

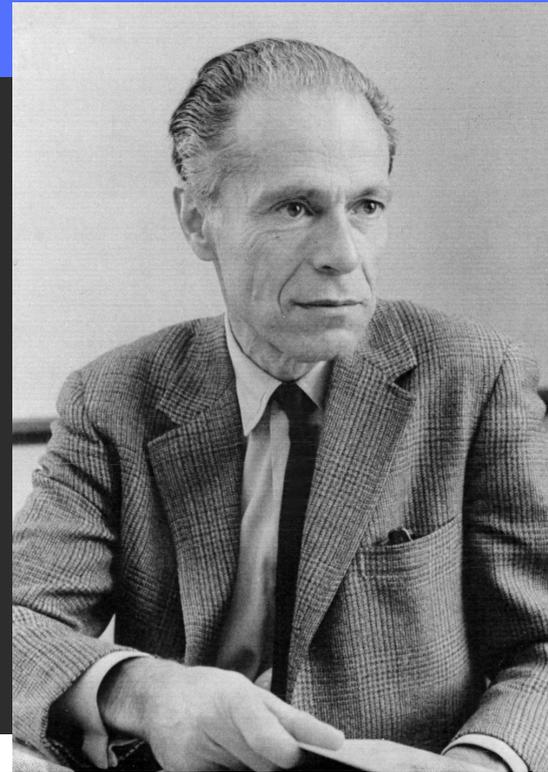
ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN

1915 – 2012

Born in Berlin, Hirschman's life is almost (!) as interesting as his writings. He was an active member of the French resistance during the Second World War and played a key role in helping Jews escape the Nazi's during the German Occupation. After the war, he moved to the United States and, a few years later - as Chief of the Western European and British Commonwealth Section of the Federal Reserve Board (1946 – 1952) - he played a vital role in the development and implementation of the Marshall Plan.

Most famous for:

- Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states (1970)
- The passions and the interests: Political arguments for capitalism before its triumph (1977)



Relevance for Management and Organization Theory

In his biography, Adelman describes Hirschman as a pragmatic idealist but his chosen label may have been: Intellectual Subverter. His works have had a far more profound impact in other fields than ours - Exit, Voice, and Loyalty is, by far, the work that most of us know. He has also impacted our scholarship through the writings of boundary spanning scholars most notably Donald Schön. Here are some of the concepts that have received the most attention and others than would help us advance in some of crucial research questions, particularly those connected with systems change and Grand Challenges.

Exit and Voice: Reflections on the sources for the impetus to bring about change to systems not working for their stakeholders: Exit (the economics theory based source – rather blunt and likely to end instead of change a system) and Voice (a social movement theory based source – requires more effort and a general interest on the survival of the system).

The hiding hand: Reflections on how spectacularly new approaches to tackle complex problems can be brought forward by regular individuals (instead of hyper muscular heros) when operating in a situational context that press us to stay engaged in problem solving.

Dissonant loyalty or how individuals, who in principle should have no interest in engaging in Voice, do so because of an acquired sense of loyalty to a system for “dissonant” reasons (e.g. difficulties in joining in).

The unexpected role of exit as impetus for change when performed by large numbers of uncoordinated individuals (e.g. hundreds of thousands of East Germans migrating to West Germany).

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