best way. Leadership insecurity and competency addiction are the first pains that organizations encounter. The landscape of the Badlands demands that organizations give up competency addictions and create instead a climate of systemic innovation. This will require top leadership to create the conditions that will support innovation. Once leadership has achieved a deep understanding of its competencies and addictions, it needs to determine its innovation gap—the difference between the speed with which innovation occurs in the marketplace and the organization's ability to create innovation and respond to the demands of the marketplace.

Competency addiction, it should be noted, can affect an entire industry. One of the most prominent examples is

the American healthcare system, which is so “addicted” to old behaviors and mind-sets that it appears unable to undergo any significant innovation. With so many deeply entrenched patterns of power and hierarchies of services, so many special interests and so much fiercely protected turf, few healthcare organizations are experimenting with new ways to deliver services while access to quality care continues to decline.

All organizations will subsequently encounter strategic junctions along the journey where they will experience additional pains. These junctions are places where changes in the environment create issues that impinge on an organization and cause its leaders to

*The breakdown of the Industrial Era social contract between companies, employees, and labor sets up powerful new tensions. The new economic context steadily renders knowledge and skills obsolete, fosters global competition, and gives rise to new technologies that outdate business models overnight.*

make strategic choices—changes in direction, structures, or relationships—in order to continue pursuing the organizational mission. These environmental changes can be new global competitors, disruptive innovations in the industry, obsolescence of a key technology that is central to a core business model, or dramatic shifts in customer desires and buying habits. Although an organization that keeps its eye on the big picture can anticipate these junctions, the simple fact that the junctions exist and have to be responded to, will cause pain. Resolving the pain that results, however, is distinct from creating the new capabilities that correspond to resolving each pain. Both processes—resolving the pain and creating new capabilities—must take place simultaneously. It is through building new capabilities that organizations will be able to undergo a metamorphosis. These new capabilities include the development of a culture of systemic innovation, an engine of growth in the face of disruptive innovation, and the capability to engage diverse people around the globe.

The hierarchical organizational structures of the Industrial Era are too rigid for the Badlands, which are characterized by waves of disruptive innovation. Hierarchies are not quick enough to respond to rapidly evolving opportunities or resilient enough to rebound when problems arise. The shift to networks as a means of getting work done will surely cause anxiety for senior executives

from the Industrial Era, as established partnerships and employment relationships are gradually replaced with a new way of doing business, a pain the author terms *network angst*. Organizations are, however, continually being pushed by changes in the marketplace to engage in new alliances with suppliers, customers, consultants, and independent knowledge workers. Networked leadership must self-organize in pursuit of its strategy and innovation across internal and external networks and alliance webs.

A by-product of networked leadership is that instead of creating more followers, it will create more leaders. The ability to interconnect and perform seamlessly across boundaries—whether organizational, cultural, or generational—is an important part of the new leadership paradigm demanded by the transition from the industrial age to the information age. Each company’s web-like structure will be unique; it will be distinctive to a company’s style of conducting business and it will showcase a company’s innovative drives and talent. In this culture, “leadership brands” will emerge. In the Badlands it can be said that “you can get in alone, but you can’t get out alone.” There is too much turbulence and uncertainty for any one leader to go it alone and thrive, or even survive. The organization of the future will be a more social entity than the organization of the Industrial Era, when much of the work was done by people using machines. Most of the critical work in the knowledge economy will be people-to-people transactions and conversations which requires the metamorphosis of organizations into more web-like structures.

Organizations can no longer simply work hard and succeed. They now have to build the capacity to put disruptive, innovative strategies into play and to manage them to success in the marketplace. When leaders continue to tinker with old strategies and processes that fail to produce results, with nothing on the horizon to replace those strategies, they are experiencing strategy tragedy. Creating new value, and therefore new wealth, requires imagining a different future. To build this capacity requires changes, new habits and new competencies. Strategy can no longer be a passion-less ritualistic process, the landscape of the Badlands requires real strategic and intuitive thinking because in this environment, the pace of change is very fast and strategies become irrelevant much more quickly

than in the days of the “Industrial Plains.” Because of the transitional environment, organizations have the opportunity to create an engine of growth around multiple disruptive innovations, not just one.

As organizations rethink and reconfigure how they create and deliver products and services, innovate in their business models, meet the challenge of global competition, and realize their competency addictions, they will experience a gap in essential skills and competencies. Organizations must, therefore, make themselves attractive to the new generations of knowledge workers—a far-flung, multicultural, multi-generational knowledge workforce—from the Gen X and Net Generation, who dislike traditional hierarchy and corporate culture. To do this, organizations must be able to communicate their value proposition to a diverse global workforce. Without engaging these young global knowledge workers it will be difficult to have sufficient resources to expand in the knowledge economy. By 2010, it is estimated that of the 128 million Net Generation knowledge workers worldwide, the majority will be women, with China offering more knowledge workers than the U.S. It is anticipated that a highly competitive marketplace will develop to attract these knowledge workers as their native countries also become more attractive places to work.

The globaleconomy is increasingly consumer-centric as the middle class expands around the world. With increased disposable income, access to information and the Internet, consumers are now better educated, more sophisticated, and more demanding. They are, in fact, driving a shift from mass marketing to multiple niche marketing. They are “activist” consumers, in contrast to consumers of the past who willingly responded to marketing information provided to them. These consumers are also the high-value workers that companies are seeking. Therefore, companies must engage with them in both roles.

Although people like globalization, they do not want it to interfere with their own preferences and lifestyle, which means that culture matters now more than ever before. Add to this the fact that people are living longer than ever before. In response, markets are increasingly fragmented. Successful companies are those that manage relationships and use the relationships to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Consumers have more control in the

marketplace which means that sales will take place in the context of a new relationship, with the consumer—not the organization—driving closure. Companies are struggling to interact with their customers in smarter ways and to create adaptable business models that can respond quickly to growing consumer experimentation with information, channels, and relationships. Over the next twenty years China will become a major power on the global stage. In the Badlands, the largest group of activist consumers will live in China.

### THE CHALLENGE

As a result, there will be a need to create new values and make the right social choices to create a “global commons.” The global commons can be described as the shared agreements and institutions that are crafted for everyone’s well-being. Technological change and economic shifts will outpace society’s ability to adapt, undermining

*Of paramount importance is the creation of new values that are congruent with what we know to be true—that globalization must include more people in its promise of prosperity or it will devolve into a more unstable and dangerous world.*

old and new social constructs. Everyone’s way of life will be affected. Society is never as resilient as technology and business in the face of major shifts. Social systems will need time to adapt to the new conditions. Globalization will mean retaining cultural integrity while learning to be interdependent. If globalization is not made sustainable, the world will become an increasingly dangerous place. The Information Revolution, as discussed above, tends to polarize; it increases the gap between the haves and the have-nots. This gap will continue to grow if leaders do not consciously work to reverse it.

In the long term, globalization has the potential to lift everyone up, but in the short term it can be dislocating. Leaders must integrate marginalized economies into the prospering global economy. For most of these economies, the means to close the gap are difficult to identify. Intense and growing expressions of social resistance are evident in all parts of the world as those who are left out form defensive communities around primary identities of religion, locality, or ethnicity. Throughout history, these defensive communities have formed in response to economic and social shifts, but never have they been as

visible and as globally connected as they are today; one of the most prominent examples today is Al Qaeda.

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*Endnotes, resources, and a subject index are provided.*

## Remarks

Showing organizations how to hone their competitive edge in the current uncertain economic climate is the ostensible theme of **Navigating the Badlands**. In reality, O'Hara-Devereaux's book paints a picture of today's economic climate with much broader brush strokes. In fact, this can be considered as the overarching and thought-provoking theme of the book. A global economy is already a reality; there is no turning back. The Information Revolution cannot be reversed. Traversing the Badlands is not an option.

The pace of change is an accelerated one. The world has changed more in the last fifty years than it has at any time in human history—and that period of change is not over. O'Hara-Devereaux estimates that a decade, or possibly two remain to complete the cycle of disruptive innovation. This disruptive innovation comes from new knowledge in all fields, not simply from new technologies, which, together, are changing in a fundamental sense, our knowledge base and ultimately our social identity in a local, national, and global way.

Innovation now has to be in our social systems and social reality, which is much more difficult to manage and to achieve. The advanced economies are facing choices, especially with regard to allocating resources to close the wealth gap and building new societies around the world. The world has, the author believes, the resources to accomplish this, but acknowledges that it will call for radically different ways of thinking. Most of the advanced economies, particularly the U.S., are now putting extraordinary resources into defending against one of globalization's effects—strengthening security and military programs. The world will have to think differently about these problems (particularly their causes) and develop innovative solutions that bring diverse groups together that will prevent the clash of cultures that results in terrorism.

The safety nets that developed in response to the Industrial Revolution are no longer viable, which presents an opportunity to develop a new paradigm that meets the needs of a globalized society and a networked knowledge-based economy. The author predicts that the best safety net is a strong economy. Strategists know how to create good economic conditions and the factors necessary for an economy to grow sufficiently. This knowledge needs to be put to work in new ways to work with social systems and cultures to create networks that foster entrepreneurs and innovation.

The current global institutions and governments are not up to the challenge of managing global political problems. Political and social innovations always take place at a slower rate than economic innovation. This is both the danger *and* the opportunity of the Badlands.

## Reading Suggestions

**Reading Time: 7-8 hours, 332 pages in book**

**Navigating the Badlands** can be approached in several ways. It can be read in its entirety, which is the recommended approach. As befits her subject, the author skillfully weaves all the elements of the networked future which lies on the far side of the Badlands together over the course of book's ten chapters. Readers will find it difficult to skip chapters. However, the author does end each chapter with "Parting Thoughts" that serves as a brief (two-to-three paragraph) summary of each chapter's contents. It is possible to eliminate chapter 9, "Learn About China." Information about China and other developing economies can be found throughout the book. If reader's time is very limited, chapter 1 serves not only as an introduction, but also an approximately 30-page encapsulation of the book's major themes and conclusions.

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