Implications of organisational culture in developing, planning and undertaking organisational development processes

A 'think-piece'

A

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Collaboration

IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN DEVELOPING, PLANNING AND UNDERTAKING ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

A 'think piece'

Brenda Lipson
www.framework.org.uk
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1. Background

To facilitate the organisational development of influential and credible WWF Offices, WWF UK is investing and supporting key WWF Offices in Priority Parts of the World (India, China, Brazil and Kenya) to undertake organisational strategy and development processes. Increasingly in these processes the importance of organisational culture (OC) is being recognised by leaders and staff.

In order to support leaders, change managers and the WWF Organisation Development (OD) Advisor to consider the implications of organisational culture in these processes, a think piece was commissioned. It is intended to be an initial 'mapping' of interesting references and potential points for reflection, rather than a thorough in-depth research paper. There were several sources of information identified – academic and web-based literature and materials; references made to OC by interviewees in a recent study undertaken by the consultant (with a Framework colleague, Bruce Britton); a few selected interviews with staff from WWF or external informants (nine in total) plus the consultant's own experience.

Thanks are due to all who contributed, and hopefully this paper serves its purpose in terms of stimulating some useful discussions on such a fascinating topic.

Terminology used in this paper

For the purposes of this paper the following definitions have been used:

Complexity Theory	'Set of concepts that attempts to explain complex phenomenon not explainable by traditional (mechanistic) theories. It integrates ideas derived from chaos theory, cognitive psychology, computer science, evolutionary biology, general systems theory, fuzzy logic, information theory, and other related fields to deal with the natural and artificial systems as they are, and not by simplifying them (breaking them down into their constituent parts).' (http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/complexity-theory.html)
'Family'	A shorthand, generic and collective term for the members of a global Non-Governmental Organisation and any centralised body or secretariat that supports, coordinates or manages the work of the family members. The word 'family' is rarely used by organisations themselves. More commonly used terms include network (e.g. Save the Children), federation (e.g. IFRC), and movement (e.g. Transparency International).
Human Systems Dynamics	'A collection of concepts and tools that help make sense of the patterns that emerge from chaos when people work and play together in groups, families, organizations, and communities.' (http://www.hsdinstitute.org/about-hsd/what-is-hsd.html)
Symbols	Things such as organisational layout, landscape, or dress that stand for the ideas that compose the organization.
	Total Quality Management A holistic approach to long-term success that views continuous improvement in all aspects of an organization as a process and not as a short-term goal. http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/total-quality-management-TQM.html
'Ways of working'	The way in which work processes are organised, and often includes policies and procedures for working practices, team processes etc.

2. What is organisational culture (OC) & why is it important?

What is it?

Academic interest in this area emerged in early 1980's, particularly oriented towards its connection with organisational performance. Cameron & Quinn[1] write:

> The reason organisational culture was ignored as an important factor in accounting for organisational performance is that it refers to the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories and definitions present in an organization. It represents "how things are around here". It reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads. It conveys a sense of identity to employees, provides unwritten and, often, unspoken guidelines for how to get along in the organization, and enhances the stability of the social system that they experience. (p.14)

Edgar H. Schein is someone who became the leading academic on this subject, and who developed a very helpful model for understanding organisational culture.[2]. His model is helpful to understand how culture is learned, passed on and changed. His definition of organisational culture is as:

> *... the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.*

Schein presents a model of organisational culture as seen operating at different levels – the visible artefacts (physical environment; technology; manner of dress; behaviour patterns; public documents; stories); the values that shape the artefacts and govern behaviour and are referred to explicitly (or 'espoused'); and the underlying assumptions which may be unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think, and feel. This last, deepest layer is where there are values and beliefs (or 'world-view') on areas such as the nature of reality and truth; on what it means to be human; on the nature of human activity and relationships; and on how human relate to the environment. These are also referred to by Schein as the taken-for-granted values and tend to require a concerted effort and focused inquiry to bring them back to awareness. Most organisational culture change tends to focus on the other two levels, with little or no work taking place on questioning some of the deepest assumptions.

Another way of looking at these levels is described by Holbeche (p235)[3]..'..culture is "the way we do things around here", which results from the pattern of shared beliefs and values that reflect "the way people think about things around here". The way we do things (shared patterns of behaviour) includes strategic behaviour, operational behaviour, decision making behaviour, information-flow behaviour, managerial and leadership behaviour.

Some of the literature reflects an attempt to provide easily accessible/understandable models for organisational culture, developing typologies which cluster different aspects of the culture together. Thus, e.g. Competing Values Framework (see below) developed at the University of Michigan, presents us with four different culture 'types' (adhocracy, clan, market and hierarchy). Another model using four 'types' (power, role, task, people cultures) was used by Harrison and further developed by Charles Handy[4] who chooses to illustrate these with easily memorable images (spider web; building supported by columns and beams; a net with some strands thicker than others; a constellation of stars). As always with the case of models, there are some points in favour of these (primarily the ease with which people can start

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[1] K.Cameron, R.Quinn: *'Diagnosing & Changing Organizational Culture'*

[2] See early article: *'Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture'* for a synthesis of the model. Available *Sloan Management Review, Winter 1984.*

[3] In *'Organization Development: A practitioner's Guide for OD and HR',* 2011

[4] In *'Understanding Organizations',* 1976

to use a common language to describe culture) and others against (the potential risk of taking a reductionist approach and wishing to fit different elements of a complex system into one or other 'type-box').

Boston Consulting Group states, in its website:

BCG believes that culture defines how people behave both around others and when they are alone. These behaviors are visible not only in the shared culture within an organization, but also in regional and functional subcultures.

Three things define a high-performing culture:

- The culture is aligned with strategy. This is vital to building capabilities and attaining goals. An aligned culture will support and facilitate the capabilities needed to achieve strategic goals, whereas a divergent culture will undermine them.
- Employees engage in their work to get results. Employees with a high level of engagement will "go the extra" mile to reach goals. Employee engagement is measured in terms of ambition, accountability, inspiration, pride, and support.
- The organizational context supports and reinforces the culture. The context, or environment, of an organization is the main driver of employee behavior. Therefore all leadership behaviors, policies, organization design, and hiring practices should be aligned to achieve the desired culture.

Writers on organisational culture will also point out that whilst there may be one predominant culture for the organisation as a whole, there are also likely to be a myriad of sub-cultures reflecting different parts of the system. These may be functional departments, hierarchical levels, and geographic units. Difficulties in coordinating and integrating processes or organisational activities may emerge as a result of clashes of different sub-cultures and there may be talk of a 'silo' mentality existing within the organisation.

Within the INGO sector, there has been increasing interest in the topic of Organisational Culture, building on the earlier experiences and knowledge base of those who work within the field of Human Resource Management. It is hard to identify a specific time period when a more concerted expression of interest in OC emerged within the sector, but it is agreed that in the last few years there has been increased interest in exploring what it actually means to work with it in practice. There would not appear to be a shared or common understanding of the term. Comments provided by interviewees illustrate this:

Within WWF the Secretariat of WWF International has done some work on organisational culture internally, with the help of Human Synergistics. The website of this company indicates the following as their understanding of the term 'organisational culture':

> *'At Human Synergistics International, we define "culture" in the organisational context as being the shared norms and expectations that govern the way people approach their work and interact with each other. Such norms and expectations shape how organisational members believe they are expected to behave in order to fit in, get things done, and at times simply survive.'*

When asked about their own, personal understanding of this term 'organisational culture', some answers provided by WWF staff included:

> *"..how we are working together internally, also how we are perceived externally...a mix of a way of working amongst ourselves AND with others which generates an image of the organisation...Also, it is about how the leaders are talking to themselves, transparency, openness, trust and how decision making is happening. Then drilling it down because it cascades down into the rest of the organisation. It is about one part connecting with another, so they are in alignment. So it is about engagement with people across the organisation at different levels. It is also about the principles as applied externally - are we transparent, open with partners, are we involving stakeholders...."*

> *".. the way we do things round here...the unwritten rules, how people behave...the way things happen in the organisation. Sometimes it can go counter with what we say we want it to be...that's a challenge."*

> *"There are two aspects – set of values that we need to abide by; and alignment with what the organisation stands for. The four or five objectives we are aiming for - what are the ways and means to go about achieving those? So organisational culture defines how."*

".. we need to be really careful because it means different things to different people – not easy. So for me, because it is a composition of different elements – shared values and beliefs (the way we are), what is right and what is wrong; also a lot about the assumptions that organisations and people who work there make about what they are capable of doing – some are more risk taking, more ambitious, others more about survival. Also – the literature talks about artefacts (symbols of what we want to be portrayed about us). Also – what is more easily seen – systems of formal/informal reward and penalties – reward the behaviours that we are supposed to be doing. There are also soft things – signs, messages, icons, practices that define hierarchy and power e.g. how you organise the office space. Also – the decision making archetypes – the way decisions are taken...the process leaders go through when make decisions – how that is perceived by those who report to them, and how they adapt to that and respond accordingly."

"...a variety of things about how we relate to one another internally, as well as how we relate to people etc. externally. How we communicate ... if it is a hierarchy or horizontal. The formalisation, or not, of lines of communication as well as lines of engagement. So how we work as a team, share info, how we define who leads, how we engage across programme areas as well as vertically from more junior to senior staff. The structure reflects some of that culture, as well as trying to respond to a programmatic set of objectives. Some of it is not clearly stated....there are manifestations."

Other, non-WWF interviewees expressed the following:

"Everything that describes the way an organisation works and feels... it functions at individual and collective level... is about values, behaviours, beliefs."

"Usually refer to the way people behave. The behaviours that have become institutionalised...the way we do things, treat each other, unwritten morale, rules, and beliefs. Also, the whole structure of power...who knows best, who has the last word, what kind of weight does someone have. Some groups are considered more important than others... How we think people are positioned in the hierarchy."

"...it is about stories, humour, play... who are seen as examples... how you socialise people into the ways. Often there is a lot of gap between espoused values and in-use values. E.g. Rights based organisations not embracing that at a cultural level."

A few comments on this range of views:

- A number of the responses do reflect the understanding amongst academics of what constitutes organisational culture, including Schein's model of different levels of operation.
- Just a couple of people specifically referred to issues of power.
- Within WWF there appears to be an understanding about organisational culture encompassing both the internal *and* the external spheres. In particular, the ways of relating with others which can affect how the organisation is perceived externally. This is not a commonly encountered understanding within the literature, but when referring to an organisation's culture being projected in its profile or external image, it can make sense to include this dimension of external relationships. In organisational capacity building work, we tend however to refer to the relational dimension and the external profile of an organisation as something separate but linked to the organisational culture.

Why is it important?

Studies show the limited results obtained by change processes which do not incorporate a dimension of work on organisational culture. Restructuring, re-engineering work processes, downsizing, Total Quality Management initiatives - all run the risk as being seen as specific techniques or programmes of change rather than reflecting a fundamental shift in organisational direction or strategy.

The organisational culture can be a 'facilitator 'or 'enabler' in the development and implementation of a new strategy. For example, if there is a pre-existing culture of openness to new ideas and innovation, then this will create a fertile ground for thinking in new ways about the direction of the organisation, or new ways of organising in order to deliver an agreed strategy. The reverse is true, where culture can actually be an 'inhibitor' of new strategy – for example, where there are behaviours and beliefs which centre around the preservation of what exists (programmes, partnerships etc.) over and above letting go in order to start afresh.

However, the tendency is for organisations not to consider organisational culture issues when developing and implementing new strategy, and then they are surprised when they constantly encounter blockages or obstacles to their efforts to reorient their work, or introduce new elements or reduce others. Often the tendency is to focus on the business processes, the resource base (money, people) and the structural or 'hard wiring' of the organisation when deciding what needs to change in order to deliver the strategy. This is often known as 're-engineering' the organisation. But it is not enough.

It is possible to facilitate a change of strategy or identity (e.g. towards becoming a national NGO) when you incorporate work on deep-seated world views, beliefs, values, norms (what is acceptable and what not). Similarly, culture can become a 'facilitator' of strategy development and implementation when interventions are pitched at the expressions of these beliefs in terms of the symbols[5] used, the organisation of the physical space, the ways of behaving as leaders, teams and as individuals etc. These are the 'soft' areas.

The challenge lies in managing the two together during a change process – the 'hard' with the 'soft'. It is important to recognise the differences between the two, and to seek to find an appropriate balance in the change management approach that is chosen. Purely concentrating on the 'hard' issues of restructuring, or redesigning work processes (e.g. cross-team working) will not be sufficient. There needs to be attention paid to the complementary 'soft' areas which lay the foundation stones for these changes – the attitudinal and behavioural changes, the changes in the stories told of who is important or who is a good role model etc. Some of this topic is explored more in the section 4 below.

In the view of one interviewee, it helps to 'surface' the issue of organisational culture – to refer to it explicitly, because then people don't see behaviour purely in terms of individuals. In the interviewee's words, they recognise there is something that is "*institutionalised*[6] *behaviour and that depersonalises issues*".

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[5] *See Anat Rafaeli & Monica Worline (1999) for exploration of four functions of organisational symbols: 'They reflect underlying aspects of culture, generating emotional responses from organizational members and representing organizational values and assumptions. They elicit internalized norms of behavior, linking members' emotional responses and interpretations to organizational action. They frame experience, allowing organizational members to communicate about vague, controversial, or uncomfortable organizational issues. And, they integrate the entire organization in one system of signification.'*

[6] *The interviewee's use of the term 'institutionalised' is understood to mean behaviour that reflects the organisation's general culture.*

3. THREE WAYS OF CONSIDERING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES

It is possible to consider organisational culture in three different ways:

- As a means to an end (i.e. how it influences the change processes)
- As an end in itself (i.e. as an outcome of the change processes)
- As a contextual factor for consideration (i.e. how cultures might differ within one international organisation due to the influence of external, societal cultures in different parts of the world)

Each of these could serve as a 'lens' through which to examine the issue of organisational culture within a broader change process, or in relation to the development and implementation of new strategy. This section will briefly present each one in turn:

3.1. As a means to an end:

Here the 'lens' is focused on culture as an influencing factor, when embarking upon a broader change process or when designing and implementing a new strategy. As seen above, the pre-existing set of beliefs, values, norms, behaviours, symbols, stories etc. can play a key role in shaping these processes. Pre-existing culture can shape the decisions taken about how extensive a change is being conceived, for example – how conservative, how transformative? It can shape the design of how the proposed changes should be managed – with respect to authority? With a strong emphasis on participatory methods? It can affect the success of efforts of the change agents (the facilitators, the leaders, the champions of change) to influence, inspire, or persuade colleagues that the proposed changes are desirable, feasible and possible.

So it is critical that there be a reflection on the pre-existing organisational culture from the very beginning of a change process, or when first identifying how to go about defining a new strategy. This may take the form of a diagnosis (see section 4 below) which, by helping to surface the characteristics of the existing culture, can inform the answers to the question: *How might our culture facilitate and constrain the process we are about to embark upon?* The answers to that question could then help to identify the appropriate action to take in order to harness those characteristics that might facilitate the process and those necessary in order to manage the characteristics which might constrain it.

3.2. As an end itself:

This is the most common 'lens' – it is the focus on organisational culture changes that might be desired as an outcome of the broader change process, or new strategy. The greatest part of this paper is dedicated to exploring different ways of approaching this challenging area. One approach (the 'design and build' approach) may produce one key question to ask: *What kind of culture do we need in order to deliver this new strategy?* together with: *How will we describe the new culture?* This then may be followed by the question *What kind of actions should we take to 'embed' it within our organisation?* Another approach (the 'emergent') may produce a different starting question: *How will we collectively construct a new meaning for our culture, in a context of change?* Section 4 below explores these issues.

3.3. As a contextual factor:

Organisations that operate globally are constantly reflecting upon and acting in response to the diversity of operating environments in which they are located. One of the leading thinkers on this issue of the influence of societal culture on managing organisations is G. Hofstede (see Annex One for a brief summary of his key thesis). His work has led to the emergence of a dedicated academic field of study on cross-cultural management.

This paper does not investigate this third 'lens' , nor is there specific reference to the possible cross-cultural considerations that might be worth taking into account when reflecting upon the different approaches presented in Section 4. However, there were a few interesting observations made by some interviewees. In particular, one WWF informant reflected that

> *".. the nuances, the local culture impact is very high..... however you try to bring a common DNA, make global citizens, it is practically impossible. Shouldn't push it and instead we should find the ways to celebrate the differences."*

Thus, this third 'lens' raises the question; *How does external societal culture influence our internal organisational culture in different parts of the world? And how should we take this into account when working with organisational culture in the context of change processes?*

4. SOME DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN A CHANGE PROCESS

Introduction to this section

This section is dedicated to sharing information and reflections on some different ways in which conscious organisational culture change can be approached. The section is divided into two parts – the first explores the topic from the angle of broad, overarching approaches whilst the second 'drills down' into some specific aspects of the change process. In both parts, there are some boxes containing illustrative examples based on information gathered in interviews. It is important to recognise that throughout this section there is no assumption about the degree to which the examples that are shared, or the models presented, have been/are successful in obtaining the desired change outcomes.

4.1.   Some Broad Approaches

a)   The more 'traditional' approach to culture change – planned and often driven 'from the top':

This is sometimes referred to as the 'design and build' approach. Very common in corporate sector and increasingly so in the NGO world. Often the design of the desired outcomes of the overall organisational change will draw upon a conceptual model which seeks to integrate the 'strategy' dimension with other elements. One example of this would be the use of the 7 S' model, developed in the 1970's by Peters & Waterman, of McKinsey consulting company.
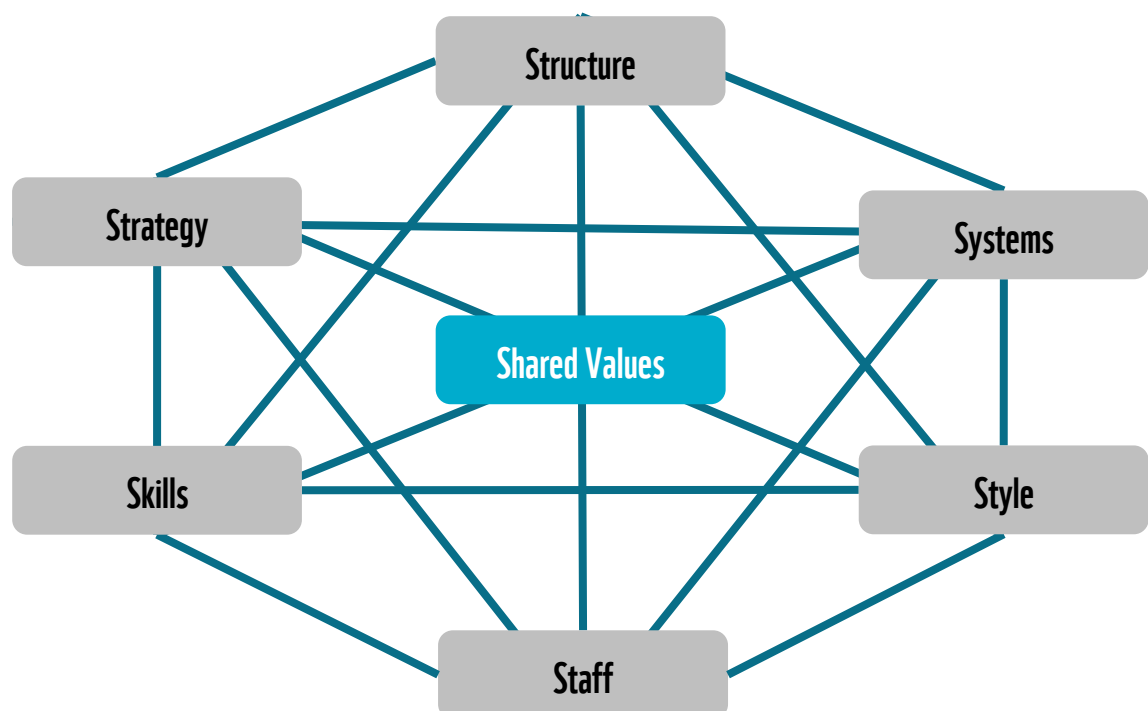

This has been used by one WWF National Office to inform their thinking about their organisational change and which areas would need to change in which ways. The model touches upon organisational culture through the central sphere of shared values. Here the focus is on how core values and key cultural practices can best support the strategy and be in alignment with the other spheres.

Another conceptual model is that of the 'star', developed by Jay Galbraith[7] for informing choices about organisational 'design'. It consists of a series of what Galbraith calls 'design policies' that are viewed as controllable

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[7] 'Designing Complex Organisations', 1973

by management and that can influence staff behaviour. The policies are the tools, or 'levers' with which management must become skilled in order to shape the decisions and behaviours of their organizations effectively. They fall into five categories. The first is Strategy, which determines direction. The second is Structure (or 'how we organize'), which determines the overall shape of the organisation, and the location of decision-making power, roles and reporting lines etc. The third area are the information and decision Processes (or 'how we work') which cut across the structure. They can be seen as horizontal/lateral - designed around the workflow - and also vertical - such as business planning or budgeting. The fourth area is that of the Reward (and Measure) system used to align the goals of the employee with the goals of the organization. The rewards provide motivation and incentives for desired behaviour. And finally, the selection and development of the right People — in alignment with the other policies — is seen as allowing the organization to operate at maximum efficiency.

Galbraith writes that the Star Model shows the levers that managers can control, and as a result, can affect employee behaviour. He states that by choosing the desired behaviour, managers can influence the organization's performance as well as its culture.
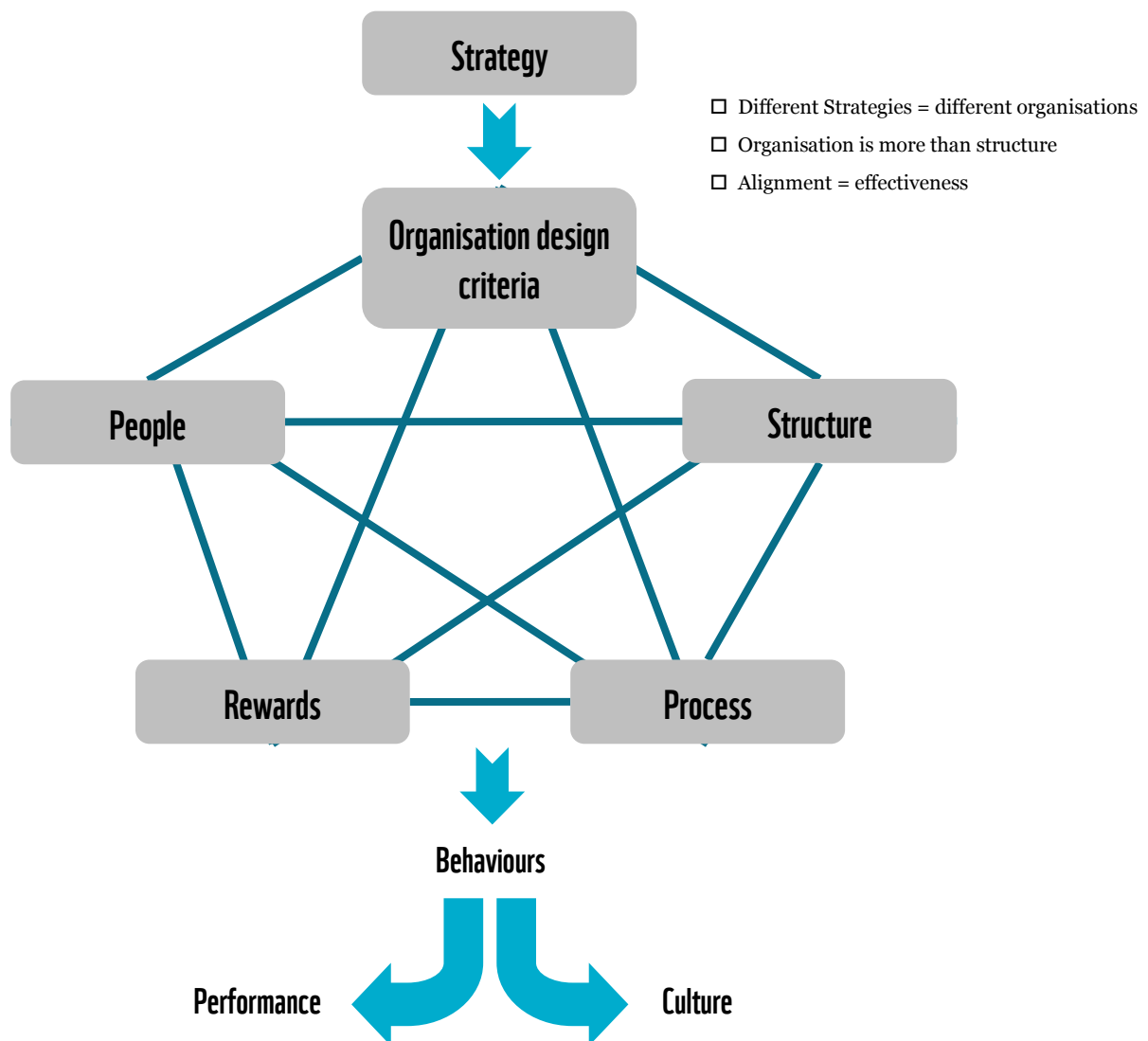
Alongside this use of models or frameworks which present different dimensions to consider for the *design* of the desired change *outcomes*, there is often the use of a strongly *planned and managed change process*. Here the emphasis is on the managing of a series of stages/phases to go through and steps to take, often in a rather linear manner and with the support of project management methods and tools. Often the emphasis is on the role of the leader/s to identify desired changes and 'drive' them forward.

One very well-known example of this is Kotter's 8 steps. Here the first three steps are all about creating a climate for change, the next three focus on engaging and enabling the organisation. And the last two on implementing and sustaining change.

Establish a sense of urgency	→	Create a "Guiding Coalition"	→	Develop a Vision and a Strategy	→	Communicate the Vision

Empower broad based action	→	Generate Short Term Wins	→	Consolidate Gains	→	Anchor in the culture

The last step refers to embedding the changes into the organisational culture. In the words of the Kotter Institute:

'New practices must grow deep roots in order to remain firmly planted in the culture. Culture is composed of norms of behavior and shared values. These social forces are incredibly strong. Every individual that joins an organization is indoctrinated into its culture, generally without even realizing it. Its inertia is maintained by the collective group of employees over years and years. Changes – whether consistent or inconsistent with the old culture – are difficult to ingrain.

This is why cultural change comes in Step 8, not Step 1. Some general rules about cultural change include:

- Cultural change comes last, not first
- You must be able to prove that the new way is superior to the old
- The success must be visible and well communicated
- You will lose some people in the process
- You must reinforce new norms and values with incentives and rewards – including promotions
- Reinforce the culture with every new employee

 Tradition is a powerful force. We keep change in place by creating a new, supportive and sufficiently strong organizational culture. A Guiding Coalition alone cannot root change in place no matter how strong they are. It takes the majority of the organization truly embracing the new culture for there to be any chance of success in the long term.'

http://www.kotterinternational.com/our-principles/changesteps/step-8

Another variation on this 'design and build' approach is that proposed by Steve Denning in an article written about culture change in the World Bank. Denning presents us with a model of Organizational Tools for Changing Minds, which groups various types of procedures, systems, activities etc. into three interlocking clusters – Leadership tools that provide inspiration for the culture change, Management tools that provide information necessary for the change and Power tools that Denning calls 'intimidation' for a 'last resort, when all else fails'.

Organisational Tool for Changing Minds
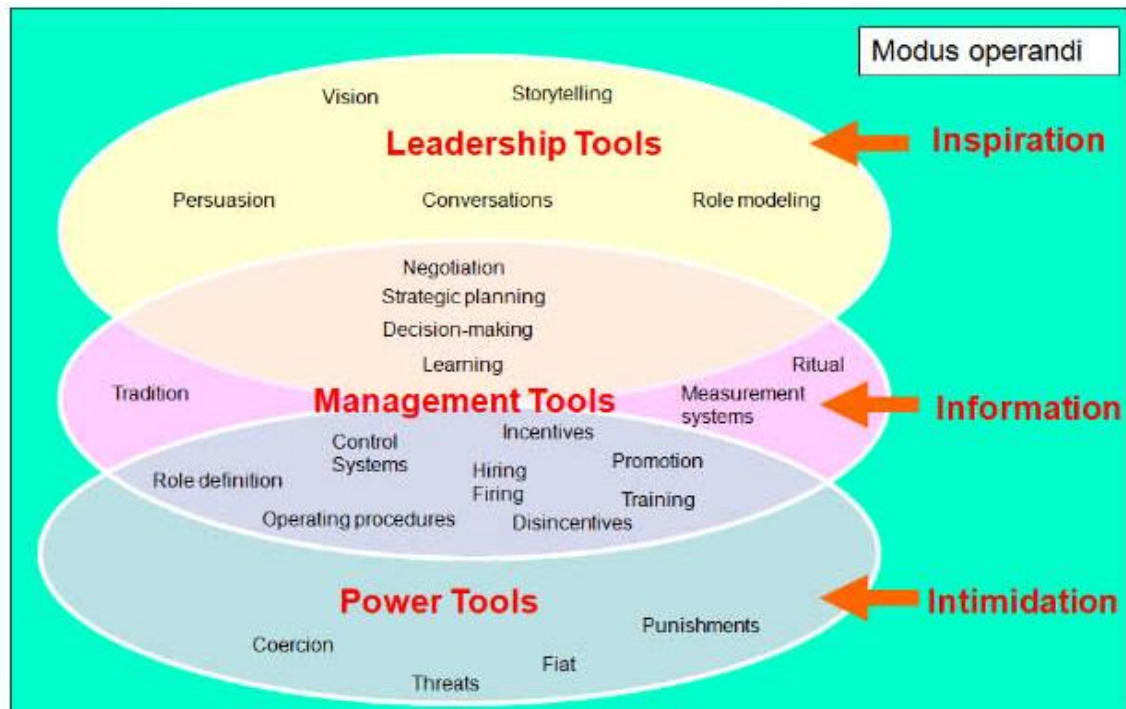
Denning indicates that the most successful change strategies begin with the leadership tools and then 'cement' the change in place with the management tools (or HR 'levers' for culture change as they are referred to elsewhere). He proposes that the core stakeholders of the new vision be identified and the change management process should be continuously and systematically response to that group of people. The role of managers is seen as that of 'enablers of self-organizing teams'. Speed is a factor – with recommendations for fast acting to develop and put in place new systems and processes that support and reinforce the vision. Horizontal communication in conversations and stories is seen as important, over and above top-down commands.

An illustration: The box below contains an illustration of this 'design and build' approach in practice:

What are the <u>strengths/challenges</u> in these 'design and build' approaches?

- ✓ They often work with conceptual models which provide a framework for facilitating alignment and coherence across different dimensions of organisational life.
- ✓ Some of these models may facilitate communication about organisational culture change processes, due to their simplicity of presentation and potential to easily be established as common references across the organisation.
- ✓ The strongly planned approach provides a sense of security, reassurance and facilitates communication to staff about the steps that will be taken. (However, this may be more relevant to other change processes rather than to the design and build of new organisational culture?).
- ✓ The Denning model of three interlocking clusters provides a very useful reference for discussion about different types of interventions. It highlights some of the differences between leadership and management (see annex 2 which has a presentation on these differences). Rather than present a linear model, the potential in a model that has a three-dimensional approach is that one can imagine moving in and out of the circles as appropriate during the change process (although Denning himself does propose the traditional approach of starting with the 'inspiration' and then embedding change with the 'information' tools of management).
- ⚐ There may be a danger of developing a dependency on one model. This may lead to missing out on things that don't neatly 'fit' into the model, or of a sense of arbitrarily squeezing complex human interactions into one of the 'boxes' or 'elements' of the model.
- ⚐ The strongly 'leader driven' approaches do have some associated health warnings that come along with the benefits. Top leadership may have lost moral authority with their staff, due to past actions or current behaviour. They may have lost connection with those they lead.   A People in Aid international conference in 2009 identified that 'courage' was a key characteristic that facilitates strong leadership of change processes,

over and above 'power'. In addition, it recommended that there were key roles for middle managers and those who 'cared enough to speak up'. The study on 10 years of OD in WWF Colombia indicated that a key success factor was the decentralised leadership approach – this facilitated the emergence of leadership of different components of the change process from within the staff body and not solely from the top leadership team.

- As with most linear planning processes, there is a fundamental challenge in responding to the unexpected. Life is not linear; there are many unknowns that emerge along the path of change. Thus the challenge with these approaches is around how to manage the uncertainties and the unexpected. Here the answer probably lies heavily in the use of effective feedback loops, constant monitoring and reflecting on progress, adjustments to the plans and a flexible resourcing of the process.

- A specific question may be posed around the notion that 'culture change comes last, not first' as expressed by Kotter but also as implicit in some of the models, particularly the 'Star' model. This illustrates a key weakness in a linear, step by step mind-set, as it does not recognise that pre-existing culture may be affecting the progress along the way from the very beginning. If work on this area does not start from the beginning then there are dangers of encountering obstacles to the implementation of the planned change process as a whole. In addition, there is an opportunity to be 'modelling' new behaviours and attitudes in the implementation of the change process itself – thus waiting until the end implies a missed opportunity.

b) Co-creating culture change – the 'emergent' approach

This is an approach based on the Human Systems Dynamics theory, which sees organisations as 'self-organising systems' and draws on the new sciences of Chaos and Complexity as well as the organisational and behavioural sciences. The approach works with the concept of human systems behaving as complex, adaptive systems (CAS). These are defined as a collection of semi-autonomous agents that interact in unpredictable ways and generate system-wide patterns over time[8].

The key characteristic of this approach to culture change lies in its emphasis on culture as being based on social interactions of the people within the organisational system, not from a management edict that defines "what it's like around here." Thus, culture change cannot be imposed from above, but rather relies on strategies that create new groups and alter the quality of the inter-relations.

In the words of Holbeche,

> '...people tend to resist or subvert change if change is imposed. The deep changes – in how people think, what they believe, how they see the world – are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve through compliance.' (p.265)

There is an emphasis in this approach on dialogue and inquiry, i.e. active engagement and participation in the process of co-creating a new culture. It also draws on the concept of the 'butterfly effect' whereby a very small change is seen to generate enormous effects, and on the understanding of 'nonlinear causality' where one thing causes, and is simultaneously caused by another thing (e.g. You behave in such a way that I trust you, and I trust you because you behave in such a way. The causal circle makes it difficult to see which comes first, the behaviour or the trust).

Another feature of this type of approach is the emphasis on what Holbeche calls 'change-able culture' - the building of an adaptive capacity that is embedded in symbols, behaviours and beliefs about the importance of being responsive to changes in the environment. In her words,

> '...rather than dreading change, a change-able workforce will welcome change, seek it out, be prepared for it and find ways of adjusting themselves, contributing to the overall success of the organization.' (p.255)

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[8] G.H.Eoyang, in 'Human Systems Dynamics – competencies in a complex world', 2005

Case example: The 'simple rules' approach to behaviour change, using Adaptive Action methodology.

- *What was context of the change?*

  Change in HQ of an affiliate member of an international 'family'. A major change process had been focused in the past few years on the country programmes managed by the affiliates, alongside strategy revision and restructuring in the family and its members. The need was recognised by one affiliate for behaviour change in the HQ in order to fully embed the wider change process.

- *What is the conceptual basis and broad methodology for the approach?*

  Adaptive Action is defined by the Human Systems Dynamics Institute as "an intentional reflective process based on these three questions: What? So What? Now What? …Each one can lead into a deep exploration of the patterns emerging human systems." The methodology is focused on interpreting these patterns and generating options for action.

   One of the various methods used for this is called the "Simple Rules" method. Here the idea is that a group can work as a coordinated unit if every one of its members follows the same set of simple rules. This is based on work done by Craig Reynolds in the late 1980's to interpret the movement of separate birds as they fly together as a coherent flock. Reynolds discovered three simple rules were in operation (fly toward the centre, don't bump into anyone, and match the speed of your neighbour). Eoyang and Holladay found this idea to be powerful when working with groups. They write, "Sometimes implicit rules establish organizational culture, and when a group becomes conscious of their rules they have the capacity to change them and transform their culture. Other times, a leader frames a set of rules to establish conditions for adaptive diversity and coherence."

  They state that they have found this method useful for groups that want coordinated action without sacrificing individual and local decision making. They have used it in facilitating corporate culture change, where multiple agents with diverse needs and resources followed simple rules to move into collaborative action without losing their individual diversity. They have developed a few practical guidelines to its use ('Adaptive Action' p.98)

- *How is it being put into operation?*

  The focus is on behaviour change, and a conscious choice was made to try out the Simple Rules method because it was felt that competency frameworks would not help the organisation to achieve the kinds of change desired.

  An initial workshop was held to establish the Simple Rules for the HQ. There were 70 participants, composed of a mix of corporate/senior management/others and an external facilitator who was familiar with the method. The interviewee stressed that it wasn't a leadership team defining the change they want to see and then working towards behaviour change via a competency framework, "…which was the old way of doing it. It can't be top down for culture change - people make meaning, they do it so it is theirs."

  It was felt important for people to shape the draft rules that emerged in their own ways, to respond to the different groupings within the HQ. So each group is working to make meaning of these rules, to define the behaviour that is behind each and how they will put it into practice. They are thinking of how to tell stories of how people are working with these simple rules (the OD people working closely with internal communications). They can see some teams moving ahead quickly - where the managers attended the original workshop.

  The interviewee commented that people have found the what/so what/now what cycle very useful – that it helps the organisation be more agile in the face of change. Also, a comment was made about the importance of understanding the framework, methodology and tools that were used, but that there are "..no fixed truths on what order you do things."

What are the strengths/challenges in this approach?

✓ This approach retains some of the strengths of the previous, 'design and build' approach in the positive reasons for engaging in the conscious planning of organisational change. The difference is that the emphasis appears to be on the planning of *enabling processes* for the co-creation of what the new culture might look like, rather than on planning the design (and hence definitions) of a new culture and the subsequent 'building' process.

✓ There is a sense that this approach is oriented towards sustainability of the outcomes of a culture change process. This is due to the fact that it is the people within the organisation who are actively defining the new

culture, and that the results are tailored to diverse groups within the whole system whilst retaining a common 'thread' to provide coherence.

- Whilst conceptually very interesting indeed, this approach is far less 'tried and tested' than the previous examples. There is less available in terms of real applications beyond those of the Human Systems Dynamics practitioners. However, it might prove feasible to gather a selection of further examples in order to understand more fully how this approach works out in practice.

- This approach probably relies considerably on the existence of confident, skilled process facilitators to accompany the co-creation process. At a minimum, there would be the need for a 'kick-start' with some specialised input on how to design such a process.

- There are aspects of this approach which might be felt as very familiar to environmental organisations working with the notion of self-organising systems (although applied to human systems rather than eco-systems). Thus some of it may easily fit with these organisations' conceptual frameworks. However, some aspects of it may not have such a good fit for organisations who have very deep-seated, evidence-based and rational analytical foundations such as those working in the legal sector of human rights, or those with a strong science-orientation. In particular, working with the 'emergent' rather than with pre-defined desired outcomes in terms of descriptions of desired behaviour may feel like a step too far for these kinds of organisations.

c) An 'emergent' approach to culture change in a low-trust environment

This is not a formal, recognised change approach, but was identified as a result of the interviews carried out during the preparation of this paper. It was felt to be worthy of reflection, particularly as it illustrates a very different type of approach from the previous, more structured examples.

What are the strengths/challenges in this approach?

- ✓ It does not apply a pre-defined recipe for a culture change process
- ✓ It takes into consideration the overall context within the organisation, and the nature of the pre-existing culture which forms the starting point (low-trust in the illustration case).
- ✓ It has a strong emphasis on ownership
- ✓ It is realistic about the effectiveness of some of the HR 'levers' for culture change.
- ⮫ There are no 'certainties' or reassuring planned activities. It is very much a 'trust the process' type of approach. This may not be acceptable in some organisations.
- ⮫ It relies heavily on the skills and personal qualities of the facilitator (in this case, the Secretariat staff member).
- ⮫ The success may depend on other factors beyond the specific work on culture (e.g. in the illustration, it may depend on growing in membership numbers, on recruiting new leaders or on successes in the human rights work)

d) Locating culture change within a broader 'framing' model

This is not a specific case, but is a model used extensively at the Maxwell School, Syracuse University, in their work with Transnational NGO leaders and is reported to resonate well with the participants. It is used to encourage leaders to be adaptive in their approach, and to 'see' their organisations through different lenses. In this way, it is similar to a 'situational leadership' approach which stresses the importance of not automatically using one 'default' way of acting.

The four frames of organisational leadership: (Bolman & Deal)

The model proposes that there are four different ways of 'framing' our world view – Structural, Human Resources, Political and Symbolic. We do not use just one frame all the time, although there is a tendency to revert to one or two as preferences. When applied to understanding and leading organisations and their change processes, these frames can provide different insights.

The Structural frame tends to reflect formal aspects of what the organisational system looks like. This would focus on goals, organisational structure, formal relationships, roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures. Leaders working with this frame would be concerned to ensure the structure fits the situation, strategy, context etc.

The Human Resource frame sees the organisation as an extended 'family' made up of individuals with their needs, feelings, skills, prejudices and limitations. It recognises individuals' capacity to learn and also to defend old attitudes and beliefs. The focus of this frame is to make sure individuals get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing. For leaders working with this frame, there would be an emphasis on working with a situational leadership approach.

The Political frame sees organisations as 'arenas' or contested spaces with different interests competing for power and resources. An emphasis would be placed on issues of bargaining, negotiation, coercion, compromise etc. Leaders need to be aware of it and know how to work with power dynamics during change processes.

The Symbolic frame sees the organisation in terms of tribes, theatre, carnivals. The focus is on culture as expressed through rituals, ceremonies, stories, myths, heroes. Leadership may focus on helping actors play their parts according to desired behaviour, and on symbols that reflect desired meaning and ceremonies and rituals that are relevant and reinforce desired messages. Leaders who know how to recognise this will know how best to affect the culture.

The key point is the need to discern which frame is most relevant at any point, and to be self-aware of any 'default' to a specific frame over and above others.

As applied to change processes:

Reframing Organisational Change

Frame	Barrier to Change	Essential Strategies
Structural	Loss of direction, clarity and stability; confusion, chaos	Communicating, realigning and renegotiating formal patterns and processes
Human Resource	Anxiety, uncertainty, people feel incompetent and needy	Training for new skills, participation and involvement; psychological support
Political	Disempowerment; conflict between winners and losers	Creation of arenas where issues can be renegotiated and new coalitions formed
Symbolic	Loss of meaning and purpose; clinging to the past	Creation of transition rituals; mourn the past, celebrate the future

What are the <u>strengths/challenges</u> in this approach?

- ✓ The underlying message conveyed by this model is one of flexibility/adaptability. It stresses that leaders need to be self-aware, and be consciously reflecting upon how they are interpreting and acting upon areas or issues that need addressing.
- ✓ The existence of the Symbolic frame may be very helpful to ensure that discussions about organisational culture do actually reach beyond the 'ways of working' level. Change agents or facilitators of change processes or new strategy implementation may not automatically approach the work with this 'frame' of mind. Thus having an explicit reference to it, as an equal part of a four-frame model, highlights its importance and facilitates the building of awareness of how to consider this most intangible of topics.
- ⚐ It would require becoming familiar with the model and with its application through the 'reframing' process (although there does seem to be plenty of material and references to it on the internet).
- ⚐ In itself it does not provide all the answers to how to address organisational culture change, and so would probably be needed to be complemented by other interventions.

Points for consideration

When applied to the process of organisational culture change, the use of this model may be of help in the initial phase of work. It may be interesting to consciously 'pick up' each frame in turn and explore how culture currently expresses itself in the organisation, and how it might look in the future. Thus e.g. with the 'political' frame the questions to discuss might be 'what do we currently believe is the right way to resolve differences of opinion? Is this the way we see ourselves acting in the future?' Or 'where does power reside in our organisation, both formally and informally? Is this the way we want it to be in the future?'

Bolman and Deal themselves propose the use of the frames when managing broad organisational change processes, with a particular emphasis on problem-solving. It may be worthwhile taking a look at the different ways in which they propose that 'reframing' an organisation can be taken forward.

4.2. Some Specific Triggers, Interventions or Tools Used To Facilitate the Culture Change

a) The initial culture diagnosis

Any organisational change process or OD strategy will be most effective when based upon a clear diagnosis of the existing situation, and identification of the strengths to be protected and built upon whilst facilitating the identification of the priority areas for change. This is true of work on organisational culture. Some approaches emphasize that effective culture change engages people in the change process and this starts from the diagnosis phase where employing a participatory process enables people to become aware of how their culture really operates and to believe that change is both desirable and possible.

There are some specific instruments focused on this area:

- ➢ Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument – OCAI.

  This instrument works with a typology of organisational cultures, based on the Competing Values Framework developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn of the University of Michigan after extensive research on organizational effectiveness within the corporate sector. It is designed to explore six dimensions of organisational culture, based on the theoretical framework of how organisations work and the kinds of values upon which their cultures are founded. It identifies the current culture profile, and facilitates the identification of a desired future culture.

  As with any such instrument based on a typology framework, it's effective use relies upon the 'buy-in' to the original model. In this case, the team behind the Competing Values Framework propose that there are four culture types organised along two dimensions. One dimension differentiates effectiveness criteria that stress flexibility, discretion and dynamism from those criteria that emphasize stability, order and control. That is, the continuum ranges from versatility and pliability at one end to steadiness and durability at the other. The second dimension differentiates criteria that stress an internal orientation, integration and unity from criteria that emphasize an external orientation, differentiation and rivalry. This continuum ranges from organizational cohesion and

consonance at one end to organizational separation and independence on the other. This model produces four quadrants which are called culture types:

- Adhocracy – a term based on the idea of 'ad hoc'. Highly versatile, innovative, with a strong external, entrepreneurial orientation.
- Clan – a term which recalls the idea of family. A strong internal orientation focusing on people, loyalty and tradition and participation combined with flexible working arrangements and degrees of autonomy for teams.
- Hierarchy – emphasis on internal structure and formal standardized procedures with little discretion for individuals or teams.
- Market – based on the idea of the organization that functions as a market itself, oriented towards the external environment. Heavily results-oriented, often with use of 'stretch' targets.

The OCAI uses a scoring system against statements that illustrate four different ways in which the organisation can be described in six different areas (dominant characteristics; organizational leadership; management of employees; organization glue; strategic emphases; criteria of success). The respondent is required to distribute a total of 100 points amongst the four alternative descriptions in each of the six areas, allocating a higher number of points to the description that matches most closely to their organization.

The process is one of cascading up i.e. individuals fill in the OCAI for themselves, and then teams compare and discuss the scores with the aim of arriving at a consensus profile. The instrument can be used again to define a preferred future profile, by producing scores based on how people believe it should look like to match the future demands of the environment and the challenges to be faced by the organisation.

➢ The Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI)

This is an instrument developed by Human Synergistics International.. The website indicates that:

> '.. the OCI® provides organizations with a visual profile of their operating cultures (Current Culture) in terms of the behaviors that members believe are required to "fit in and meet expectations." Such expectations guide the way they approach their work and interact with each other. In turn, these behavioral norms have a significant impact on the organization's ability to solve problems, adapt to change, and perform effectively. OCI® results are plotted on profiles that illustrate individual normative beliefs (when the perspective of only one member is considered) or the shared behavioral expectations that operate within the organization and represent its culture (when the perspectives of multiple members are combined). Results are presented for 12 behavioral norms grouped into three types of cultures—Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive—on the Circumplex.'

Humansynergistics
Organisational Culture

It would appear that the 'entry point' for taking a look at the organisational culture is that of people's *behaviour,* which is one of the more evident and tangible areas of expressed values and norms according to Schein. Some other approaches are presented below, which attempt to assess culture via other visible expressions such as the physical environment, the 'stories' that are told etc.

➢ A culture audit

This would tend to be in a looser format – not based on any specific model of culture types, but rather exploring different elements that make up organizational culture. The audits can be carried out by one person/small team of internal or external people or can be used to structure group discussions in a self-assessment process.

- *Example 1:* a checklist of things to look at, explore, when entering an organisation, Richard Seel (www.new-paradigm.co.uk/checklist). This is a selection of points structured around key areas

such as Communications (styles, modes); Dress Code; the physical environment; food; attitudes to the organisation's history; meetings; rewards and recognition; attitudes to time etc.

- *Example 2:* a series of questions that can trigger/shape discussions around different elements of organisational culture. These can also be used as prompts for organising data gathered in other ways e.g. by an external person/peers from another organisation coming in to enquire via interviews, observation etc.

Example: prompt questions for data collection or for use in group discussion, IDRC

1. What kinds of people are involved in this organization? Who are the real leaders? Who gets ahead? (These questions provide information on the informal reward and power system, as well as identifying any heroes.)
2. What is it like to be part of this organization? (This question provides a real overview of the organization's culture.)
3. Why is the organization successful? (This helps describe what areas are perceived as important.)
4. Can you clearly define the organization's values or beliefs and norms of acceptable behaviour?
5. What is the organization's culture now? How strongly and uniformly does this exist across the organization?
6. Is the organization a safe environment in which to grow and make mistakes?
7. Are people considered important to this organization?
8. What skills and actions are rewarded?
9. Does the leadership promote openness, risk-taking, and trust?
10. What is the history of the organization?
11. Does the organization focus inwardly, rather than to the outside world, that is, does it have only a short-term focus?
12. How frequent is the turnover of personnel?
13. What are the "war stories" and anecdotes of this organization? (continued below)
14. What kinds of people are involved in this organization? Who are the real leaders? Who gets ahead? (These questions provide information on the informal reward and power system, as well as identifying any heroes.)
15. What is it like to be part of this organization? (This question provides a real overview of the organization's culture.)
16. Why is the organization successful? (This helps describe what areas are perceived as important.)
17. Can you clearly define the organization's values or beliefs and norms of acceptable behaviour?
18. What is the organization's culture now? How strongly and uniformly does this exist across the organization?
19. Is the organization a safe environment in which to grow and make mistakes?
20. Are people considered important to this organization?
21. What skills and actions are rewarded?
22. Does the leadership promote openness, risk-taking, and trust?
23. What is the history of the organization?
24. Does the organization focus inwardly, rather than to the outside world, that is, does it have only a short-term focus?
25. How frequent is the turnover of personnel?
26. What are the "war stories" and anecdotes of this organization?
27. What are the major events in this organization's past?
28. How do people new to the organization learn the ropes?
29. What matters have a high priority in this organization?
    What matters have a low priority?

Overall, how would you describe the culture of your organization?

> An enquiry process

Less of an instrument or tool, this approach to diagnosing culture would tend to emphasize a *process* of co-creation of the analysis based on conversations, participatory workshops, consultations on draft outputs etc. This approach is strongly championed by Holbeche, and others who do not ascribe to the 'design and build' school for culture change. It is based on the recognition that small groups are the basic units to focus on, and that the 'culture change process is essentially about managing meaning through information and relationship networks... therefore co-construction – not consultation – is key to releasing energy. 'The conversations can be highly structured however, and for example can draw on tools to shape the group discussions, such as the prompt list of questions in the IDRC culture audit above.

Comments on the diagnosis approaches:

- ✓ In general it is very useful to have a structured approach to diagnosing, and most of the above do present the opportunity to shape the enquiry around a pre-existing structure. This takes the form of either a typology of cultures, or a set of prompt questions which explore the different facets of organisational culture.
- ✓ The use of a quantitative approach in the OCAI may appeal to many organisations.
- ✓ The 'upward cascade' method of the OCAI is also a positive element, as it builds from the starting point of the individual's perception and then moves into group discussion and consensus making. This method could also be applied to the other instruments, but certainly it is simpler when combined with a scoring/ranking against descriptive statements.
- ✓ The IDRC prompt questions is a very flexible instrument as it lends itself to application in any context – as a focus for group discussions; as the content for a more extended workshop; as an enquiry framework for an external (or internal) assessment.
- ⚐ The OCAI and OCI rely on an acceptance of a pre-defined typology of organisational cultures or of individual behaviour patterns. Full investigation of these instruments should take place in order to ensure that they are acceptable as ways of 'framing' organisational culture – the implication being that once the diagnosis is based on these typologies, the future change work will also have to be in alignment with those models.
- ⚐ In a similar vein, tailoring the OCAI and OCI instruments may prove difficult. They are trademarked and may not permit adjustments in terms of tailoring to different societal culture contexts (is behaviour 'universal'?). There may also be specific points of interest that would be good to include (e.g. perhaps around evidence-based culture) and it is not clear if the standard instrument could be adapted.
- ⚐ Whilst the quadrant approach in OCAI might feel familiar to some who may have used it in other fields of work, others may not feel so comfortable with locating the cultural 'intangibles' along a spectrum or fixing a culture within a box. It would be important to reflect upon how all members of staff might respond to this approach.
- ⚐ The OCI may be a useful instrument for exploring behaviour, but should probably be complemented by other approaches/tools to ensure coverage of all dimensions of culture.
- ⚐ The OCI does appear to use rather value-laden terms to describe the three main 'types' of behaviour. This is definitely not indicative of an 'appreciative' approach.

b) A Focused and intensive 'launch' and its follow-up :

Example of one country office of an INGO:

An intensive one-week workshop with one international consultant and one local consultant was followed by accompaniment by the local consultant for a one-year period, with quarterly visits but also being available for calls/email support. The workshop was with all staff initially and they collectively identified current culture and desired future behaviour that would be required in order to deliver their new strategy. They used practical exercises, games, role plays etc. to practice what the new behaviour and future organisation (short to long term) would look like. Some time was spent during the week working intensively with leaders/managers as change leaders and champions of the process.

For behaviour change at individual level, they did an exercise of identifying one real strength ("something which the person should continue to do and be an inspiration to others) and one thing to change. After the workshop, they incorporated new behaviour descriptions into performance management and tailored individual follow up, taking into account those identified strengths/improvement areas identified in the workshop.

They changed working practices in order to create a facilitating environment for desired behaviours e.g. protecting certain hours a week from the daily routine or operational tasks in order to free up 'thinking/innovation' time.

They changed their structure to reflect new desired ways of working – across teams, even physically relocating people so that there could be improved communication, learning and sharing among members of different units.

Comments on this:

- ✓ This would appear to be a fairly 'light touch' approach. However, it does cover the essentials such as establishing an agreed diagnosis and a vision for the future, together with the mechanisms for facilitating the desired changes.
- ✓ It is a highly participatory process of co-creation in the initial phase.

- ✓ The initial workshop will have established the issue of OC as a high priority for all, thus facilitating the implementation of follow-up activities such as the performance management incorporation of the behavioural revisions.
- ⚐ Investing the time in such a concentrated fashion requires commitment and agreement by all to put aside the 'day job' for the period of the workshop.
- ⚐ Possibly reliant on identifying the appropriate consultants – internationally and locally.

c) Use of 'tag' words

It is common to encounter culture change processes that use a few key words that aim to sum up or synthesize the essence of the desired new culture. Examples:

- 'Constructive', 'Leading', 'Connecting'

Or a pair/set of words:

- 'Audacious and rigorous'; 'challenging and respectful'; 'agile and accountable'

Comments on this:

- ✓ Similar to the use of key words to describe organisational values, this facilitates a rapid and clear communication of the essence of the new culture to all stakeholders.
- ✓ It is feasible that the use of 'tag' words can be helpful in encouraging new stories to emerge and new symbols to appear. Invitations to staff to share stories and symbols that they believe illustrate the words can be a path towards increased internalisation of the new culture, and generate new conversations about what it means to the people who make up the organisation.
- ⚐ There is a danger that without further explanation, the 'tag' word might be interpreted in very different ways by individual staff. Thus they would need to be initially accompanied by a range of other materials and communication processes.
- ⚐ Translation into other languages may present complications

d) *Use of 'success factors', standards or indicators* to describe in detail how the desired behaviour will be assessed. They are often expressed within the formulation of Competency Frameworks, and other similar HR 'levers' for embedding culture change.

Generally these would be *positive* in nature, for example:

for 'Acting with pace' desired behaviour, there are three success factors identified:

- ❖ Has a 'can do' attitude and sense of urgency
- ❖ Keeps approaches simple and delivery 'good enough'
- ❖ Takes calculated risks and makes quick decisions, taking account of input from others

Indicators can also be used to illustrate the kind of behaviour that is *not wanted*.

Comments on this:

- a) Similar to capacity indicators in organisational assessment tools, the use of detailed descriptions of what something actually looks like in practice does aide an individual's increased awareness and understanding. This can prove to be effective when applied to behaviour change, as most models of changes in behaviour (in whatever field) will place 'knowledge' as the first step along the change path.
- b) Such detailed descriptions provide a common frame of reference, with less opportunity for different individual interpretations to create misunderstandings or false expectations.
- c) When used in the context of individual performance assessment, the descriptions can be useful references to elicit examples of past and current behaviours in order to jointly assess degrees of change.
- d) The issue of contextual culture may come into play here, with the challenge of making the descriptions relevant to diverse cultures if they are to be used across various parts of the world. It may be feasible to develop contextually appropriate descriptions – using the 'co-creation' methods described above?

e) Use of 'stories for cultural change

In an article by Dorian LaGuardia, the author proposes that organizational cultures can adapt and change to new influences relatively quickly. One such key influence is that generated by the stories that are told about

'how things are' – for example, what behaviours are encouraged or tolerated, how people progress in the organization etc. These provide common organizational references that bring to the surface the culture and help people know how to interpret the organization they are part of.

When stories are negative or focused on things that don't work then it affects people's energy, commitment, innovation etc. La Guardia proposes that it is possible to get people to tell stories that amplify the best aspects of the organization and consciously facilitate culture change, particularly by telling positive stories *often*. It is proposed that there is a 'tipping point' whereby the amount of story 'input' has been sufficient to enable the organizational system to continue the culture change on its own. It is possible to then reinforce the culture changes with complementary measures such as through your recruitment, training, performance management systems. The aim is to reach the point where the new positive stories become so common that people can't remember what came before.

The method that is described in the article can be summarized as follows:

Using an agreed foundation which identifies the new, desired culture and its associated behaviours can help to generate the stories. LaGuardia proposes a method based on a repeating cycle of inquiry, engagement and review.

The **inquiry phase** is aimed at obtaining answers to questions about how people see positive values and competencies in practice e.g. what good teamwork looks like in terms of what individuals do, how they behave etc. It is suggested that answers can be obtained by use of surveys, peer-interviews, workshops etc.

The **engagement phase** asks people to comment on the common themes from the stories that were shared, building on the findings and providing more examples to illustrate them. This can be done via more surveys, debates in teams, invitations to staff to provide examples of how their managers exemplify the behaviours, introducing training and development activities that align with the emerging competencies etc.

The **review phase** seeks to uncover the best stories and identify how to circulate them throughout the organization. Common phrases, similarly stated challenges or a typical story about high-performing individuals are circulated in newsletters, intranet, bullet boards etc.

LaGuardia suggests that the next cycle picks up on emerging trends and brings them into the new inquiry phase e.g. if many people report that "Our organization has some of the brightest minds in the field", the next cycle of inquiry questions could include, "How does the fact that the organization has some of the brightest minds in the field enable it to build partnerships?".

Comments on this:

✓ Stories are very powerful and play a large role in perpetuating existing cultures or, as illustrated here, can facilitate the introduction of new ways of seeing 'how things are'.
✓ Stories can be captured (in written form or visually or orally) and recorded for history and comparative purposes. Thus they can be useful for assessing culture change over time.
🕮 The use of stories can be a good 'fit' with many diverse societal cultures in different parts of the world.
🕮 The particular method described in the box above may require some rigorous planning and implementing, to ensure the cycles are operating to their full potential.

f) Recognising the transitions

William Bridges has written about the importance of recognising and managing the transition process, which he defines as a psychological process people go through as they come to terms with new situations brought about by change. He says this is different from managing change, which he defines as external situations that don't stay the same – for example, redundancies, strategy changes, re-organisation, restructuring etc. Bridges identifies three phases of transition:

- The *Ending, Letting Go, Losing* phase in which we need to help people let go of the old ways and their old identities and deal with their losses. (Change begins with an ending!)
- The *Neutral Zone* in which the old is gone but the new era isn't quite there yet.
- The *New Beginning* phase in which people develop a new identity and discover a new sense of purpose.

This material emphasises the 'people' dimension – how individuals experience changes in their lives and how to accompany them through the phases. Bridges provides a number of concrete tips which may be relevant for processes which involve organisational culture change.

Comments on this:

This has been included as a reminder of a relatively common understanding about the importance of accompanying the individual member of staff through their own 'loss curve' (the Kubler-Ross model used in people management practice).

4.3.   Overall points for consideration:

1. How far can you adapt your approach to cultural change to the pre-existing internal conditions? E.g. the case where there was pre-existing low trust in leaders/hierarchy – so there was a need to use an approach that was not dependent on existing leaders modelling desired behaviour change. So, should the overarching approach to this work be a *situational* one? No **one** recipe (planned/emergent/strong leadership role etc.) can be applied to different contexts. This implies a thorough diagnosis before engaging in the change process.
2. Following this point above, is there a case to be made for a 'change-able' culture ? If there is agreement that change is not an 'event' but is a constant feature of our lives, and of our external context, then the 'change-able' or adaptive culture becomes highly relevant. Similarly, whether internal changes are taking place within the cultural sphere, the programmatic, the structural etc. – having a strong adaptive culture and capacity will be the foundation stone. The consideration might therefore be, when engaged in a wide change process (such as national field offices becoming registered local organisations), what place is there for working on organisational culture in a way which facilitates the growth of this adaptive capacity?
3. A number of the examples above include an emphasis on 'bringing in new blood' – either through restructuring or expansion. Is there clarity on the kind of situation that might trigger this type of intervention? Would it be possible/desirable to establish some kind of criteria for identifying when this may be a positive option to achieve desired culture change?
4. A key 'tip' that may be of interest emerged from a case study presented by Holbeche[9] (p.254). Here, after diagnosing the existing culture, the HR person in the company used three 'buckets' in which to place cultural elements in a change process:
   - One 'bucket' for things to celebrate and work to enhance
   - One 'bucket' for things that don't matter and therefore don't touch
   - One 'bucket' for things that need to need to change in order to support the business strategy – but we should not try to do too much too soon

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[9] *In 'Organization Development: A practitioner's guide for OD and HR', Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011*

5. Questions that INGO staff are asking themselves

- ❖ Questions around prioritising this area, and getting leadership engagement:

  - What is the most effective to way to work with the leadership on this? No process of change happens if the sponsors/leaders are not behind it, but there is a difference between saying 'yes I agree' and 'yes I agree, I understand and we will do it together'. That is the issue that concerns me – certain people will not accept criticism or be happy to be put in a position where they do have to show a difference. So how to deal with a leadership that doesn't fully understand, or thinks it is ok so long as it doesn't mean a real change?
  - (similar to above point): We need leaders to be behind it. It isn't an HR project - not something that needs to be done in a part of the organisation. It needs leaders to commit, put resources and make it happen.
  - How to make this seen as a prime issue for the organisation? The vision translating into culture and values, and that we address it together. So it is about how to position this so it doesn't get buried into the list of very operational priorities. This is a hard one …a real one.

- ❖ On the timeframes

  - How to pace it appropriately? A short, fast process or a slow/extended one? Both have pros and cons.

- ❖ Who are the 'change agents'?

  - Do you need someone 100% dedicated to managing a change process or does it need to be taken on more broadly? It can't be unending, but for it to generate all the changes you need to allow people to take on the changes, adopt it in an organic way.
  - You may have ideas on policy, good practice etc. and produce materials about these, but the implementation is the challenge. How to make it alive? We've lots of tools for communication – weekly emails etc. - but actually how many read them? It has to be through the managers, to change how things are done – need to reinforce the role of the manager as cultural change agent.

- ❖ Questions around the kind of additional support that might be needed/available:

  - How to be clear on the added value of outside help? Need to look at who could provide professional input, but also it is important to learn from peer organisations. There could there be some cross-fertilisation and perhaps do it together?
  - How to hear more of what others are doing, particularly from the sector and within WWF (rather than from private sector/business case examples)? For example, sometimes one doesn't know how to structure the question to allow a dialogue to take place and get into the issue in depth and tease things apart. So having a sense of the processes and questions that others are thinking about would be helpful.

- ❖ On learning

  - How to consciously monitor and evaluate these kinds of processes? How best to reflect and be more conscious about this aspect of change – build on the increasing awareness?

- ❖ On diversity

  - As a global 'family' how to truly reflect the diversity of membership in the culture, and not be a predominately northern culture e.g. in our ways of making decisions.

- ❖ Integration

  - With a high input of new people, what is the best way of consciously inducting them into the desired new culture?

A final word?

"The world we live in today is not one subject to tight human mastery…..almost to the contrary, it is one of dislocation and uncertainty, a 'runaway' world. And, disturbingly, what was supposed to create greater and greater certainty – the advance of human knowledge and 'controlled intervention' into society and nature – is actually deeply involved with this unpredictability….Manufactured uncertainty is a result of human intervention into the conditions of social life and into nature."

(Anthony Giddens in Beyond Left and Right)

6. Annex One: Culture in Society

The cultural orientation of a society reflects the complex interaction of values, attitudes, and behaviours displayed by its members. Individuals express culture and its normative qualities through the values they hold about life and the world around them. These values in turn affect their attitudes about the form of behaviour considered most appropriate and effective in any given situation. The continually changing patterns of individual and group behaviour eventually influence the society's culture, and the cycle begins again.

Adler, N. (2002)
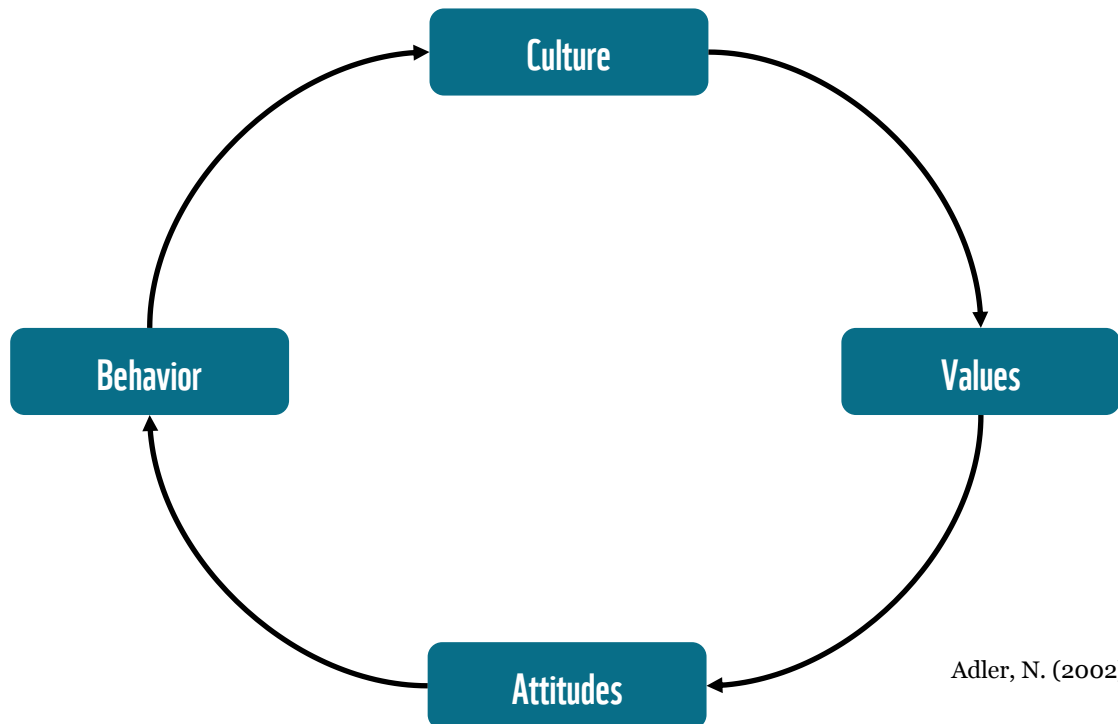
Six basic dimensions describe the cultural orientations of societies: people's qualities as individuals, their relationship to nature and the world, their relationship to other people, their primary type of activity, and their orientation in space and time. These answer the questions: Who am I? How do I see the world? How do I relate to other people? What do I do? How do I use space and time? Each orientation reflects a value with behavioural and attitudinal implications.

A Dutch management researcher, Geert Hofstede, carried out a 40-country study, later expanded to cover 60 countries including Oriental and Occidental cultures. He found highly significant differences in the behaviour and attitudes of employees and managers across the world. Hofstede found that national culture explained more of the differences in work-related values and attitudes than did position within the organisation, profession, age or gender. In summarizing the most important differences, he located these on five dimensions as follows:

6.1. Individualism vs Collectivism

Individualism exists when people define themselves primarily as separate individuals and make their main commitments to themselves. It implies loosely knit social networks in which people primarily focus on taking care of themselves and their immediate families. Collectivism is characterised by tight social networks in which people strongly distinguish between their own groups and others. Collectivists hold common goals and objectives, and expect members of their particular in-group to look after them, protect them, and give them security in exchange for their loyalty to the group.

6.2. Power Distance

This reflects the extent to which less powerful members of organisations accept an unequal distribution of power. Is the boss right because he or she is the boss (high power distance) or only when he or she knows the correct answer (low power distance)? Do employees do their work in a particular way because the boss wants it that way (high power distance) or because they personally believe that it is the best way to do it (low power distance)?

6.3. Uncertainty Avoidance

This reflects the extent to which people in a society feel threatened by ambiguity and therefore try to avoid ambiguous situations by providing greater certainty and predictability. Organisations reduce uncertainty by establishing more formal rules, rejecting deviant ideas and behaviour, accepting the possibility of identifying absolute truths and providing their employees with greater career stability.

6.4. Career Success and Quality of Life

This dimension contrasts societies focused more narrowly on career success with those more broadly emphasising quality of life. The first type would emphasise assertiveness and the acquisition of money and things (materialism), while not showing particular concern for people. By contrast, the second type would tend to emphasise relationships among people, concern for others, and the overall quality of life. This dimension strongly affects workplace motivation.

6.5. Confucian Dynamism

This dimension measures employee's devotion to the work ethic and their respect for tradition. Many observers attribute the rapid economic growth of Asia's "Four Tigers" to their extremely strong work ethic and commitment to traditional Confucian values.

A further dimension was added by researchers Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), that of:

6.6. Rules and Relationships or Universalist vs Particularist

Universalist societies believe that laws apply equally to everyone and they therefore must be upheld by everyone at all times. By contrast, in particularist societies, the nature of the relationship determines how someone will act in a particular situation. In cross-cultural organisational dealings, clashes between these cultures are legendary. Those from universalist cultures rely on extensive and specific contracts to document the "rules" of doing business together, whereas particularists would tend to view these as signs that they are not trusted and that therefore no relationship exists. They consequently may feel little need to adhere to the contract.

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http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=rjcm20#.U7wOXfldXTo

and the Sage website for the International Journal of Cross Cultural Management http://ccm.sagepub.com/

8. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

About Framework

Framework is a collective of independent consultants dedicated to strengthening organisations, networks, and social movements working for positive social change. Our aim is to help develop healthy civil society organisations in the UK and internationally. We do this by drawing on our 30-year history working worldwide with development, humanitarian and environmental organisations, applying our specialist knowledge of organisational development and management, and upholding our values of creativity, integrity, and connection. Framework has worked closely with WWF UK and some of its network partners on initiatives concerning partnership, organisational assessment, organisational learning and organisational development for over a decade. You can find out more at www.framework.org.uk

About the author

A former Director of INTRAC, **Brenda Lipson** has been a member of the Framework collective since 2008. With a deep seated passion for supporting change-oriented organizations to truly realize their potential, she seeks to contribute her practical experience and knowledge of organizational management and capacity development strategies and processes. She is the co-author of a publication focused on the design and implementation of partner capacity building programmes.

IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN DEVELOPING, PLANNING AND UNDERTAKING ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

A 'think piece'

Brenda Lipson
www.framework.org.uk
July 2014

framework

Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and
to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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