Under the Skin of Change

*Meanings, Models and Management*

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November 2012
ABSTRACT

For society at large, and organizations in particular, the magnitude, speed, impact, and unpredictability of change, are greater than ever before. But there seems to be a general consensus between practitioners and scholars that few are successful when trying to lead organizational change. Different surveys also indicate that managers identify the ordeal of leading change as one of the key obstacles to increased competitiveness. This is the specific research focus in this thesis: the use of change management models, their influence on management decision making and the meaning they make in practice for the organizations adopting the models. The following overarching research question has been formulated: How does management use models to manage change?

The problem addressed is both complex and complicated. Therefore, the research question is supported by the sub questions: What does the literature say about models for organizational change best practice? How do organizations organize change management? Future directions of quality management and change management? The theoretical frame of reference is focusing on aspects of organizational change and systems thinking. Six papers; a literature review, a web survey, two case studies, an organizational ethnography and a conceptual paper are appended. Based on the studies, the following conclusions could be made:

- There seems to be no evidence based change management best practice. The theory is in motion.
- Organizations are beginning to organize change based on change management models, but the ad hoc approach is prevalent.
- Management does not seem to make much use of change management models in practice, some consultants do.
- Organizational change can be described as a process comprising important elements outlined in a logical sequence.

The answer to the overarching research question is: Managers apply change management models to a relatively small extent – the theory-practice gap is for real. Managers are often informed of the benefits of change management models through business publications promoting certain models or “gurus”. But in an effort to just get it done there is a tendency to dismiss theoretical aspects of organizational change in favor of using a set of quick prescriptive steps, or no structure at all. It could well be that most change management models actually are fit for use, but the root cause is in fact a knowledge transfer problem. Managers simply do not have incentives, focus and ability to apply theoretical models in practice.
SAMMANFATTNING


- Det tycks inte finnas någon evidensbaserad ”best practice”. Teorin inom detta område är i rörelse.
- Organisationer börjar organisera förändring baserad på förändringsarbete modeller, men ad hoc metoder är utbredda.
- Chefer tycks i praktiken inte använda förändringsmodeller i någon betydande omfattning, vissa konsulter gör det dock.
- Organisatorisk förändring kan beskrivas som en process innehållande viktiga element beskrivna i en logisk följd.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people who have contributed to make this research journey possible. To start with, I wish to thank my supervisors Rickard Garvare and Raine Isaksson for believing in this project. You have encouraged me to take on this challenge and have pushed me along the way with your good spirit and never-ending energy. Thank you, dear friends, for your generosity, patience and profound knowledge. Can you believe that we actually made it!

This work would not have been possible without the participating organizations. I would like to thank them for letting me use our business relationships for research purposes. A special thanks to Robert, the main character in study 2 – you really let me under the skin of your three year change challenge. Many thanks also to Anders and all other colleagues at Implement MP AB for support, encouragement and fruitful discussions on organizational change along the years.

I would like to thank Bjarne, Björn, Erik L, Erik V, Fredrik, Thomas and all other fellows at Luleå University of Technology. An extra thought of gratitude to Jostein Langstrand at Linköping University for valuable comments on earlier drafts of the thesis as well as to Henrik Eriksson at Chalmers for inspiring cooperation. Thanks to Dawn-Marie in Canada for our Skype-sessions, to Stefan for our “hunting seminars” and to Anna and Mats for guiding me into the world of ethnography.

Finally, I wish to praise my parents, siblings and the rest of my family for love, support and encouragement. The greatest and most loving thank to Jeanette, my best supporter, criticizer, friend and lifelong companion. Thanks for putting up with me. Without you, nothing of this would have happened.

Can one thank a horse? Anyway, I would like to thank “Åskan” for being such a good listener and for fixing my aching back.

Stockholm, November 2012
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APPENDED PAPERS

The selection of appended papers is based on my research journey, the research questions and my effort in each paper.


Hallencreutz, J. (2010), *Who is in charge of change management around here*, Conference proceedings, 13th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2010 in Cottbus, Germany, August 30-September 1.


OTHER PAPERS PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

These papers could be seen as stepping stones in my research process.

Hallencreutz, J., Isaksson, R. (2006), ”Create Knowledge – not figures” The importance of measurement system management, Performance Measurement and Management: Public and Private, Cranfield School of Management, Center for Business Performance, UK


“When I leave our meetings, I think I get this with processes… but hell, you have to explain this once again.” Robert, always eager to go forward, had stumbled on methodological issues. I had once again tried to explain the need for change and the benefits of process management and filled the whiteboard with boxes and arrows. Apparently I had failed to reach him. The models made no sense and there seemed to be a gap between my theory and his practice.¹

I am raised in a truly academic family in Uppsala, an academic city with a University founded in 1477. When I graduated from high school, the majority of my friends went straight on to the University. Rather than follow the crowd I instead wanted to “make a buck”, so I completed my military service and steered myself to a job as a clerk at an insurance company in Stockholm from where I progressed to a career as project leader, manager and consultant in both service and manufacturing companies. Two decades later, I steered myself into action and completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

Along the years, it has been obvious to me that academic theories and management models are one thing while the actual realization of these is another. Textbooks and management literature introduce various models, concepts and ideas in a clean and objectified manner. The reality, where I have been involved, has always been less clear cut. To me, this has served as a proof of my deep prejudice about academics and bookworms whom appear distant from reality. Since 2002 I have worked as a management consultant in the field of quality and change management. During these last years it has become apparent to me that a theoretical frame of reference assists me to comprehend the challenges in the real world. This evolved into something more serious in 2005 when I completed an online course in Quality Management at Gotland University. From that point in time I started to reflect on my work in a more academic way. So now having completed my doctoral thesis one can say that my journey has taken me “back to the academic roots” – although I have conducted my research together with my fellows in Luleå and not in my birth town of Uppsala.

In the summer of 1995 I was the Information Manager at Agria Animal Insurances² and had nothing but a vague idea about organizational change. The theory was unknown. At that time, Anders Mellberg, CEO of Agria, found the

¹The story of Robert is narrated in paper 2, Under the skin of change.
²The only organization, so far, that has received the Swedish Quality Award twice, in 1999 and 2003.
SIQ business excellence model and decided to use it as a stepping stone for a long term investment in quality management. He involved me in his thoughts via a series of messages from his fax machine, sent from his summer house in Medelpad in the northern part of Sweden. I was sitting at our head office in Stockholm and used the fax messages to cut and paste guidelines for the forthcoming business planning process. The result of this summer session was a 47 page document which was distributed to the whole management team in mid-July, when everyone except for me was on vacation. I will never forget the shaken reaction from the Chief Veterinarian, calling from his summer house in Öland, when the envelope hit his mailbox; “Jacob, 47 pages about quality management, what’s going on??” I spoke enthusiastically about TQM and the need for improved quality. But to be honest, there was very little substance behind the words. Nevertheless, in August Anders Mellberg launched “Agria - 99” – a three year quality improvement program with the slogan “increased customer loyalty to a lower cost” and the main objective to achieve “25 up and 25 down” (meaning 25% increase in sales and 25% decrease in handling cost). I was assigned as the project leader. At this point, this journey began.

Despite challenging TQM projects I left Agria in February 1999. After almost twelve years in the insurance business I wanted to try something else. My new address was Fagerdala World Foams, a Swedish based international group specializing in the development, manufacture and marketing of polymer foams. I was assigned as vice president for the branch in Sweden, with a specific mission to introduce a “modern” business oriented quality culture, tailored especially for the plants and lines producing parts for the car industry. Very soon I realized that this was a different scenario. The methodologies and tools successfully used at Agria were to some extent applicable on a conceptual level in the management team, but failed to work in practice in this new environment without a great deal of modification. The sketches, models and discussions of quality management were simply not enough. The hard way I learnt to cope with internal contradictions between white and blue collars, regional differences in company culture, a very active owner and in general a much rougher business environment. I remained with Fagerdala for almost three years. After a brief visit in an IT company in the end of 2001 (handling crisis for six months) I embarked on my career as a management consultant. From that point in time I also began to develop a profound interest in theoretical considerations on organizational change, with a specific focus on implementation challenges.

Being a consultant, it is my job to assist management teams to overcome managerial obstacles when leading organizational change. During the last decade, I have met some brilliant leaders but more often skilled specialists who
have qualified for managerial positions due to their field of expertise rather than leadership talent. In an urge to manage and control, I see rigorous operating procedures and performance management systems. I meet management teams who try to grasp the whole by measuring and controlling fragments. I listen to managers who feel misunderstood by colleagues and have attended uncountable boring and inefficient management meetings. Questions such as: For whom do we exist? Which processes create value? How do we measure success? Do we have a sense of urgency around relevant challenges? appear to be difficult to answer in many organizations, despite widely used models like ISO 9000, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma, Lean and Balanced Scorecard. There seem to be disturbing discrepancies between meanings, models and management.

The text in front of you can be viewed as a narrative resume of this journey – originating from the early stages at Agria in 1995 and leading me to where I am today.
1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research background, the purpose, the research questions and the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Background

Some years ago I had an assignment at a middle-sized Swedish manufacturing company experiencing ongoing problems ”getting the production people to keep the sales peoples promises”. For decades, the business had moved on, but now the company was suffering from intense attacks from new low-cost competitors. The margins were gone. Moreover, there was escalating fuzz from several key customers about rigid and slow procedures, old fashioned pricing and a general lack of customer orientation. The management team was frustrated as the dread clouds were gathering. My mission was to assist in refocusing away from the distractions of the internal battles and shift the focus towards their customer demands, needs and expectations. As the assignment proceeded, I thought a lot about the root causes of the company’s problems. The Sales manager, a young and ambitious woman, was constantly displeased with late deliveries, high production costs and trashed calculations. She was squeezed between different interests. Where on one side from customer’s demand for flexibility and value for money, while on the other, from the owner’s desire for return on capital invested. The production manager, a senior who had worked for the company for some thirty years, had a totally different viewpoint. According to him, the company had abandoned its genuine focus on supreme product quality. Nowadays, the clients were allowed to make late changes and design adjustments, without coordination and very often ”free of charge”. The sales rep’s paperwork was rarely correct.

The communication between sales, the engineering department and procurement was confused despite the ISO 9001 certified quality management system and different attempts with Lean and other management fads. The CFO, a loyal clerk and cousin to one of the owners, was disgruntled. He was worried about the new balanced scorecard and the Managing Director’s need for facts, figures and control. The Managing Director, a highly skilled man around 40, had also expressed doubts about the future of the company. His mission was to grow the company by all means modern and ready for the competition of the 21st century, combined with strong profitability along the way to keep the owners happy. But he doubted the ability of his management team as well as the rest of the organization. Most of the colleagues he met felt no need for change at all.
This is a snapshot of a complex reality of organizational change. For society at large, and organizations in particular, the magnitude, speed, impact, and unpredictability of change, are greater than ever before (Burnes, 2009, Helms Mills et al., 2009, By Todnem, 2005). But despite the need for unceasing transformation, there seems to be a general consensus between practitioners and scholars that few are successful when trying to lead organizational change (Haines et al., 2005, Kotter, 1996, 2008, Hughes, 2011). Different surveys also indicate that managers identify the ordeal of leading change as one of the key obstacles to increased competitiveness (Worall & Cooper, 1997, Dunphy et al., 2003, IBM, 2008, Senturia et al., 2008, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008). The field of organizational change is a paradox - organizations must continually change in order to survive but the very nature of organizational change itself often lead to inherent risks (Klarner et al., 2008). Although debated, it is estimated that around 70 percent of all organizational change initiatives fail to reach their intended objectives (Senturia et al., 2008). Beer & Nohria, (2000) estimated that nearly two-thirds of all change efforts fail. Of the ones deemed successful, as many as 75 percent of these fail to achieve their intended result, according to Nikolaou et al. (2007). Haines et al. (2005) refer to own studies and claim that 75 percent of all change initiatives fail. Kotter (1996, 2008) comes to the same result having studied 100 large-scale change efforts. Either the intended changes were not fully launched, or failed, or achieved but over budget, late and with great frustration.

According to Doyle (2002), skills required to manage change are being incorporated into the existing expectations, roles and responsibilities of managers together with other employees. In recent years, management textbooks have been devoting entire chapters to organizational change and programmatic change models and techniques to support this incorporation (Helms Mills et al., 2009). By linking the discussion of change to stories about “real” companies, they have affirmed the need for these types of practices. But the use of models seems to be problematic regardless of theoretical definitions or models chosen. According to Helms Mills et al. (2009) statistics suggest that 75 percent of all studied American *Total Quality Management initiatives* during the last decade failed. Studies of TQM in European countries found a failure rate of 70 percent or more (Burnes, 2009). A study of major European, Asian and North American companies by Bain & Co found that the failure rate for *culture change* initiatives was 90 percent (Rogers et al., 2006). Studies of major change projects involving *new technology* found failure rates between 40 and 80 percent (Berggren & Lindkvist, 2001, Burnes 2009). Zook (2001) learns that between 80 and 90 percent of organizations fail to execute their *strategies*. It is also claimed that 70 percent of all *Balanced Scorecard* implementations fail (de Waal & Counet,
2009). The concept of Business Process Re-engineering scores no better, failure rates between 60 and 80 percent are reported (Bryant, 1998, Breslin & McCann, 1998, Bywater, 1997). Little scholarly research has been carried out on Six Sigma’s influence on management theory and application (Goffnett, 2004, Schroeder et al., 2005) but the deployment of Lean seems to follow the general trend – studies indicate failure rates around 80 percent (Bashin & Burcher, 2006). These findings are difficult to overlook. Something seems to go terribly wrong when management theories are turned into practice by means of models, decade after decade.

Failures are often generally explained by implementation problems such as cultural resistance, lack of communication and weak management. Other reasons cited include the lack of attention given to the human dynamics of change and a lack of knowledge of the underlying processes3 of change (Armenakis et al., 1993, Burnes, 1996, 2009). In the organizational leader’s efforts to just “get it done” there has been a tendency to dismiss all the theoretical aspects of organizational change and the underlying assumptions, knowledge and understanding of the change process in favor of using a set of quick prescriptive steps (Burnes, 1996, 2009, Sanwal, 2008). But recent studies reveal the crucial role of cultural and behavioral change during transformational projects (Jorgensen et al., 2009). The underlying mechanisms of behavioral and sociocultural aspects of organizational change must not be underestimated. Organizations are complex social systems. Change management, by means of models must also construct meaning. And meaning lies in cognition and not in external elements (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990). Oakland & Tanner (2007) emphasize that people are the essential contributor to successful change, and managing change within the culture is important. According to a survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2008) a root cause for failure is that management fails to win over the hearts and minds of the people in the organization. The lack of contextual knowledge and ability to understand the human response to change leads to change leaders who are unable to handle resistance and overcome obstacles (Andrews et al., 2008). Kotter claims after decades of research that the single crucial reason for failure is the lack of a sense of urgency among senior executives and middle management (Kotter, 2008). Organizations simply do not think they have to change. Yet other reasons could

3 The term “process” is used in this thesis meaning two different things. According to the Encyclopaedia the word comes from the Latin “processus” or “procedere” meaning “progress” or “move forward”. In this sense the word is used to describe a general course of events. In a management discourse, the meaning is slightly different. A business process could be defined as “A network of activities that, by the use of resources, repeatedly converts an input to an output for stakeholders” (Isaksson, 2006). See also chapter 2.
be that Senior Executives launch too many parallel change projects and seem to have unrealistic expectations about the outcome (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). Hackett (2006) concludes that many leaders are stuck in strategic and structural thinking from a time when competition and market conditions were different. He calls for a new organizational paradigm, where survivability, flexibility and systems thinking are key success factors. The field of quality management is also moving. Emerging topics in research on TQM involve implementation challenges and subsequently, its effects on firms (Qin-Qin & Kah-Hin, 2012). Research also indicates that management focus on processes is needed to execute successful organizational change (Isaksson, 2004, 2006, Oakland & Tanner, 2007). A wider systems view on an organizational level could possibly lead to an increased management focus on the horizontal multifunctional processes which deliver value to customers and other stakeholders (Deming, 1993). Moreover, leaders who see change as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event are likely to be more successful in realizing desired change outcomes (Rowland & Higgs, 2008).

To resume: organizations deal with management of change, by means of models. But there is no obvious way forward and many fail along the way in their effort to contextualize models and construct meaning. This provides a background to my general research interest; How do organizations organize change management? How does management use models to manage change? How can management models create meaning? Severely applied flawed theory is of little use. As is a perfect theory that fails to be implemented. Could it be possible to improve the chances of making good theory come to good change management practice by means of models constructing meaning?

1.2 Narrowing down the problem

There seems to be no widely accepted coherent definition of the term organizational change. The classic definition by Kurt Lewin (1951) describes change as a process of unfreezing a current state, moving it and freezing a new state. Carr et al. (1996) describes organizational change as a re-aligning process of people, resources, and culture. Ragsdell (2000) defines it as a movement from current state to a more desirable state. According to Helms Mills et al. (2009) organizational change can be defined as an alteration of a core aspect of an organization’s operation. Thus, the field of organizational change can be described and categorized in different ways, see for instance Burnes (2009) or Rowland & Higgs (2008). To put it simple, a change process is either described as a predictable phenomenon that could be planned or as a complex emergent phenomenon that is unplanned. A change could also be categorized based on magnitude, see for instance Nadler (1998) and Marshak (2002). Either a change
is incremental and continuous within the existing framework or intermittent, radical and outside the framework. Burnes (2009) uses the term punctuated change to describe a steady state that is punctuated of a burst of change activity as compared to continuous change. Within the Japan oriented quality movement the word Kaizen is often used to denote a continuous but incremental change while Kaikaku is used for breakthrough change (Imai, 1986, Juran, 1999, Womack & Jones, 2003). Different changes call for different management strategies. The choice of strategy for leading change could be distinguished between either “hard”, instrumental and uniform approaches to change or “soft”, organic and differentiated approaches, see for instance Beer & Nohria (2000) or Rowland & Higgs (2008). Senior & Swailes (2010) observe that the way change is performed has altered from problem solving to an acceptance of continuous change as a part of how organizations of today work. Incremental continuous change punctuated by intermittent breakthrough change executed in a planned, project like, manner seems to be a common approach for many organizations. Definitions guiding my research resumes that organizational change can be seen as a managed process to relocate individuals, groups and organizations from a current state to a desired future state where change management is the approach to lead that process.

A model can be described as set of relating concepts, describing the context we want to understand in a simplified manner (Andersen, 1998). In this thesis the term “change management model” will be used as an overarching description of a model designed to facilitate change management. A change management model can help organizations understand why change occurs, how it will occur and what will occur (Kezar, 2001). Crystal-clear descriptions of the differences between a management model, a methodology, an idea, a concept, a technique or a tool are still to be presented, see for instance Foley’s (2004, 2005) discussion on Total Quality Management (TQM) and Hellström’s (2006) discussion on management ideas. Models can be generally seen as partial representations or maps of theories (Van de Ven, 2007). According to Dean & Bowen (1994), a management model could be defined as a multi-dimensional management approach consisting of principles, practices and techniques. To be able to capture, describe and understand the complexity of a contemporary organization, practitioners as well as researchers strive to simplify reality into easy-to-understand models and step-by-step transition processes. By doing so, we find means to codify and visualize abstractions such as systems, cultural phenomena,
principles and values and link them to certain techniques. The development of a management model could be described in three steps, according to Furusten (1999). First, a management practice is observed in one or several organizations. Secondly, the observations are analyzed to establish relationships and patterns between variables. Finally, the outcome of the analysis is transferred to a text or picture of some sort. In order to find relevance in contexts outside the one that has been observed, the text is decontextualized. The completed model is then less dependent on context and therefore more easily transferable to other contexts. However, since it has been stripped of contextual dependencies, there are several questions that are left open for interpretation (Langstrand, 2012).

Researchers as well as practitioners impose order on the perceived world by introducing models in an effort to construct meaning (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990). But studies have shown that practitioners often fail to adopt the findings of research in fields such as management (Tranfield et al., 2003, Rosseau, 2006). Moreover, there seems to be a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of organizational change, both in academia and among practitioners (Stuart, 1995, 1996). Some scholars claim that the literature is more conceptual and the empirical studies describing change processes are inadequate (Shanley, 2007, Burnes, 2009, Hartley et al., 1997, Doyle et al., 2000). Often mentioned success factors like “strong leadership”, “good communication” and “empowerment” are hard to argue against in theory, yet difficult to achieve in practice (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Helms Mills et al., 2009). From an academic point of view there seems to be no universal, prescriptive and systematic change management model to cover the diversified nature of change in organizations. This is despite the importance of change and the plethora of articles and books written in this field (Dunphy & Stace, 1993, Sheldrake & Saul, 1995). According to an extensive literature study by Hughes (2011), there is no empirical support for preoccupations with either the best way to manage change or the worst way to manage change. Management models rise and fall and will eventually be renewed or replaced (Abrahamson, 1996, Barley & Kunda, 1992, Giroux & Landry, 1998). From a manager’s point of view, one might dismiss the diversity of descriptions in management handbooks and academic literature as being too theoretical with no meaning in practice. This may be true to some extent, but a similar diversity is observed in real life. Based on a survey among Swedish production managers, Poksinska et al. (2010) unravel that the application of a specific management model differs significantly between organizations as well. Thus, managing change by means of models gives rise to a contextualization challenge. While the descriptions in the popular management literature may seem appealing, they are not directly applicable without some adaptation; the recontextualization of management models becomes a mirror image of the
decontextualization process, in which the abstract description is translated into a specific context. Given this chain of translations, it is unlikely that the initial practice captured in a model and the adopted one will be identical, leading to large variation in how specific management models provide guidance in practice. Findings, no matter how accurate and relevant they might be in theory, seem to be difficult to take from the drawing board back to reality again. Change management models seem to suffer from a lack of meaning in practice and their function as drivers for change could be discussed. Foley (2005) comes to the same conclusion having studied the impact of change management models from a quality perspective; “there has been such a gap between its promises and performance” (Foley, 2005, p 32). A cycle of interpretation, decontextualization, theory building, recontextualization and application is visualized in figure 1.

![Diagram](image-url)

Figure 1. A cycle of contextualization and the gaps between theory and applied practice.

My contention is that an improved understanding of the relationship between how change management models are applied by management and how practical change management is performed could possibly improve the outcome of organizational change initiatives. Since most managers are occupied with the ordeal of taking command of change, see for instance Senior & Swailes (2010), I focus this thesis on understanding planned change where managers are urged to lead.
1.3 Purpose and research questions

Traditionally, researchers start with a research problem which guides a number of choices starting with the problem definition and including choices for the research approach (Wallén, 1996). In this case, the starting point has been a wide research problem in shape of a general interest in organizational change challenges from a practitioner’s point of view, with a particular curiosity and concern for the gaps between theory and practice when managers are managing change by means of models. This boils down to my specific research focus in this thesis: the use of change management models, their influence on management decision making and the meaning they make in practice for the organizations adopting the models when planning and executing change initiatives. To be able to accomplish the purpose, the following overarching research question has been formulated:

- **How does management use models to manage change?**

The problem addressed is both complex and complicated. Therefore, the research question is supported by the following sub questions:

- **What does the literature say about models for organizational change best practice?**
- **How do organizations organize change management?**
- **Future directions of quality management and change management?**

It should be noted that this research does not claim to unveil general theory but instead to seek initial answers and contribute to a broader understanding of change management in practice. I do not pretend to cover all nuances of organizational life. The research is built on inductive exploratory reasoning based on an interpretive approach (see further in chapter 3). It is limited to focus on managerial aspects of change, linked to the use of change management models in a certain organizational context. Behavioral aspects from an individual perspective are delimited, so is also the societal perspective.
1.4 Thesis structure

Figure 2. The structure of this thesis and the appended papers.

Figure 3. An illustration of how the research questions are linked to the gap discussion and have been investigated in six studies presented in six papers.
2 THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

This chapter provides general concepts and definitions within the theoretical framework for the research presented in this thesis. Aspects of organizational change, systems thinking, sense-making and quality management are presented.

2.1 Axioms on organizational change

The rise of capitalism in Britain and other European countries in the mid-18th century created new problems that could not be accommodated under the old order and a need for coping with change emerged, see Burnes (2009). The earliest attempts to develop a systematic approach to change management began in the era following the Second World War. By the turn of the 1980s, an interest in organizational change was an established part of the thinking of practitioners and scholars, see Helms Mills et al. (2009). Change management models originating from quality management are often referred to in the literature on organizational change, see Burnes (2009), Helms Mills et al. (2009) and Senior Swailes (2010). In the 21st century, technological advances, demographic and socioeconomic shifts and environmental changes are all having a significant impact on the context in which organizations are operating and change is on every agenda, see Rowland & Higgs (2008). According to Helms Mills et al. (2009) organizational change can be defined as an alteration of a core aspect of an organization’s operation, but there is not a widely accepted coherent definition of the term.

Theories on organizational change follow the development of the classic organizational theories which emerged from the industrialization era. The mechanistic, hard systems approach to organizational change, seeing change as episodic with discrete beginning and end points, was grounded in this classic approach to managing and changing organizations, see for instance the classic definition by Kurt Lewin (1951) describing change as steps of unfreezing a current state, moving it and freezing a new state (Oswick et al., 2005). For the classical school, change management was straightforward; it tells the organization where it should be and rational beings within the organization accept that. Ragsdell (2000) defines it as a movement from current state to a more desirable state. Despite being dominant from the 1930s this classic approach to change management has encountered both intellectual and practical opposition and newer perspectives on organizational life have become increasingly influential in the last decades (Burnes, 2009). According to the human relations movement, in its prime in the 1930s, change cannot be seen as a rational process. Therefore, persuasion and leadership play a key role in change
efforts. Carr et al. (1996) describe organizational change as a re-aligning process of people, resources, and culture. Later theories, such as the cultural-excellence approach (Peters, 1993), advocated a “big bang approach” to change. Handy (1986), on the other hand, seems to have adopted a more emergent approach to change. Kanter et al. (1992) advocated a combination of both emergent and radical approaches; major cultural changes take time, dramatic interventions are needed to improve short term performance. A change process should be categorized based on magnitude, according to for instance Nadler (1998) and Marshak (2002). Either a change is incremental and continuous within the existing framework or intermittent, radical and outside the framework. Burnes (2009) uses the term punctuated change to describe a steady state that is punctuated of a burst of change activity as compared to continuous change.

Figure 4. Description of different types of change.

The choice of strategy for leading change could be sorted in either “hard”, instrumental, uniform approaches to change or “soft”, organic and differentiated approaches, see for instance Rowland & Higgs (2008) or Beer & Nohria (2000).

Companies that effectively combine hard and soft approaches to change can reap the big payoffs in profitability and productivity, those companies are more likely to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and reduce the anxiety that grips whole societies in the face of corporate restructuring. (Beer & Nohria, 2000, p 134-135)
The school of organizational learning is directed at enabling organizations to change, see for instance Senge (1990), but have been criticized for not clarifying how change initiatives generated by learning will lead to effective and coordinated organizational change (Easterby-Smith, 1997, Tsang, 1997). Within the Japan oriented quality movement the word Kaizen is often used to denote a continuous but incremental change while Kaikaku is used for breakthrough change (Imai, 1986, Juran, 1999, Womack & Jones, 2003). The Japanese approach to long term change has undoubtedly been successful in Japan, but it is debatable whether this approach actually works in many Western countries (Dale & Cooper, 1992, Hannam, 1993, Womack & Jones, 2003, Burnes, 2009).

Alongside these developments runs the view that contemporary organizations, as well as the scientific society, have moved from a modern to a postmodern world (Boje, 2006). Postmodernism and other interpretive worldviews, with their denial of an absolute reality and promotion of competing and socially constructed, multiple realities, offer a scope for alternative organizational strategies. It also stresses the importance of culture, power and politics (Burnes, 2009). According to this worldview, change should be seen as an organic diffusion of ideas rather than an end-to-be-achieved project. For instance, Pink (2005) stresses that the future belongs to “creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers”. Gladwell (2002) discusses change as “social epidemics” and Herrero (2008) the need for “viral change” as an antipode to slow, painful and unsuccessful change management.

### 2.2 Quality management and change

The quality movement itself has a long and complex history and its evolution from the industrial revolution to present day has been interpreted in many different ways and stages, from Quality Control to Total Quality Management (Bergquist et al, 2008). Different aspects of quality management have been thoroughly covered in the literature, see for instance Bergman & Klefsjö (2010), Crosby (1979), Deming (1986, 1993), Feigenbaum (1951), Foley (2005), Juran (1999) and Oakland (1999). Bergman & Klefsjö (2010, p 34) interpret TQM as: “A constant endeavor to fulfill and preferably exceed, customer needs and expectations at the lowest cost, by continuous improvement work, to which all involved are committed, focusing on the processes in the organization”. However, there are many definitions of TQM (Isaksson, 2004). Looking at these definitions there seems to be no precise description of what TQM actually is (Bergquist et al., 2008). According to Foley (2004) it has for a long time been unclear whether TQM is simply a collection of essentially independent techniques, a management philosophy, a coherent management method, a
strategy, a theory for managing only the quality and service process, or a master theory for managing the entire enterprise – or all of the above. Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000) define TQM as a management system consisting of values, methodologies and tools. However, TQM does not have any commonly agreed process for implementation although many countries provide national business excellence assessment models based on TQM-principles. Self-assessment based on Business Excellence Model criteria can exemplify a practice for the deployment of TQM (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010). The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) Program, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model and the Swedish Institute for Quality (SIQ) Model for Performance Excellence can all be said to include TQM values (Isaksson, 2004). According to Bergman & Klefsjö (2010) the most important principles of TQM can be summarized as follows: Focus on customers, Focus on processes, Improve continuously, Let everybody be committed, Base decisions on facts and Committed leadership. TQM is sometimes accused of being programmatic and technical, see for instance Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008) and Helms Mills et al. (2009). But in many successful organizations TQM is more than the narrow set of techniques often associated with failed change programs in various parts of the world. It is rather a part of a broad-based approach used by companies to achieve organizational excellence (Oakland & Tanner, 2007).

Process management has been a vital part of quality management, see for instance Bergman & Klefsjö (2010), Deming (1986), Foley (2005). Process focus is also highlighted as an important feature of BPR (Hammer & Champy, 1993), TQM (Isaksson, 2004), Six Sigma (Magnusson et al., 2000) and Lean (Liker, 2004). Business processes could be defined as: “A process is a related group of tasks that together create a result or a value to a customer” (Hammer, 1996); “A process is a logical, related, sequential (connected) set of activities that takes an input from a supplier, adds value to it, and produces an output to a customer (Harrington et al. 1997); “A process is a network of activities that are repeated in time, whose objective is to create value to external or internal customers” (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010) or “A process is a network of activities that, by the use of resources, repeatedly converts an input to an output for stakeholders” (Isaksson, 2006). Current research indicates that management focus on the organization’s processes is needed to execute successful organizational change (Isaksson, 2004, Oakland & Tanner, 2007). When it comes to managing processes on a system level the notions and definitions used vary widely (Palmberg, 2009). In addition, the tools and approaches for process management vary both in the literature and in practice and give no precise direction on how to deploy process management (Hellström & Eriksson, 2007).
A change towards process management requires a change in management style and way of thinking (DeToro & McCabe, 1997). Implementation of TQM with a specific focus on processes includes both structural and cultural changes to the organization (Rentzhog, 1996, Oakland & Tanner, 2007).

The popularity of TQM peaked in the 90s and has since declined. During the first decade of the new millennium, the term seems to have lost attraction in the Western parts of the world. Instead, terms such as operational excellence, Six Sigma and Lean seem to have overtaken the position even though the contents of these new approaches could be understood within the framework of TQM (Dahlgaard-Park, 2011). The basic idea with Lean might be summarized by the 14 principles bundled in four sections by Liker (2004): A long term philosophy focusing on organizational survivability, a constant focus on process improvement and waste reduction, focus on human development and methods for continuous problem solving. So far Lean is probably the most popular model of the Japanese approaches to management. Top leaders of many manufacturing and service businesses throughout the world now seek to emulate Lean (Emiliani, 2006). In the literature this change management model is referred to as “Toyota Production System” (Ohno, 1988), “Toyota Management System” (Monden, 1993), “Lean Production,” (Womack et al., 1990), “Lean manufacturing” due to its origins in production and operations management (Shingo, 1981; Ohno, 1988), “Lean Management” (Emiliani et al., 2003) or just “Lean thinking” (Womack & Jones, 2003). The Japanese commitment to quality and continuous improvement is legendary. But despite a seemingly widespread acceptance of the need for improved quality in the West, Japan still appears to be the only nation capable of diffusing and disseminating these ideas and practices throughout the majority of its industry (Dale & Cooper, 1992, Hannam, 1993, Womack & Jones, 2003, Burnes, 2009). Six Sigma, on the other hand, has been described as an American response, wrapping classic quality management in a new package (Klefsjö et al., 2006). Six Sigma includes many of the principles, practices and techniques mentioned within TQM, but comes with a clear recipe for change in the DMAIC-process and other techniques. Change moves from identified needs over Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control to a desire state.

As highlighted, research results on impacts from the use of concepts such as Lean, TQM and Six Sigma are somewhat contradictory. Some studies indicate that change based on TQM principles improves economic performance, see for instance Hendricks & Singhal (1997, 1999) and Wrolstad & Krueger (2001), while other studies on TQM are less positive, see for instance Hansson (2003), Helms Mills et al. (2009) and Burnes (2009). According to Bergquist et al. (2008) some scholars call TQM a management fad. The same things have been
said about Lean, see for instance Williams et al. (1992) and Mehri (2005). Despite this relative fuzziness, TQM became the label of the organizational change at Agria. The implementation of a process based quality management system was my first real encounter with a practical change challenge during the years 1996-1998. The SIQ-model was used as assessment tool and eventually Agria received the Swedish National Quality Award twice. Many years later I asked CEO Anders Mellberg about the origin of his interest in total quality management. What was his spark? He has never given a precise answer, but my interpretation is that he was naturally attracted to and driven by the core principles of TQM.

2.3 Change can be planned

There are many theoretical aspects to take into consideration with respect to change. To put it simple, descriptions of change in the literature range from change being a predictable phenomenon that could be planned to a complex emergent phenomenon that is unplanned. These two underlying beliefs about how organizational change occurs have shaped much of the development of change management theory. The planned change belief, emerged from Kurt Lewin (1951) and the tradition of Organizational Development (OD), views change as externally driven and episodic. It attempts to explain the stages or steps an organization must go through in order to effect the necessary or desired outcome (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Burnes, 1996, 2009, Todnem By, 2005, Porras & Silvers, 1991). Traditional quality management concepts qualify here. The second belief, mainly evolved due to the criticisms of planned change, has been the belief that change is an organic unplanned process which cannot be managed (Alvesson & Svenningsson 2008, Burnes, 1996, 2009). Thus, theory development provides the contemporary organization with a wide range of options and choices as to lead change but there seems to be no “one best way” to go about it, see Hughes (2011). It can be concluded that all these approaches have their strong points and drawbacks. But their relevance for the contemporary organization should be discussed (Burnes, 1996, 2009, Dunphy & Stace, 1993, Hughes, 2011, Rothwell & Sullivan, 2005).

Senior & Swailes (2010) observe that the way change is performed has altered from problem solving to an acceptance of continuous change as a part of how organizations of today work. Incremental continuous change punctuated by intermittent breakthrough change executed in a planned, project like, manner seems to be a common approach for many organizations. Previously change was seen as an ongoing incremental phenomenon, but by the turn of the 1980s it was beginning to be perceived as something that managers needed to do. Interest in organizational change became an established part of the thinking of business
practitioners. The management of change has become an essential part of the business education of the manager and with that has come a number of programmatic change strategies and models, see Helms Mills et al. (2009). John Kotter continues the Lewinian tradition of programmatic change and could be seen as one of the most influential profiles in the field (Prosci 2009). I first read Kotter’s *Leading Change* in 2002. According to Kotter (1996, 2008) a major success factor when leading change is how well managers handle resistance. He claims whenever human communities are forced to adjust to shifting conditions, resistance is ever present. Resistance to change can be seen as a result of major changes in work environment (new demands and expectations, changed social structures), reduced job security, threat or status shifts (Dawson, 2003). Some of the most common mistakes when transforming an organization are, according to Kotter (1996):

- Allowing too much complacency,
- Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition,
- Underestimating the power of vision,
- Under communicating the vision by a factor of 10x-100x,
- Permitting obstacles to block the new vision,
- Failing to create short-term wins,
- Declaring victory too soon,
- Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture.

Kotter argues that these errors can be handled and possibly avoided. He breaks down the approach of creating and leading change within an organization into an eight-stage process. This can be served serve as an example of a change management model from the planned change tradition (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008).

Table 1. Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage change process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Establishing a sense of urgency&lt;br&gt;· Examining the market and competitive realities&lt;br&gt;· Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Creating the guiding coalition&lt;br&gt;· Forming a group with enough power to lead the change.&lt;br&gt;· Getting the group to work together like a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Developing a vision and a strategy&lt;br&gt;· Creating a vision to help direct the change effort.&lt;br&gt;· Developing strategies for achieving that vision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **Communicating the change vision**
   - Using all possible ways to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies.
   - The guiding coalition acting as role models for the behaviors expected of employees.

5. **Empowering broad-based action in the organization.**
   - Removing obstacles for the change process
   - Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision.
   - Encouraging risk taking and new ideas, activities and actions.

6. **Generating short-term wins**
   - Planning and creating visible improvements in performance, or “wins”
   - Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who make the wins possible

7. **Consolidating gains and producing more change**
   - Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures and policies that don’t fit together and that don’t fit the change vision
   - Recruiting, promoting and developing people who can implement the change vision.
   - Strengthening the process with new projects, themes and change agents.

8. **Anchoring new approaches in the culture**
   - Creating better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behavior, more and better leadership and more effective management.
   - Clarifying the connections between new behaviors and organizational success.
   - Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Through my reading of Kotter I gained new insights into my practice. I noticed patterns and relations that I had not seen before for example the importance of a sense of urgency, committed leadership and clear change objectives. His theories on change management felt like an extension of the quality management discourse from Agria and Fagerdala. Later I realized that Kotter’s eight stage process and other similar change management models describing the initiation, planning and execution of change, see for instance Dawson (2003) and Womack & Jones (2003), aligned to a reductionist approach to organizational change which was a heritage from Kurt Lewin and the early tradition of OD (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). Reductionism can be described as an approach to understand the nature of complex things by reducing them to the interactions of their parts. It is also a philosophical position that complex systems are nothing but the sum of its parts of which can be reduced to accounts of individual constituents, as explained by Checkland (1999). Lewin’s (1951) description of the process of change, from which many change management models are built, involves three steps:
- **Unfreezing:** Faced with a dilemma or disconfirmation, the individual or group becomes aware of a need to change.
- **Moving:** The situation is diagnosed and new models of behavior are explored and tested.
- **Freezing:** Application of new behavior is evaluated, and if reinforcing, adopted.

The OD tradition can be said to be built on empowerment, open communication, ownership of the change process and a culture of cooperation and continual learning (Hurley et al., 1992). Over the last decades this tradition has moved closer to an outspoken systems approach to change (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). Another theoretical approach within the turf of planned change, sometimes called “the school of open systems”, can be seen as an extension of OD (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). This school emphasizes the importance of seeing the whole of the organization rather than just different groups of people. An organization consists of different, interacting sub-systems which need to be open to each other and to the environment outside the organization. It includes the hierarchy and process flows. But it also includes the attitudes and perceptions together with the quality of products and the ways in which decisions are made (Senge et al., 1994, Wilson, 1992). According to this school, a planned change process must be system oriented and adapt itself to both “hard” and “soft” systems (Beer & Eisenstat 1996). Katz & Kahn (1978) describe characteristics that define open systems:

- The processing of inputs to yield an output that is exported to outside systems
- Systems as cycles of events: input, throughput and output – the output furnishes new sources of energy for the input so the cycle can start again
- Negative entropy and the importation of energy from the external environment: without continued inputs any system soon runs down
- Information input, feedback and coding: systems gather information about their environments and also about their own activities so that they can take corrective action
- A steady state and dynamic homeostasis: despite continuous inflow and export of energy, the character of systems that survive remains the same
- Inclusion of different system levels and their interrelationships, e.g. hierarchical ordering
- Differentiation and structure elaboration, e.g. greater specialization of functions
• Integration and co-ordination to ensure unified functioning
• Equifinality, the ability to reach the same final state from differing initial conditions.

Many popular change management models can be seen as a result of the Lewinian heritage, the OD tradition and the open systems approach (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). An example of a generic change management model describing a change process and resources for leading change is presented by Isaksson (2004). This model is inspired by Kotter (1996), the tradition of planned change and the open systems approach.

Figure 5. A Generic change model adapted from Isaksson (2004) and inspired by Kotter (1996) and the tradition of planned change and the open systems approach.

Yet another model used by Implement\(^5\) to visualize different perspectives of organizational change can serve as an example of how a change management model based on an open systems approach can be reflected in practice (Figure 6). This model contains three perspectives: the strategic perspective which clarifies the organizations change challenge and objectives, the structural perspective.

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\(^5\) Implement is my employer. For further information, see www.implement.se
which addresses the organizational hard systems such as infrastructure, systems and business processes and the *human perspective* which addresses the soft systems such as culture, values, relations, positions and patterns.

![Figure 6. A change management model combining hard and soft aspects of organizational change, described as strategic, structural and human perspectives of change. Adapted from Implement MP AB.](image)

Planning and executing change has been an important management practice as well as good business for consultants. It is fair to say that I have inherited a planned approach to change based on an open systems approach from the theories and practices of my managers, colleagues, teachers, mentors and other prominent executives I have met along the way. In its simplest form, this planned change process could be outlined as follows:

![Figure 7. A current system using a planned change process to achieve a future system.](image)
2.4 The antipode: change seen as organic

Since the 1930s it has been argued that organizational change does not occur in a logical sequence, see for instance Burke (2002) and Burnes (2009). Emergent organic change reflects an understanding of change as an ongoing learning process that emphasizes the analytical, evolutionary nature of change, rather than following pre-defined steps (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Burnes, 1996, 2009, Shanley, 2007). The reasoning is that when management of change is approached as a series of steps based on a project scenario, the result is often that the whole becomes disconnected from its parts and the whole ends up looking very little like it was intended (Jackson, 2000). The reductionist approach to managing organizational change fails to account for the human dynamics of change and purposefulness of people (Jackson, 2003). The lack of contextual knowledge and ability to understand the human response to change results in change managers who are unable to handle resistance and overcome obstacles (Andrews et al., 2008). Wilson (1992) states that empowering managers to plan for change ignores the impact of wider and more determinate forces which lie outside the organization and beyond the boundaries of strategic choices for individual managers. In the organizational leader’s efforts to just “get it done” there has been a tendency to dismiss theoretical aspects of organizational change and the underlying assumptions, knowledge and understanding of the change process in favor of using quick prescriptive models (Burnes, 1996, 2009, Sanwal, 2008).

The high failure rate has also led to a growing mistrust against popular management books accused of containing superficial clichés and stories based on anecdotal evidence (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Collins 1998). There is also a criticism against quality management concepts such as TQM, Lean and Six Sigma failing to keep in pace with the rapidly changing social and organizational environment, see for instance Bergquist et al. (2008) and Foley (2005). According to the organic, emergent viewpoint, change is not about following predesigned change management models. It is about acknowledging local, emerging interpretations and constructions of meaning through series of dialogue (Balogun, 2006). This approach to organizational change deals with questions about diffusion and translation of ideas, see for instance Latour (1986, 1988, 2005), Gladwell (2002) and Herrero (2008). Change should be seen as a sense-making approach which allows exploration of how people in a specific social system create for themselves the systems of meaning of their world (Geertz, 1973, Weick, 1995). Thus, an organic approach to organizational change requires a deeper understanding of social systems, i.e. interactions, communication, organizations (formal organized social systems) and societies (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). Organizational change through diffusion and
adoption of new ideas requires an organizational climate of trust and empowerment together with an engaged leadership (Burnes, 2009, Collins, 2001). Weick & Quinn (1999) summarize the discussion by turning the Lewin sequence around in an equilibrium seeking cycle of freeze-rebalance-unfreeze-freeze, arguing that change is a continuous organic process. Responding to all this, there seems to be an interest in the conception of organizational change as an organic, emerging process which cannot be planned (Burnes, 1996, Shanley, 2007).

![Figure 8. A current system facing an unplanned organic change process will eventually end up with a changed system.](image)

### 2.5 A systems approach to change

It is fair to say that systems’ understanding is an important virtue when managing change regardless if the approach is planned or unplanned. Jackson (2003, p 13) states that “systems language has proven itself more useful for getting grips on real world management problems than that of any other single discipline”. Hackett (2006) claims that many leaders are stuck in strategic and structural thinking from a time when competition and market conditions were different and calls for a new organizational paradigm where survivability, flexibility and systems thinking are key success factors. However, it could be argued that a systems approach is ever present in the last century’s theories on management, organizational development and sociology, see for instance Barnard (1938) and Churchman (1968, 1971). Some authors have also suggested a systems approach to TQM, see for instance Hansson (2003) and Isaksson (2004). The importance of a systems perspective is also mentioned in business excellence models such as the EFQM and MBNQA-program (Isaksson, 2004) and quality management standards such as ISO 9001. Deming (1993) calls for a systems approach in his “System of Profound Knowledge”, consisting of four parts:

- **Appreciation of a system**: understanding the overall processes involving suppliers, producers, and customers (or recipients) of goods and services
Knowledge of variation: the range and causes of variation in quality, and use of statistical sampling in measurements;

Theory of knowledge: the concepts explaining knowledge and the limits of what can be known.

Knowledge of psychology: concepts of human nature.

With the publication of Wiener’s work on cybernetics (1948) and von Bertalanffy’s on general system theory (1950, 1968) the systems approach began developing into a more distinctive area of research. It is an interdisciplinary science, owing as much to biology as to physics as much as the study of the brain as to the study of computers. As well as owing also a great deal to the formal languages of science for providing tools in which the behavior of all systems can be objectively described, see Checkland (1999). In short, this management theory relates to the management of all types of organizations and institutions in the profit and non-profit sectors. Beer (1959) was the first to apply cybernetics to management, defining management as the “science of an effective organization”, see Jackson (2000).

A system can be described a set of interacting or interdependent entities, real or abstract, forming an integrated whole (Checkland, 1999). The concept of an integrated whole can also be stated in terms of a system embodying a set of relationships of which are differentiated from relationships of the set to other elements, and from relationships between an element of the set and elements not a part of the relational regime. Systems thinking is according to Haines et al. (2005) a shift from seeing elements, functions and events to seeing processes, structures, relationships and outcomes, based on a holistic process approach to reality. Jackson (2000) argues that three core system notions still remain and are held in common by the different tendencies in system thinking:

- Holism – to look at the world in terms of larger wholes rather than reducing it into its fundamental elements
- Knowledge is organized into cognitive systems, i.e. structured frameworks that links various elements of our knowledge into cohesive wholes
- Systems approaches have a strong resonance with real-world problems and practice.

The idea of systems practice implies according to Checkland (1999) a desire to find out how to use systems concepts in trying to solve problems. Checkland has also drawn attention to two alternative viewpoints, which explain the nature and significance of systems thinking. In the first, the world is considered to be
systemic (made up of systems) and is studied systematically. In the second, we consider the world to be problematic (it makes little sense in a unitary way, admitting many interpretations) and we study it systematically. This ontological difference is also reflected in the notion of hard systems thinking on the one hand and soft systems thinking on the other. In the literature, it is often stated that hard systems thinking is appropriate in well-defined technical problems and soft systems thinking is more appropriate in fuzzy situations concerning human and cultural interactions.

**Hard Systems thinking**

In hard system approaches an objective or end-to-be-achieved can be taken as given. A system is engineered to achieve the stated objective. According to Ackoff (1958) all problems ultimately reduce to the evaluation of the efficiency of alternative means for a designated set of objectives. This is in line with the traditional positivistic scientific paradigm (see also Chapter 3) and early stages of change management theory. Hard systems thinking is also sometimes labeled as “the engineers’ contribution” (Checkland, 1999). As the name suggests, Hard Systems Engineering is deeply rooted in a more general engineering tradition. Although large-scale engineering projects have been undertaken throughout the history of mankind, it is only relatively recent that the methodological principles for carrying out such projects have been codified. The need for this codification can be seen in the increasing complexity of the projects undertaken and hence in the Engineers task. The following problem-solving sequence of the System Engineering approach developed as a result of years of experience within the Bell Telephone Laboratories (Hall, 1962, 1969). This is one classic example of the Hard Systems Thinking discourse.


1. **Problem Definition**
   - Define needs ('Needs research').
   - Search environment ('environmental research')
   - List system inputs, outputs and their relationships.
   - Define system boundary and constraints.

2. **Choice of Objectives**
   - List objectives
   - Optimize value system

3. **Systems Synthesis**
   - Collect alternatives
   - List system functions
   - Delineate subsystems
   - Use creativity
4. Systems Analysis

- Decide what to analyze
- Select analytical tools - analyze
- Deduce uncertain consequences
- Compare system performance with objectives

5. Systems selection

- Define decision criteria
- Evaluate consequences - rank alternatives
- Select the most promising alternative

6. System Development

- Promote system plan
- Develop prototype

7. Current Engineering

- System realization beyond prototype
- Monitoring and feedback.

According to Checkland (1999), a “hard systems thinker” observes the world, looking for systems which he can engineer. Thus, the observer’s perception of the world is that it can be described in a systemic manner which is very much in line with the predominant research tradition of quantitative, empirical nature. This “hard” research tradition and approach, based on the statistical analysis of data collected by means of descriptive and comparative studies is usually termed positivistic. As further discussed in chapter 3, the reductionist view that this logical empiricism provides the only true basis for explanation and general theory has occasionally come into conflict with a hermeneutic, interpretive approach.

Soft Systems thinking

Soft systems thinking is relevant for systems that cannot be easily quantified. Especially those involving people holding multiple and conflicting frames of reference. The “soft systems thinker” uses an interpretive lens and sees the world as a complex, organic web full of sociocultural phenomena (Checkland, 1999). However, this blurry reality can be observed in a systemic manner. In 1981, Checkland presented an engineering-like seven stage sequence which then developed to a soft systems methodology, useful for understanding motivations, viewpoints, and interactions and addressing qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions of problem situations. The seven stages are, in brief:

1. Investigate the unstructured problem
2. Express the problem situation through “rich pictures”
3. Root definitions of relevant problems
4. Conceptual models
According to Checkland & Scholes (1990) the use of a more mature Soft Systems Methodology should be seen as a sense-making approach which allows exploration of how people in a specific social system create for themselves the meaning of their world. Not far from Geertz’ (1973) theories about cultures as systems of meaning and his method of “thick descriptions”. Thus, the soft systems approach is close to the interpretive research tradition in the social and behavioral sciences, for instance the use of ethnography by sociologists, anthropologists and occasionally also by management researchers.

A model describing systems
A conclusion made by Isaksson (2004, 2006) supported by systems thinking theory (Beer, 1959, 1972, Checkland, 1999 and Jackson, 2000, 2003) is that a process based system model (Figure 8) could possibly be a suitable tool for visualizing an organizational context, facilitate dialogue and interpretation, assess systems maturity and strengthen both hard and soft systems thinking in organizations.

Figure 9. A process based system model visualizing an organization as a set of processes and resources creating stakeholder satisfaction. Adapted from Isaksson (2006).

2.6 Systems, sense-making and meaning
A critical systems thinking framework emerged from the increasing criticism of traditional systems thinking during the 70s and 80s (Jackson, 2000, Ulrich, 1987). This branch aims to combine systems thinking and participatory methods to address the challenges of problems characterized by large scale, complexity, uncertainty, impermanence, and imperfection. It allows nonlinear relationships,
feedback loops, hierarchies and emergent properties to be taken into account. This discourse has particularly focused on the issue of system boundaries and their consequences for inclusion, exclusion and marginalization (Ulrich, 2003). A change process within a system could also be seen as a sense-making event which allows exploration of how people in a specific social system create for themselves the systems or landscapes of meaning (Geertz, 1973, Reed, 2011). Meaning lies in cognition and not in external elements (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990). According to Balogun (2006) change is about acknowledging local, emerging interpretations together with constructions of meaning through series of dialogue. In organizations, sense-making can be seen as a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding out of different stakeholder’s perspectives and interests. Sense-making, according to Weick (1999), is about sizing up a situation, trying to discover what you have while you simultaneously act and have some effect on what you discover. It can be seen as an attempt to grasp a developing situation in which the observer affects the outcome of the situation. Awareness, desire, understanding, will and knowledge transfer could be seen as crucial elements in sense-making, see for instance Hiatt (2006) or Granberg & Wallenholm (2012). The use of a Soft Systems Methodology includes sense-making (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). Since recent studies reveal the crucial role of cultural and behavioral change during transformational projects (Jorgensen et al., 2009) and the rate of failure is reported high due to cultural resistance and problems with “the people side of change” it is reasonable to assume that the construction of meaning through sense-making is a vital part of successful change.

2.7 My reference – a teleological approach to change

Although criticized by some, a planned approach to organizational change appears to be predominant, see for instance Helms & Mills (2009) and Senior & Swailes (2010). Moreover, there is not enough empirical evidence to reject planned changed based on change management models, see for instance Hughes (2011). Kezar (2001) noted in his review of change management models more similarities among the models in different categories than differences. There also appears to be consensus on some critical elements necessary for successful organizational change, see Burnes (2009), Carnall (2007), Heracleous & Langham (1996), Rowland & Higgs (2008), Isaksson, (2004), Kotter, (1996, 2008), Mento et al. (2002), Senior & Swailes (2010). A defined need for change is vital, a defined outcome seems to facilitate understanding, an effective leadership is mentioned in several studies, a change plan visualizing a way forward is advocated as well as resources and know-how about change management. Thus, some elements of structure and planning seem to reduce risks for failure. That is also my preference to organizational change. Arguably it
is reasonable to assume that a holistic, open systems approach is preferable from a management perspective. Van de Ven & Poole (1995) outline a theoretical framework for interpreting change theories in the field of social sciences. This is further discussed by Van den Ven (2007). According to this framework, my approach could be labeled as teleological, meaning that change should be seen as a cycle of goal formulation, implementation, evaluation and modification of actions. Teleological models of development incorporate the systems theory assumption of equifinality; there are several equally effective ways to achieve a given goal.

Modern organizations are complex systems where focus and output is determined by the needs and expectations of multiple stakeholders. An interpretive teleological approach to change seems viable in a volatile environment. It is also reasonable to assume that a model based approach can assist managers in leading change. For instance, in many successful organizations TQM is more than the very narrow set of techniques often associated with failed change programs in various parts of the world. It is rather a part of a broad-based approach used by companies to achieve organizational excellence (Oakland & Tanner, 2007). Based on this theoretical overview two overarching change management model applications can be advocated. Firstly, a system model can be used to visualize an organization’s stakeholders, processes and resources. Secondly a (step-) model can be used to describe a change process. Starting from an outspoken need for change usually ignited by top management of which include the generic steps initiation, planning, implementation and securing. Graetz et al. (2002) suggest that in practice, managers need to understand the limitations of general models and apply them with common sense. My contention is that an interaction between a planned approach to change and an organic approach to change is most viable. This integrated approach is visualized in Figure 10.

![Figure 10. A planned change process embedded in organic change.](image-url)
It could be argued that a wider theoretical frame of reference would have been needed to cover all the subjects discussed in this thesis. Such areas include for instance a deeper understanding of leadership, psychology and sociology. I have chosen to limit my frame of reference to mainly include theoretical aspects of organizational change starting from the purpose of the research. Specific theory linked to each study is also commented in respective paper.
3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I present the research approach and paradigms in which the research has been conducted. The research strategy and methods that have been used are also outlined.

Many of us are practitioners – not philosophers – of science. We don’t think much about ontology and epistemology so that we can get on with the craft of doing research instead of talking about it. (Van de Ven, 2007, p 36)

I will have to take the existence of a fuzzy phenomenon called knowledge for granted. Even if this fuzziness is somewhat frustrating, we will probably keep working whether we are academic researchers or consultants – not in the least to pay telephone bills and mortgages; those are certainly for real. (Gummesson, 2000, p 7)

3.1 Paradigms in management research

A research paradigm can be defined as the “basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Underlying any form of research is a philosophy of science that informs a scholar’s approach to the nature of the phenomenon examined and methods for understanding it (Van de Ven, 2007). Guba & Lincoln (1994) state that the basic beliefs that define a particular research paradigm may be summarized by the responses given to three fundamental questions:

1. The **ontological** question i.e. what is the form and nature of reality and humans
2. The **epistemological** question i.e. what is the basic belief about knowledge (i.e. what can be known)
3. The **methodological** question i.e. how can the researcher go about finding out whatever s/he believes can be known.

There has been considerable interest in recent decades in the role of philosophical assumptions and paradigms in the development of management and organization theory, see for instance Gephart (1999), Gummesson (2000), Johnson & Duberley (2000) and Van de Ven (2007). According to Van de Ven (2007), a key example of this development is Burrell’s and Morgan’s analysis of the influence of sociological paradigms upon organizational analysis. Burrell & Morgan (1979) outline the following metatheoretical assumptions about the nature of thinking:
The general ideas of positivism have previously been widely accepted as the predominant approach among social scientists. However, critics argue that social science cannot be objective, rational and cumulative because fluffy things such as language, culture, social norms, ideologies, mental biases and selective perception constitute the inputs and processes of science, see for instance Johnson & Duberley (2000). As a response to positivism a repertoire of “anti-positivistic” interpretivistic research paradigms has emerged. Understanding the differences in epistemology among research paradigms begins primarily as a philosophical exercise since the question of whether there is one knowable reality or that there are multiple realities of which some individual knowledge can be acquired is more a question of faith (Krauss, 2005). Thus, despite many proposed differences between worldviews and paradigms, the heart of this “debate” is philosophical, not methodological, se for instance Krauss (2005), Johnson & Duberley (2000) and Van de Ven, (2007). I therefore sympathize with the opening quotations of this chapter, although I realize that some philosophical considerations are needed.
3.2 Action research

The concept of action research, introduced in mid-1940, could be described as a process of actively participating in a change situation whilst conducting research, see for instance Cronemyr (2007). Kurt Lewin, often considered being the father of action research, argued for the need of a research discipline with the main purpose to help the practitioner. According to Lewin, action research is the creation of theory whilst the researcher participates in an action of planned change, in cooperation with clients/practitioners (Lewin, 1946). This idea of embedding research into action and vice versa enabled a merger between classic management theories and pointed the way toward collaborative consultation (Weisbord, 1991). Lewin described the steps of action research as planning, fact finding and execution (Lewin, 1947). A commonly used experimental framework emerged from Lewin’s action research model was proposed by Kolb et al. (1971) as a four-step cycle of learning; doing, reflecting, understanding and applying. It can be visualized in the learning cycle described by Kolb (1984).

![Diagram of the Lewinian action research model](image)

Figure 12. The Lewinian action research model guiding my research, as described by Kolb (1984).

Gummesson (2000) emphasizes the following advantages of an action oriented approach to management research:

- **Firsthand experiences**: Pre understanding could be based on a combination of firsthand personal experience and the experience of others. The researchers’ own experiences are the most important.
- **Access to data**: Traditional forms of data collection provide only superficial access to processes of change. The role of the change agent provides better access.
- **Inductive method**: Research concerned with processes in organizations must primarily be generated on the basis of real data (inductive data), and not by means of logical deductions from established theory.

### 3.3 My research approach

The researchers’ pre understanding and paradigm, experiences and research approach always direct the research (Gummesson, 2000). Academic researchers and management consultants are both “knowledge workers”, but from different perspectives (ibid). Scholarly work and managerial work differ in context, process and purpose (Van de Ven, 2007). In the management consultancy world, the deal is more about impact and less about theory as such. The consultancy process is pragmatic. The main objective is to fulfill the client’s needs, demands and expectations and hopefully gain trust and extended assignments. Thus, the scientist and the consultant approach their task from different viewpoints. The differences in these two views can be summarized in the table below adapted from Gummesson (2000).

Table 3. Differences between the research paradigm and the consultant paradigm, adapted from Gummesson (2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The research paradigm affects:</th>
<th>The consultant paradigm affects:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher’s goals, such as a desire to obtain new knowledge, to have an article published in a refereed journal, to be cited, or to be promoted.</td>
<td>The consultant’s goals, such as completing an assignment to the satisfaction of the client, and being offered new assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher’s pre understanding and understanding, with focus on theory and support from practice.</td>
<td>The consultant’s pre understanding and understanding, with focus on practice and support from theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of research territory and within this, research projects.</td>
<td>Choice of a specific field of consultancy such as change management, and securing assignments in that field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of methods and researcher roles for gaining access.</td>
<td>Choice of methods and consultancy roles for gaining access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of quality criteria: the assessment of good and bad research by the scientific community.</td>
<td>Choice of quality criteria: the client’s assessment of consultant’s work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being both a management consultant and an action oriented researcher could be seen as a bias problem. For instance, Helms & Mills (2009) and Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008) criticize the mixing and accuse consultants for producing superficial solutions based on anecdotal evidence and business schools for
providing platforms for “gurus” to spread unscientific doctrines. However, an alternative viewpoint advocated by action scientists is that scientific knowledge will be implemented only if researchers, consultants and managers jointly engage in interpreting and implementing study findings, see Argyris & Schon (1996), Mohrman et al. (2001) and Van de Ven (2007). During this iterative research process, I have thought a lot about how these two viewpoints can be combined. Through active collaboration and mindful self-reflective discussions with fellow researchers I believe the risk for bias has been reduced. I have also made an effort to provide a clear documented statement of my research process, theoretical frame of reference as well as research paradigms that allows readers to draw own conclusions, see Gummesson (2000). Reflecting back at this research journey, it is obvious that this thesis shows a somewhat scattered mix of research paradigms. Traditionally, researchers start with a research problem which guides a number of choices starting with the problem definition and including choices for the research approach, see for instance Wallén (1996). In my case, there was no concrete well defined “problem” to start with. Rather, more of a curious wish to see if my practical experiences could be captured and described in an academic way.

The research initially emerged from my interest in the development and deployment of models and techniques for my profession and has grown by multiple iterations. In 2006, I had no profound independent academic standpoints or objectives. I inherited the philosophy of science underlying the practices of my teachers and mentors. A positivistic and normative science presenting models and general propositions explaining causal relationships between variables made a great deal of sense to me. I wanted to find the “truth”. However, upon resuming the last years and reflecting on all the shifting environments I have met including the academic, I think it is wiser to say that there are multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest rather than one objective reality. The importance of meaning and sense-making has grown stronger. A critical realism, highlighting the mind-dependent aspects of the world seems reasonable. Thus, it is fair to say that my research approach is to be found more on the right side of the Burrell-Morgan matrix. Or more precisely, I align to the philosophy of science presented in Engaged Scholarship by Van de Ven (2007):

- There is a real world out there (consisting of material, mental, and emergent products), but our individual understanding of it is limited. In general, physical material things are easier to understand than reflexive and emergent social processes.
• All facts, observations and data are theory-laden implicitly or explicitly. Social sciences have no absolute, universal, error-free truths, or laws as any scientific knowledge.
• No form of inquiry can be value-free and impartial; each is value-full. Some methods are better warranted than others depending on the phenomenon.
• Knowing a complex reality demands use of multiple perspectives.
• Robust knowledge is a product of theoretical and methodological triangulation where evidence is not necessarily convergent but might also be inconsistent or even contradictory.
• Models that better fit the problems they are intended to solve are selected allowing an evolutionary growth of knowledge.

Another critical choice is the way of producing knowledge; by seeking evidence – deduction, or by discovering new knowledge – induction (Andersen, 1998). Conclusions are deductive when they are drawn from general principles about specific events, such as testing existing change management theories in practice. Inductive conclusions, on the other hand, can be drawn and new knowledge produced, based on empirical observations and experience from specific events. Abduction, or inference to the best explanation, is a third method of reasoning in which one chooses the hypothesis that would, if true, best explain the relevant evidence (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). My overall research approach can be seen as inductive and explorative. Both the work on the six appended papers and the compilation of the thesis as a whole could be seen as a long term experimental action learning process.

3.4 Research strategy and design
Van de Ven (2007) advocates an ongoing iteration between research design, theory building, problem formulation and problem solving. These activities can be performed in any sequence. As mentioned, the starting point has been a wide research problem in shape of a general interest in organizational change challenges from a practitioner’s point of view. My belief system or world view has guided the purpose and research questions. The purpose has been funneled to explore the use of management models, its influence on management, the meaning it makes in practice for the organizations when planning and executing change and how gaps between theory and practice could be possibly bridged. The research proceeded through a loop of purposeful selection of methods, data collection and data analysis in order to reach results and fulfill the purpose. The studies in this thesis can be seen as multiple iterations in the learning cycle,
rather than a linear sequence. I have also chosen to compile the studies following the research questions. Thus, the studies are not sorted in a chronological order:

- **How does management use models to manage change?**
  - What is the present understanding of models for organizational change best practice?
  - How do organizations organize change management?
  - Future directions of quality management and change management?

The selection of methods, data collection and data analysis are below reported for each research question.

**Research design for answering the main research question: How does management use models to manage change?**

Three studies mainly address this research question; a case study based on Yin (2003), an ethnography based on Neyland (2008) and a conceptual study.

From 2002 to 2006 I worked with the organizations studied in study 1 on implementing a process based system model in order to improve systems thinking and assist management to reach their change objectives. This multiple case study grew from an earlier study not included in this thesis (Hallencreutz et al., 2007), where a process based system model was used and the elements of business excellence models were discussed. The criteria for choosing these organizations were: Representation from different areas (public and private, service and manufacturing), similar change objectives and process based approach, management interest in change management and a long term consultant-client relationships (3-6 years). Selection was based on knowledge, pre-understanding of chosen organizations, easy access to senior executives and representation of both service and manufacturing industry. In study 1 both managers and employees were chosen. Employees were selected based on recommendation from their managers. It could be argued that these selection processes could have been more thorough to minimize risk for bias. However, since the interviews were complemented with other sources of evidence, the researchers viewed that risk as tolerable. Sources of evidence in the case studies have been semi-structured interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations as well as physical artifacts. Before each study the organizations were contacted and agreed to participate. Dates were set for interviews and the organizations received verbal information on the areas that would be investigated. The semi-structured interviews were prepared through tests and
discussion among the authors. The choice to use semi-structured interviews made the analysis of and comparison between the studied organizations easier. It also facilitated the interviews, making them more of a conversation rather than running through a long list of pre-set questions. The interviews in the studies were documented through notes and were triangulated with archival records together with our own observations and relevant theory. Sources of evidence in both case studies were also the researchers own observations. In study 1, where three organizations were included, case study protocols were used to ensure that the same procedures were followed at all the sites. The interpretation and analyzing processes were not separated from the data collection. It was an ongoing iterative process which included reading, re-reading, creative dialogue with the researchers and informants, grasping the whole, searching for patterns as well as affinity in the data, more reading and so on. The output from the studies has been data, investigator and theory triangulated to strengthen its validity and reliability. In table 4 the adoption of quality aspects according to Yin (2003) can be summarized.

Table 4. The adoption of crucial quality aspects according to Yin (2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crucial quality aspect</th>
<th>My adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity</strong>: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.</td>
<td>The manner in which the two case studies have been executed and the analysis has been made is described in this chapter. The informants have had the opportunity to review drafts and discuss output. Furthermore, all the original data, in the form of notes from interviews and our own observations can be reclaimed. Archival data such as business plans, company presentations, annual reports etc. have been filed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validity</strong>: establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.</td>
<td>According to Yin (2003) internal validity is only a concern for casual (or explanatory) case studies. In case study 1 pattern-making and explanation building was used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validity</strong>: establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.</td>
<td>It is possible, but not given to draw general conclusions from case studies. Since the research is conducted in an interpretivistic mode the there is no point in trying to establish validity in any external or objective sense, see Trochim, (2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong>: demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results.</td>
<td>To accomplish trustworthy reliability, the researchers have used documented data collection procedures that can be repeated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study 1 was presented and discussed at the 8th International Conference on Knowledge, Culture and Change Management 2008 and published in *The International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change management*, see paper 1.

Study 2 is a management ethnography. Johnson (2000) defines ethnography as a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do. According to Goldthorpe (2000) ethnography can serve as an important complement in mapping and analyzing social processes on the ground. Several academic traditions, in particular the interpretivistic paradigms employ ethnographic research as a crucial research method. Sporadic calls have also been made for the relevance of ethnography for addressing quite traditional concerns within organizational and management research. Forms of ethnographic research have also been utilized in order to address questions of culture, strategic practice and change (Neyland, 2008). Thus, ethnography based on Neyland’s *ten sensibilities* was chosen in Study 2 in order to come as close to “reality” as possible. Method texts often begin by producing a set of instructions or a recipe for the particular method in focus (Atkinson, 1990, Brewer, 2000). Organizational ethnographers can instead address this issue through consideration of ten ethnographic sensibilities (Neyland, 2008). These sensibilities do not have the same status as recipes or instructions, but neither do they leave methodological issues vague or incoherent. In study 2, these ten sensibilities were applied in the following way.

*Sensibility one: Ethnographic strategy.* Ethnographic research takes time and requires a great deal of access to the field. Ethnographers need to develop an approximate strategy which should orient the study. A fluid strategy (Law, 2004) is the best means for an ethnographer to retain coherence and contingency in the research. This study is based on a long term consultancy assignment. The engagement with the studied organization was not initiated by a specific research question. I was there to support the client and his management team in a demanding change process. After two years of collaboration, I started to look upon this engagement through a scientific lens: How could success factors and pitfalls in this change process be described and linked to theory on organizational change?

*Sensibility two: Questions of knowledge.* There are three principle approaches to knowledge in ethnographic research. Early anthropological ethnography could be said to fit the realist approach to knowledge. Realist approaches to knowledge are in many ways relevant for questions of observation and representation – what can be seen is taken more or less as a definitive version of what is going on. This
approach has been criticized for paying insufficient attention to the researcher’s own role and the possibility that an ethnographic version of events is only one of several possible versions. The narrative approach pays closer attention to these questions. “What is going on” is taken as a valuable but not the only possible version of events. These narrative accounts of the field are often utilized to get close to a group who may not be easily accessed. However, realist and narrative ethnographers are criticized by more radical reflexive ethnographers who suggest that the “reality” being studied is not independent from the researcher’s own perception. Thus, this reflexive approach makes no claim for objectivity. Instead it seeks validity by carrying out analysis of the ethnographer’s subjectivity and involvement in the field. The approach in Study 2 has been both narrative and reflexive.

**Sensibility three: Locations and access.** The ethnographer will have to consider where their study will take place and how the place can be accessed. In this case, the location and access has been given – thanks to a long standing relationship with the management team this company has opened up for research purposes, without requesting anything in return. The study zooms in on certain events in the claims organization of this insurance company during 2006-2009. The physical location has been their office premises and conference hotels in the outskirts of Stockholm.

**Sensibility four: Field relations.** Ethnographers spend a great deal of time in the field focused on establishing relations with those they study. Close involvement with members of the group under study is important, but can take several distinct shapes. In this case I have gained trust and established rapport with a limited number of key informants (mainly people in managerial positions). I have never tried to establish myself as a member of a certain group, since the consultant-client relationship has always been there in the background. I have always been what Agar (2008) calls “a professional stranger”.

**Sensibility five: Ethnographic time.** Ethnographic time operates on a different timescale than most methods in management research. The ethnographer shifts between being “in” the organization (actively participating in what is going on) and “out” of the organization (writing and reviewing observations). This insider/outside position is managed by ethnographer through time spent in the field. Bates (1997) criticizes some management research on ethnography for being too quick and hasty. In this study that would not be the case. I have had access to the field all in all for five years although the study concentrates on an intense period of transformation in the claims department during 2006-2009. It seemed reasonable to scale down study 2 to a manageable scope. Other events
during this five year period might be objects for later studies. During 2006-2009 I had hundreds of meetings, phone calls and mail conversations with the client and some thirty meetings and workshops with his management team. I have spent days in their office premises observing processes on the ground and also conducted semi structured interviews with tens of members of the staff.

_Sensibility six: Observing and participating._ A central feature of ethnographic research is developing observational skills. What to observe? According to Neyland it should be “everything”. Nothing should be taken for granted and nothing should be assumed to be uninteresting. In my case, there is no doubt that I could be criticized for having been a too participating observer. I have led meetings, carried out workshops, produced slides, taken down notes and so forth. This has resulted in some 4 600 text files with a plethora of meeting notes, memorandums, slideshows and reports. Thus, it has seldom been possible to record observations as things happen. Instead I have relied on my memory and ability to effectively retain all relevant detail and take down supplementary field notes afterwards.

_Sensibility seven: Supplementing._ Ethnographers should keep in mind the possibility of supplementing the research in a variety of ways. Alongside observations, researchers may want to consider the possibility of carrying out field interviews, using video and still cameras or analyzing secondary data. In the fall 2006 my two colleagues and I carried out a thorough organizational analysis of the claims department, including some 30 semi structured field interviews with members of the staff. This report is a very useful supplementary source. In March 2011 I also carried out 12 retrospective video documented interviews with a cross section of people who had all been on board since 2006 to capture their story of this five year period. Moreover, I also have had access to a vast number of files as well as production data and employee and customer satisfaction surveys from the insurance company along the way.

_Sensibility eight: Writing._ There are two principles of writing in which the organizational ethnographers can expect to engage. The first of these is utilizing observational material in scholarly pursuit. The second involves translating something of the ethnography for an organizational audience. The aim was to translate this more or less ordered data into a scholarly representation – writing for the organization as such is secondary. I translated these observations into ethnographic text, produced an argument and discussed conclusions.

_Sensibility nine: Ethics._ From an academic perspective, ethnographers should establish what the ethical requirements are in relation to their own academic
institution. These ethical discussions should feature which areas of the organization the researcher will study, whom the ethnographer will incorporate in the research and what the researcher will do with the observational data. In this case, these matters have been dealt with in an overt and straightforward manner and the key players in the organization are fully aware of how the research results will be used.

Sensibility ten: Exits. Exits are an important consideration from an early stage of the research and should not be left until the end of the study. Since I have been studying a time-specific organizational phenomenon it has been quite easy to bracket the time allocated to the study. I also still have ongoing consultancy assignments in the organization and a vivid dialogue with management representatives about my research process.

Study 2 was presented and discussed at the International Conference on Cultural Sociology, Linnaeus University, 2011, see paper 2.

Study 3 is conceptual. The purpose is to use the process perspective combined with stakeholder focus to describe organisational change and thereby contribute to sense-making of change. The starting point is Lewin’s (1951) three step model for planned change as a planned change process. Some widely applied change strategies and philosophies such as Lean Management, Kotter’s eight step model, Six Sigma and Total Quality Management (TQM) are viewed in the perspective of Lewin’s model and with special focus to input and output of the change process. The aim is to see if the process perspective can contribute to sense-making of change and to identify critical elements in successful organizational change. A process based system model that aspires to include all critical elements of change is proposed. The model is intended as an overarching visualisation of different phases of change and should enable further breakdown.

An early draft of study 3 was presented and discussed at the 14th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2011 in San Sebastian, Spain. After a major rework, the study has been retitled and submitted to an international journal, see paper 3.

Research design for answering sub question 1: What does the literature say about models for organizational change best practice?

A structured literature review was used to search for definitions and models for organizational change best practice. The structure of the literature review was inspired by Palmberg (2009) and her work to explore widespread definitions and
models in process management. Emerald and EBSCO were the primary databases used to make the initial search. Since Emerald is a recognized publisher of management research and provided a greater number of hits, Emerald was chosen as the source for the further literature search. The search was narrowed down to the exact phrases of “organizational change”, “change management”, “change leadership” and/or “best practice” in keywords and titles in Emerald journals. A categorization of the articles in the Emerald journals was completed and divided on decades 1961-2010. A further scan of the articles containing the keyword “best practice” was completed. The 160 best practice articles were sorted based on relevance. All articles were reviewed based on title and abstract. Using Emerald’s definition of paper categories the articles were sorted into seven categories.

The study was presented and discussed at the 13th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2010 and published in the *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, see paper 4.

**Research design for answering sub question 2: How do organizations organize change management?**

A web survey was performed to explore how large Swedish organizations organize and manage organizational change. Focus on large organization seemed reasonable; recent studies indicate that knowledge about change management in large enterprises is still immature, see The Prosci Study (2009). The top 100 Swedish organizations were extracted from a database (www.largestcompanies.se), based on turnover and number of full time employees. Delimitation to 100 respondents seemed reasonable to get a cross section of the Swedish trade and industry. Based on interviews with clients and colleagues, previous studies (Turner et al., 2009) and internal seminars at Implement MP AB a web survey was designed. The organizations were then contacted by phone. The research team called the switchboard operators, presented the survey and asked: “Who is in charge of change management in this organization?” The result was documented. In a second round of calls the procedure was repeated. This time the questions were addressed to the names on the list scored from the first round. After a series of loops, a list of 80 assured names, said to be in charge of or at least willing to answer questions about change management in their respective organization was secured. 10 organizations declined immediately due to internal policies. 10 organizations were rejected by the team due to invalid data in the database file. A final round of calls to the selected organizations was performed, where the team asked if the spokesperson would be willing to answer a web questionnaire about change
management. From that round 47 positives were counted. The main reasons for refusing were due to lack of time or restraints from internal policies. Finally, the web questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the 47 persons willing to participate. After three reminders, the study ended up with 26 completed questionnaires. Analysis of multiple crossing and profile analysis were used to investigate related differences in types of organizations, roles and responsibilities and perceived implementation success.

The study was presented and discussed at an open client seminar at Implement MP AB and at the 13th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2010, see paper 5.

**Research design for answering sub question 3: Future directions of quality management and change management?**

Study 3 (see above) and study 6 address this question. The method used in study 6 was based on generic methods for structured brainstorming and affinity analysis, see for instance Brassard et al. (2002). The data collection of opinions from scholars working with quality management at the three universities was conducted using three independent workshops at three Swedish universities. The sole purpose of the workshops was to perform structured brainstorming sessions. Affinity diagrams were used to provide a structure for the activity and to document the results. In the Luleå workshop, the invitation to participate was sent to nine people within the Quality Technology & Management research group. Of these, five persons attended the actual workshop (two professors, two senior lecturers and one PhD student. The Linköping workshop was performed in a similar fashion as that in Luleå. All members of the division for Quality Technology and Management were invited to participate, and six persons attended. Among these were three PhD students, two senior lecturers and one professor. At Chalmers, all members of the division Quality Sciences were invited, and seven persons (three PhD students, two researchers, one assistant professor and one associate professor) attended. Below we describe the general steps of the method used. The brainstorming sessions were organized around the two questions:

1. *What does Quality Management stand for today?*
2. *What will Quality Management stand for in 20 years?*

The workshops and the brainstorming sessions were conducted as follows:
• **Preparation:** A few days prior to the workshop, the purpose and the two research questions to be discussed were sent to the participants. In the Luleå workshop, the invitation to participate was sent to nine people within the Quality Technology & Management research group. Of these, five persons attended the actual workshop (two professors, two senior lecturers and one PhD student.

• **Start:** At the start of the workshop, the research questions were written on a whiteboard and the workshop methodology was presented to the participants. Everyone around the table then freely and shortly expressed what thoughts they had, related to the workshop, and this was carried out without anyone taking notes.

• **Silent individual work:** The next phase included silent work, where all wrote answers to the two research questions on white Post-It® notes. There were no special rules for the answers or the number of notes at this point. Answers from this phase could be expressed as, e.g., values, principles, models, tools, expressions of opinion and so on. After some time the participants patched the notes on the whiteboard below the current research question. This was done without guidance.

• **Grouping of notes:** First all participants silently assisted in grouping the notes. The silence was broken when there was a need to discuss the grouping of a note with several possible belongings. In such cases, the most appropriate grouping was decided after a short discussion.

• **Headings for groups:** When all notes had been grouped or considered as single outliers, the groups were given headings written on yellow notes. Some related yellow headings were grouped together in an additional iteration, and were given headings on pink notes.

• **Discussion and revision:** The group reviewed the outcome for each research question and some headings were revised and some notes were moved to fit under another heading. Some general conclusions were drawn based on the outcome and a short discussion.

• **Documentation:** The outcome was documented electronically immediately after the workshop.

Moreover, the websites of each research group were studied in order to understand how they are presenting themselves and the subject of Quality Management.

The study was presented and discussed at the 15th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2012 in Poznan, Poland and has been accepted for publication in *The Quality, Innovation, Prosperity Journal*, se paper 6.
3.5 Validity, reliability and generalization

The concepts of validity, reliability and generalization are linked to the positivistic research tradition and could be seen as a measure of how well the research has been conducted and the consistency of the obtained research results, see discussion in Johnson & Duberley (2000). Shadish et al. (2002) define validity as the approximate truth of an inference or knowledge claim of a causal relationship based on evidence. In short; the claim is true if it corresponds to the observed world. The data should represent the studied phenomenon. Reliability means, simply put, that two or more researchers studying the same phenomenon with similar purposes should end up with approximately the same results, see Gummesson (2000).

However, it can be argued that this theory is compromised because all data is theory-laden. Social sciences have no absolute, universal, error-free truths, see Van de Ven (2007). Given the acceptance that knowledge is not independent of interests and value, it can be argued that “validity” is an inappropriate term in an interpretive research context, see Johnson & Duberley (2000). Qualitative researchers may operate under different research paradigms and realities (Krauss, 2005). Thus, there is little point in trying to establish either validity or reliability in any external or objective sense (Trochim, 2000). However, also from an interpretivist research perspective it is important to consider what constitutes warranted knowledge. The credibility of a study, in terms of its validity and reliability, is equally important for qualitative research, including action research, as it is for quantitative research. If the idea of theory-neutral observations is rejected, a key issue for the researcher is to be aware of own presuppositions and values. This can be achieved through open, undistorted and self-reflexive communication. Robust knowledge in this sense is, according to Van de Ven (2007), a product of theoretical and methodological triangulation where evidence can be inconsistent and even contradictory. In this research, multiple sources of evidence have been used and the findings have been thoroughly discussed and triangulated throughout the research process to avoid the risk for bias and scientific shortcuts.

The concept of generalization of research results also originates from quantitative research and a positivistic research tradition where the aim is to generate casual laws which have predictive powers. Transferring findings from one case to another in qualitative research can be possible by providing, detailed, thick case descriptions based on data from multiple sources. But objectivity can never be fully guaranteed. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis: my research does not claim to unveil general theory but instead to seek initial answers and contribute to a broader understanding of change management in
practice. I do not pretend to cover all nuances of organizational life. Gummesson (2000 p 97) resumes this discussion by stating:

As long as you keep searching for new knowledge and do not believe you have found the ultimate truth but, rather, the best available for the moment, the traditional demand for generalization becomes less urgent.
4 SUMMARY OF APPENDED PAPERS

4.1 Paper 1

Background and purpose
This paper is based on a longitudinal study which explored if a general process based system model helped to implement a process approach and accelerate change in three different organizations. The paper discusses the outcome of the implementation of a system model, based on results from a self-assessment process using BEM criteria.

Methodology
A case study methodology was used, looking at three cases from different areas: a state authority case, a case from the construction industry and case from the food industry. A self-assessment framework was used to follow up the outcome of the system model implementation. The work was performed as a result of several years of consultancy work in the organizations.

Results and conclusions
The findings did not unambiguously show that the adoption of a process based system model as such helped top management to execute change initiatives. Empirical data as well as internal and external assessments indicated that one case out of three could be seen as successful in executing the studied change. A general conclusion could be that the model itself presented may provide enough thrust to accelerate change, but there were not enough empirical evidence in this study to prove it. Other aspects such as a dedicated top management and clear strategic objectives seemed to be more vital success factors. The assessment of the used model also indicated that there are areas to be improved in the model as such.
4.2 Paper 2:

**Background and purpose**
The purpose is to follow change management in practice. The study follows a three year change process in a Swedish insurance company covering transformation of organizational structure, business processes, leadership style and culture.

**Methodology**
This study uses organizational ethnography and action research in order to understand and analyze the studied change process.

**Results and conclusions**
The findings indicate that there are consistent success factors and barriers when leading organizational change. Urgency, persistent leadership and clear change objectives appear to be vital success factors. The study also reveals that the cognition of a change process is dependent on context and individual sense-making processes and stresses the importance of the capacity of the change leader in person.
4.3 Paper 3:

Background and purpose
The purpose of this paper is to review how change management is defined and presented and to propose a process based system model to describe critical elements of change.

Methodology
This is a concept paper based on iterative discussions in the research team. The process perspective is applied on Lewin’s three step model of unfreezing, moving freezing. A proposed model including the state before change, the change and the state after it is presented. The process model has been compared with the change philosophies/change strategies Total Quality Management, Lean Management, Six Sigma and Kotter’s eight step model of change.

Results and conclusions
None of the studied change strategies seem to have any clear requirement to assess the state before change. This could increase the risk of working with the wrong change, contributing to the high rate of failures. Future research is proposed for correlating the level of change needs assessment and change success.
4.4 Paper 4:

**Background and purpose**
This paper provides a literature review of current models and definitions of best practice. The purpose is to explore whether there are some existing widespread and common models and definitions for organizational change best practice in the literature.

**Methodology**
A structured literature review is used to search for contemporary models and definitions of organizational change best practice.

**Results and conclusions**
The study indicates that there are no consistent definitions of organizational change best practice to be found in the literature. Instead, so called “best practices” could be divided into the following categorizations:

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Paper 5:
Hallencreutz, J. (2010), *Who is in charge of change management around here*, Conference proceedings, 13th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2010 in Cottbus, Germany, August 30-September 1.

**Background and purpose**
The survey presented in this paper explored relationships between types of organizations, roles and responsibilities along with perceived success when implementing systems for change. Common denominators are described and areas for future research are proposed.

**Design/methodology/approach**
Questionnaire-based data were obtained from change managers in 26 large Swedish organizations. Analysis of multiple crossing and profile analysis were used to investigate related differences in types of organizations, roles and responsibilities and perceived implementation success.

**Results and conclusions**
The findings indicated that a majority of the respondents call for corporate management models for leading organizational change. Modeling the change reveals that those organizations which have adopted a corporate approach to the planning and implementation of organizational change perceive better results from their change initiatives.
4.6 Paper 6:

Background and purpose
There is a lack of a recognized conception of what quality management (QM) comprises of, as well as a clear roadmap of where QM is heading. The purpose of this article is to investigate how QM is perceived today by scholars at three Swedish universities, but also how and into what QM is expected to develop into in twenty years.

Methodology
Data has been collected through three structured workshops using affinity diagrams with scholars teaching and performing research in the QM field affiliated with three different Swedish universities.

Results and conclusions
The results indicate that current QM is perceived similarly among the universities today, although the taxonomy differs slightly. QM is described as a fairly wide discipline consisting of a set of core of principles that in turn guide which methods and tools that currently by many are perceived as the core of the discipline. The outlook for the future differs more where three possible development directions for QM are seen: [1] searching for a “discipline X” where QM can contribute while keeping its toolbox, [2] focus on a core based on the traditional quality technology toolbox with methods and tools, and [3] a risk that QM, as it is today, may seize to exist and be diffused into other disciplines.
5 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the intention is to analyze results and answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1 and draw conclusions.

5.1 Answering the research questions

How does management use models to manage change?
The case studies appended in this thesis show that managers use change management models to a low extent. Managers are often informed of the benefits of change management models by consultants or business publications promoting certain models or “gurus”. But in an effort to just get it done there is a tendency to dismiss theoretical aspects of organizational change in favor of using a set of quick prescriptive steps or no structures at all. Consultants may also visualize a change process as a set of steps in order to present an attractive and easy-to-read proposal. Study 5 indicates that there is no consistent application of change management models. A majority of the respondents do not have a corporate change management model in use. The overall picture on roles, responsibilities and approaches to change management are unclear. Two overarching approaches could be seen. Either change management is seen as a profession organized in a corporate staff function, or seen as something that line managers are supposed to deal with on top of everything else. Study 1 indicates that change management models are not perceived as vital by managers – other aspects such as strategic clarity, decisiveness in top management and perseverance are highlighted. The outcome of the model deployment examined in study 1 does not unambiguously show that the adoption as such helped management to lead change. However, respondents claimed that models could aid managers in “seeing the whole”. From an instrumental point of view the studied change process reported in paper 2 might be seen as successful. But management did not use a certain change management model to reach their objectives. The manager leading the change rejected “theory” as such but used external support. Thus, it can be concluded that managers seem to apply change management models to a relatively small extent. It could well be that most change management models actually are fit for use, and that the root cause is in fact a knowledge transfer problem. The studies indicate that managers simply do not have the incentives, focus and ability to apply theoretical models in practice – the theory-practice gap is for real.

In study 3, it is shown that a system model based on business processes can provide a framework as well as contribute to the visualization of organization
boundaries and relations to stakeholders. As such it can contribute to context understanding and meaning. Change management models could be used as means to facilitate dialogue, interpretation and sense-making and as such possibly reduce uncertainty and resistance. A change management model highlighting processes could assist managers even though “Strategic clarity”, “Dedicated top management” and “perseverance” seem to have been more important than the use of a certain change management model, as shown in study 1. The case studies do not unambiguously show that change management models are widely diffused and adopted by management, but this finding does not disqualify models as means to construct meaning.

A conclusion is that the use of change management models should have two main purposes: Models of and models for. Firstly, a model of an organization should be used to visualize the interactions between the organization’s stakeholders, functions, processes and resources, see for instance Beer (1972), Checkland (1999) and Isaksson (2004, 2006). Secondly a model can be used for describing contents of a planned change process, see for instance Lewin (1951) Isaksson (2004), Kotter (1996, 2008), Womack & Jones (2003), to guide management through crucial steps. Study 6 also outlines some general elements of effective change which can be discerned in the plethora of change management models.

- In most change processes there seems to be an initial phase of orientation and initiation before the actual change takes place. Kurt Lewin (1951) labeled this the stage of unfreezing of which consists of different actions to set the need for change and create a sense of urgency within the organization. This is usually initiated by management and ensures that the “right” change will take place.
- This phase is followed by a phase of preparation where planning and further sense-making takes place.
- The phase of implementation then executes the actual change events and enables the transformation (or moving).
- Finally, there is a fourth phase of securing and sustaining the desired outcome of the change events. Called freezing by Lewin.

All these phases can be visualized in a process model which can facilitate the organizational understanding of the context, purpose and meaning of the change process as a whole.
A management model of a system
A conclusion based on study 3 could be that a process based system model could possibly be a suitable tool for constructing meaning by visualizing an organizational context, facilitate dialogue and interpretation, assess systems maturity and strengthen both hard and soft systems thinking in organizations.

Figure 13. Proposed elements in a process based system model. Adapted from Isaksson et al. (2008).

A management model for implementing change
A change management model should assist organizations understand why change occurs, how it will occur and what will occur (Kezar, 2001). A planned process emphasizing the need for sense-making can be seen as an elaboration Lewin (1951), Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage model and similar approaches, see for instance Granberg & Wallenholm (2012). The idea is to highlight activities directed to the emerging interpretation and sense-making processes taking place throughout the change process. By addressing the need for interaction and dialogue around the need for change, the change objectives and the change implementation, a parallel organic change process can emerge which constructs meaning. By emphasizing definition, planning and sense-making stages,
implementation obstacles could possibly be avoided. This process could be seen as support process for enabling change, as depicted in figure 13. Management’s objective should always be to transform the system to a desired future state facing as little resistance as possible, no matter what kind of changes the system is facing. The model presented in Figure 15 is one way of providing a framework for an integrated change process based on an open systems approach. It should be seen as a change management model suitable for strategic discussions and does not claim to be a complete toolbox for every aspect of an organizational life.

1. Why? An outspoken need for change

2. What

   Change Needed?
   Yes
   Unfreeze
   Move
   Freeze
   Change Successful?
   Yes
   No

3. How?

   Initiate
   Sense making
   Plan
   Implement
   Secure

Figure 14. A proposed change model, integrating a planned and organic approach. Based on theories and findings presented in this thesis. Inspired by Granberg & Wallenholm (2012).

Reports from the field indicate that most problems seem to occur during the implementation, when the need for change should be transformed into new core aspects of the organization’s operation such as changed strategies, structures, processes and culture. Poor management commitment combined with the lack of attention given to the human dynamics of change and a lack of knowledge of the underlying processes of change seems to hinder the implementation process (Alvesson & Svenningsson 2008, Armenakis et al., 1993, Burns, 1996, 2004, Kotter 2008). Instead of action, the organization turns into a state of “wait-and-
see-if-this-change-is-for-real” were literally no sustainable change takes place (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Kotter, 2008). It can be argued that this breakdown is an effect of a failed planning process and that the root causes of the implementation problems are to be found in earlier stages of a change process – “wrong change” is executed, as discussed in study 3. It can also be a sign of an underestimation of the emerging sense-making processes that occur when things are about to change. Change managers must learn to understand the complexity of organizational change and take action to prevent implementation problems. A solution could be to enhance sense-making activities such as internal communication and dialogue in early stages of a change process. Here, an integrated process based system model like the one outlined in study 5 could be of assistance. Persistent leadership, planning and communication seem to be general success factors. The order should be; first sense, then change. A process based system model can assist managers to avoid doing “the wrong change right”.

What does the literature say about models for organizational change best practice?

In recent years, management textbooks have been devoting entire chapters to organizational change and programmatic change models and techniques (Helms Mills et al., 2009). The promises have been many:

We have all the necessary knowledge. Indeed, we know much more about the Lean transformation than we did in the early 1990s. There is, therefore, no excuse for failing to act in this golden moment for Lean thinkers. (Womack & Jones, 2003, p 337)

In 1991, more than a decade before the Lean promoters James Womack and Daniel Jones made the statement above, Joseph Juran, another prominent authority within the quality management movement, made a similar declaration regarding TQM:

I have become optimistic for the first time since the quality crises descended on the United States. I now believe that, during the 1990s, the number of U. S. companies that have achieved stunning results will increase by order of magnitude. (Juran, 1991, p 85)

By linking the discussion of change to stories about “real” companies, they have affirmed the need for these types of practices. But the plethora of guru statements and how-to handbooks has probably not made it easier for managers to navigate in this field. Study 4 unravels that the terms “organizational change”, “change management” and “best practice” appear to be used in a variety of perspectives
and research applications indicating that there are no consistent definitions of organizational change best practice to be found in the literature, which is in line with findings by Hughes (2011). There is no evidence based “best” or “worst” way to manage change. Moreover, the expression “best practice” is not substantiated by empirical evidence. So called “best practices” could rather be divided into the following categorizations, based on the findings in study 4:

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How do organizations organize change management?
The survey reported in paper 5 shows a fragmented scene, not contradictory to similar international studies, see for instance The Economist Intelligence Unit (2008) and the Prosci Report (2009). The result indicates that many large Swedish organizations (which in practice are multinationals and thus could be seen as international) still use ad hoc approaches when organizing, planning and executing organizational change. A majority of the respondents claim that they lack a corporate change management model. Bearing its limitations in mind, the study also indicates that large Swedish organizations with a holistic approach to the organization, development, planning and execution of organizational change captured in a corporate change management model generally perceive a greater outcome from their efforts.

A majority of the respondents perceive that their organizations are “very good” or “good” at executing change management. A large majority of the respondents having a set change management model perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management. About one third of those not having a set change management model perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management. These results, although not all statistically significant, could fuel a further discussion that investing in a corporate change management model improves the ability to execute organizational change. Regarding the organizational structures it can be observed that all respondents having a staff
solution in place perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management, while around half of the responding organizations having a line or project solution perceive that they are “very good” or “good”. This could indicate that an assembled, holistic and corporate organizational approach to change management is more effective than a decentralized one. However, it could also be a case of selection bias and response bias - the output needs probably to be taken with a pinch of salt. The study reflects the complex reality of change management in Sweden. The answer to the research question is that there seems to be two predominant approaches when organizing change management:

- **The ad hoc line approach**: Change is a thing that busy managers are supposed to handle on top of everything else. Change efforts are dealt with case by case by the management of the function or functions about to change. Approaches are chosen randomly or based on so called “best practices” or anecdotal evidence.

- **The staff function approach**: Change is a profession, an area of competence and a corporate staff function, usually linked to HR or similar “People Management” functions. Approaches are centralized and chosen from a corporate body of knowledge.

In less than 10 percent of the cases, the switchboard operator knows the answer to the question: “Who is in charge of change management in this organization”. According to the Prosci Benchmarking Report (2009) the HR department is the most common response for where the change management responsibility is placed. In 70 percent of our cases we ended up talking to the Head of Communication/Information. Thus, the study reveals a fragmented scene but could fuel a discussion on if and how change management can be seen both as a function and a profession rather than a thing that busy managers are supposed to deal with on top of everything else. The study indicates that large Swedish organizations with a holistic approach to the organization, development, planning and execution of organizational change captured in a corporate change management model generally perceive a greater outcome from their efforts.

**Future directions of quality management and change management?**

This thesis has emerged from a quality management context. Study 3 and 6 present that quality management (QM) is described as a wide discipline consisting of a core of principles, methodologies and tools. Study 6 discusses these matters from an academia perspective. Examples of core principles on which all three studied universities clearly agree are: Customer focus and Continuous Improvement. The three universities also agree that the QM
discipline is constantly, but slowly, changing and today QM is “driving while under the influence of” management concepts and disciplines, such as: Lean production and Six Sigma. Both study 3 and 6 advocate a stakeholder view. The wider stakeholder view within QM also leads to a shift towards research closely related to other disciplines, e.g. sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and organizational change. The view on the future differs more among the three participating universities in study 6. Although all forecast a possible scenario of further integration with other disciplines like sustainable development, the forecasts of the development direction is more diffuse. Study 6 concludes that the three universities convey three possible development directions for QM in the future:

- The “searchers” at Chalmers University of Technology propose that QM can find its place within a discipline \( X \) where QM will contribute to a “greater whole” while keeping the quality toolbox intact.
- The “technocrats” at Linköping University suggest that QM returns to its roots and consist of a core based on a traditional quality technology toolbox with its methods and tools.
- The “doubters” at Luleå University of Technology forecast a risk that QM, as it is today, may seize to exist and instead the research may be conducted within other disciplines or under a different concept name than QM.

A shift for QM towards a focus on sustainable development and change will probably not be without problems for quality management scholars. The future will tell if quality management scholars will turn their attention towards sustainability issues and what the impediments and contributions will be. Another challenging area for quality and change management in the future might be to address issues in innovation management in an organizational context where continuous improvement is a central concept. Study 3 indicates that in the future there could be reason to focus on the sub-process of assessing change needs and assessing change success, since none of the examined change strategies fully cover this part. When analysing these strategies, there should be more focus on how change cases as such have been prepared since it is not unlikely that many reasons for failure are found already at this stage. Thus, both study 3 and 6 state that QM could be vital in many aspects of organizational change and development in the future.
5.2 A meta conclusion

Summarizing the answers to the research questions from a meta perspective, some general patterns can be seen.

The theory is in motion. The magnitude, speed, impact, and unpredictability of change are greater than ever before. But there is no universal, prescriptive and systematic change management model to cover the diversified nature of change in organizations. Neither is it empirical support for preoccupations with either the best way to manage change or the worst way to manage change. The scholars are searching. Findings from study 3, 4 and 6 indicate that the theory is in motion and there seems to be no evidence based change management best practice.

"Ad hoc” is prevalent. Earlier studies conclude that practitioners often fail to adopt the findings of research in fields such as management. All studies strengthen that conclusion by showing that change in most cases is a thing that busy managers are supposed to handle on top of everything else. Change efforts are dealt with case by case by the management of the function or functions about to change. Most managers seem to lack incentives, focus and ability to apply theoretical models in their change management practice. Instead home grown solutions are used. A deliberate approach to the organization, development, planning and execution of organizational change appears to be absent in most large Swedish organizations.

Models may help. Change management models based on scientific evidence and trustworthy practical applications may help organizations understand why change occurs, how it will occur and what will occur. Study 3 finds that organizational change can be described as a process comprising important elements outlined in a logical sequence. Study 5 indicates that the use of corporate change management models is effective. As such, it should provide guidance when leading change. But theory never put into practice is of little use. A viewpoint advocated by action scientists is that scientific knowledge will be implemented only if researchers, consultants and managers jointly engage in interpreting and implementing study finding. Thus, managers, consultants and scholars should join forces in finding change management models fit for use.


6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the intention is to revert back to the research purpose and discuss findings and ways forward. To resume I reflect on the journey behind this thesis and possible areas for future study.

Organizations deal with management of change. But there is no obvious way forward and many struggle along the way in their effort to contextualize models and construct meaning. Theory is in motion and “ad hoc” is prevalent. The core question along the research process has been; could it be possible to improve the chances of making good change management theory come to good change management practice by means of models constructing meaning? My contention is that it could well be possible, but the findings indicate that there are obstacles in the way. Robert, portrayed in paper 2, summarize this ordeal from a hard-boiled practical managers point of view: “This is nothing but strategic fuzz”.

6.1 Models – meaningless or misunderstood?

“When I leave our meetings, I think I get this with processes… but, hell, you have to explain this once again.” Robert again, always eager to go forward, had stumbled on methodological issues. I had tried to explain the need for change and the benefits of process management and filled the whiteboard with boxes and arrows. Apparently I had failed to reach him. The models made no sense and there seemed to be a gap between my theory and his practice.

It is fair to say that there is enough empirical evidence to state that there really is a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of organizational change, both in academia and among practitioners. My studies and others show both that practitioners often fail to adopt the findings of research in fields such as management and that academic research is running the risk of becoming less useful for solving practical management problems. On the other hand, there is also a critique against the blending of the academic and business community, allowing legitimization of “management gurus”, see for instance Helms Mills et al. (2009). I must be frank and admit that I too have been treated with suspicion in some academic circles: “I see, you are a consultant, thus not a real researcher”. Regardless of starting point, we should be able to agree on the statement from the introduction of this thesis: seamlessly applied flawed theory is of little use, so is also a perfect theory never implemented.

So what can be said about the outcome of this research? Are management models meaningless in practice or are they simply misunderstood by ignorant
managers? I believe the answer could be captured in three future challenges: Firstly, the management research society should to a greater extent focus on the production of results fit for solving practical management problems. Close up case studies on “real” change processes is one way forward. Secondly, the term “practitioners” should also be divided in two entities: managers and consultants. My own case study findings highlight that managers seldom use theory based models, but some consultants do. Managers should to a greater extent be challenged to use models in their practice. It is simply not good enough to dismiss theory like Robert and others do. Thirdly, the consultancy society, where I belong, should be more cautious in tampering with research results for business purposes. There is no “best practice” and the term should be banned. Instead consultants and managers should cooperate with researchers to a greater extent, in search of evidence based solutions. My own collaboration with researchers from several universities and countries could serve as a good example of this. Linking back to the reasoning on contextualization, my contention is that there is a double recontextualization loop; first change management theory is interpreted, packaged (and for that matter commercialized) by consultants, then further recontextualized and to some extent applied by managers. This double loop should be a subject of further research.

Figure 15. A cycle of contextualization and future challenges.
6.2 The context beats the concepts

Summarizing the theory and the studies appended in this thesis shows a fragmented scene when it comes to the organization of change, not contradictory to similar international studies. Study 6 also reports that the field of quality management is moving. The direction, although slightly unclear, is towards aspects of sustainability, innovation and change. Study 1 and other referred studies state that there is no such thing as one best way to lead change - there is simply no Ctrl-C/Ctrl-V function in management or off the shelf solutions. All change applications need customization. The context beats the concepts. Reality seems in my studied cases to be more of social constructions – or what Reed (2011) calls “landscapes of meaning” – rather than objective measurable truths. For instance, the objective fact that the studied change process reported in study 2 reached set goals did not mean that everyone in that organization perceived success. No one of the interviewees from the retrospective interviews carried out in March 2011 could recall a coherent story from the studied period – not even the main character Robert. Dates, events and even years were mixed up. They all perceived a different reality from their respective viewpoints. There was no widespread sense of urgency in the organization. In fact, there was much complacency and very little insight that major changes were needed. Thus, the change as such was by many perceived as unnecessary. The guiding coalition consisted in reality of three senior executives and my humble self. Middle management – often praised as crucially important when leading change – played a minor part. The progress of the studied change process was totally dependent on Robert’s stamina and will to succeed. The study also highlights the unpredictability of change. There were several occasions were everything could have ended by a phone call, a simple misunderstanding, a wink of an eye or just a bad day.

Top management was also accused by the resisters of brainwashing, top-down management and not knowing the business. The strategy was disseminated on a slideshow level, but not in depth. Robert ignited a lot of activities, but it was not broad based. He dictated most of it himself. In 2009, when the new business oriented culture can be said to have been anchored, 75 percent of the staff at the claims department had shifted. The organization had shed its skin. It takes years to change a cultural context and the resistance can be fierce. In this case, the capacity of the change leader in person seems to have been crucial, rather than a specific change management model.
6.3 Doing the wrong change right

The current axiom is that approximately 70 percent of all change initiatives fail. Either intended changes are not fully launched, or failed, or achieved but over budget, late and with great frustration – at least according to Kotter (2008). Many references regarding the failure rate are included in this thesis. Study 1 reports of three cases of process implementation. The results from these deployment events are ambiguous – one process is described by the management in charge as successful, one is a complete failure since key players left the company and one case is hard to evaluate. Study 2 could be seen as a success, but yet people were displeased with the outcome. Thus, there is not empirical evidence to state this 70 percent figure as an objective truth. In fact, there seem to be no clear standards or performance indicators to define “failure” and “success” at all. Who would be the judge? Different stakeholders might arrive at different conclusions, as shown in study 2 and further discussed in study 3. Perceived success and failure is context dependent and socially constructed. It depends on whom you ask. Another challenge is how to measure success and failure during organic emergent change processes. It can hardly fail, since it is constantly growing and adapting to new circumstances. Likewise, you can hardly proclaim success since you have no outspoken objectives or plans. The outcome becomes even more subjective and stakeholder dependent. The discussion about success and failure in organizational change needs to be reframed.

The widespread notion that 70 percent of all change initiatives fail should be scrutinized. The instrumental project discourse should also be challenged – it can hardly be successful to reach goals, if the goals are poorly set. A hasty initial analysis in an effort to just get it done might in fact launch the “wrong” change, as discussed in paper 3. Instead of implicitly accepting the traditional notion that organizations are rational, logical places, we should perhaps consider wider evidence from other domains which reflect a different reality. If managers instead see that the world is complex and dynamic and constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with wider social systems, they should perhaps be a little cautious in drawing to hasty conclusions in early stages of change processes. I have met some brilliant leaders through the years but more often skilled specialists who have qualified for managerial positions due to expertness rather than leadership talent. In an urge to manage and control, I have seen rigorous operating procedures and performance management systems. I have met management teams who try to grasp the whole by measuring and controlling fragments. I believe this must come to an end. Instead we should zoom out and understand the complex reality of organizational change before we tamper with new models and tools, otherwise we risk doing the wrong change
right. All change management models should therefore be labeled with a text of warning: “leadership not included, read instruction before use”.

### 6.4 Final reflections and future research

Management theories on organizational change have developed in pace with society as a whole. There seems to be a general movement from instrumental positivistic approaches to change too more organic and interpretive ones. Action oriented research is one way forward. My own research initially emerged from my interest in the development and deployment of models and techniques for my profession and has since grown by multiple iterations. A positivistic and normative research approach made a great deal of sense to me. I wanted to find the “truth”. However, upon resuming the last years, I have noticed that I have moved in the same anti positivistic direction and could today be called a critical realist. The importance of interpretation, meaning and sense-making has grown stronger. Thus, my initial quest for a general change management best practice was bound to fail. Referring back to my discussion on research paradigms, I now do not believe I have found the ultimate truth, but perhaps some findings which can contribute to a “truth” best available for the moment. The literature consistently reports that the failure rate is depressingly high, but there is also some light at the end of the tunnel. Based on the iterative research process leading to this thesis, I dare to think that two fundamental success factors – elements which are necessary for successful change management – can be identified. These *Organizational change fundamentals* can be described as follows.

The first fundamental condition vital for a change to reach intended objectives is an outspoken and communicated need for change. Surprisingly often, change initiatives are launched without a sense of urgency. I could present loads of anecdotal evidence from change assignments, where I have left management meetings with a dull feeling of “this change is not for real…why are they doing it”. Or an awkward feeling that the “wrong change” is about to be launched: “I see, you are about to deploy Lean… but, what problem is it that you want to solve?” Without a trustworthy lever for change, endorsed by top management and transformed into a vision of a desired future state, people will question the need and resistance is likely to emerge. Questions concerning how the decision was made, why it was made, what alternatives were considered, how it impacts the organization and how it impacts employees must always be answered in a frank and honest way to facilitate sense-making and constructions of meaning. The “Big Why” needs to be answered, all the time.
The second fundamental condition vital for a change to reach intended objectives is the presence of \textit{persistent leadership and long term commitment in top management}. Without adequate leadership, every change initiative – no matter school or model chosen – seems to be bound to fail. According to research by Collins (2001) successful leaders are humble, disciplined, result oriented and equipped with enormous will power. I believe study 2 shows just that. These leaders also have a talent in understanding the complex, organic social system within the organization. They possess a natural ability to combine “hard” structured approaches with a “soft” participative management style. The most successful leaders are not extrovert guru types (Collins, 2001). Deming (1993) argues that a skilled leader should have profound knowledge of systems, variation, epistemology and psychology. Joiner & Joseph (2007) argue that leaders must be agile and understand different stakeholder’s demands and expectations, organizational contexts, creativity and also have profound interest in self-development. They should be more of catalysts instead of specialists. Other success factors mentioned in the management literature such as planning, control, communication, dialogue, involvement, certain techniques etc. drop to second place. My contention is that these factors can be seen as extensions of the two fundamentals and will not be viable without a persistent leadership or an outspoken need for change.

Gummesson (2000) states that science is a journey and not a destination – thus, this work could continue forever. The learning process is ongoing and new thoughts emerge every day. To change our behavior within systems, we have to change the way we think about the systems themselves, the way new knowledge is created and how we become involved in the process of knowledge translation (Kitson, 2009). Instead of implicitly accepting the traditional notion that organizations are rational, logical places, we should perhaps consider wider evidence from other domains which reflect a different reality. I believe that this is exactly what I have experienced during this journey.

Searching for a generic recipe for successful change is pointless. There is such a distant gap between the measurable facts and social constructs of success and failure. Thus, there are no objective answers. The literature provides no clear evidence based guidance – there is no best practice. “Success” and “failure” are elusive phenomena which seem to relate more to social constructions among certain stakeholders than to hard metrics. The answer depends on who you ask. The social context, where the actual change is taking place, seems to override no matter what management concept you introduce. However, to learn more about the landscapes of meaning in organizations that are about to undergo change seems like a good investment for change leaders. First make sense, then change.
REFERENCES


2003:07, Luleå University of Technology, Division of Quality and Environmental Management, Luleå.


PAPER 1

Process based System Models for Accelerating Change: Results from an Explanatory Multiple Case Study

Jacob Hallencreutz
Process based System Models for Accelerating Change: Results from an Explanatory Multiple Case Study
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Abstract: The working hypothesis in this paper is that systems thinking captured in a process based system model can help organizations to accelerate change. To test this hypothesis I have conducted a case study looking at three cases from different areas: a state authority case, a case from the construction industry and a case from the food industry. This work is a result of an academic follow up of several years of consultancy work in the organisations studied. The results indicate that implementation of a system model focusing on processes, resources and a multiple stakeholder perspective aids management to accelerate change. However, the results also indicate that there are other more crucial success factors than the model as such. Key success factors seem to be: Strategic clarity, management decisiveness and perseverance.

Keywords: Change Management, Process Orientation, Systems Thinking

Introduction

In a survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2008) 58% of 600 senior executives in Europe and US respond that less than half of their change initiatives have been successful. Haines et al (2005) claim that approximately 75% of all major change initiatives fail to fully meet their objectives - and this is happening in a global environment where the need for rapid change is urgent. The American consultant and researcher Greg Hackett has studied the development of 3 000 companies during 40 years, from 1960 to 2000 (Hackett, 2006). He found that two thirds of these companies had lost their position in the market or disappeared. The reason for this, according to Hackett, is that many leaders are stuck in strategic and structural thinking from a time when competition and market conditions were different. He calls for a new organizational paradigm, where survivability, flexibility and systems thinking are key success factors. Kotter (1996) also asserts the importance of corporate adaptability. A need for change is not always predictable, and in the modern world, it will be necessary for organizations to remain flexible and ready to implement change. However, there are many perspectives in organizational change. Kotter claims that whenever human communities are forced to adjust to shifting conditions, resistance is ever present. He affirms that future organizations must possess certain fundamentals if they intend to survive in the 21st century. One such trait is a distinct sense of urgency. According to Kotter, the organizational structure as such may hamper this sense of urgency by causing employees to focus on narrow functional goals of the department they are involved in, rather than establishing systems thinking and a sense of contribution to the overall performance of the business. An employee may feel successful with their personal work and fail to realize that the performance of the company is declining.

Systems thinking is according to Haines et al (2005) a shift from seeing elements, functions and events to seeing processes, structures, relationships and outcomes, based on a holistic process approach to reality. As seems to be the case with most scientific fields, systems thinking has a very long history. With the publication of Wiener’s work on cybernetics (1948) and von Bertalanffy’s on general system theory (1950, 1968) the systems approach began developing into a more distinctive area of research. Jackson (2000) argues that three core system notions still remain and are held in common by the different tendencies in system thinking:

- Holism – to look at the world in terms of larger wholes rather than reducing it into its fundamental elements
- Knowledge is organized into cognitive systems, i.e. structured frameworks that links various elements of our knowledge into cohesive wholes
- Systems approaches have a strong resonance with real-world problems and practice.

A systems approach on an organizational level could possibly lead to an increased management focus on the horizontal multifunctional processes, which deliver value to customers and other stakeholders, for instance product development, customer service, manufacturing, sales, procurement or business control, instead of vertical functions of a hierarchical organization. But it could be argued that most organ-
izations still run their business through functionally oriented structures - a heritage from the industrialization era in the beginning of the 20th century. In small enterprises few people could manage all tasks and operations without complicated internal structures. When the organizations expanded, it became necessary to delegate roles and responsibilities.

In a time when speed and flexibility are success factors in a global competition, my experience is that this kind of vertical structure is becoming more and more dysfunctional. It can lead to lack of holistic thinking, “departmentalization” and internal focus instead of customer orientation. Other possible consequences are constraints in internal information flows, lack of mutual understanding and lack of shared views which can lead to conflicts and “us and them”-thinking (Stigendahl & Johansson, 2003).

Palmberg (2008) finds two different movements in the descriptions of process management in the covered literature:

1. Process management for single process improvements – a structured approach to analyze and continually improve individual processes.
2. Process management for systems management – a holistic way to manage several aspects of the business and as a valuable perspective to adopt in determining organizational effectiveness.

Hellström (2006) argues that the academic way of defining business processes has turned out to be problematic to apply in practice and it could be claimed that deployment of a process approach has been slow. According to Rentzhog (1996), the implementation of process management includes both structural and cultural changes to the organization. Based on a survey, Forsberg et al. (1999) state that the expectations when implementing a process approach are unreasonably high. In a study of quality award recipients in Sweden, Hansson (2003) found that many small organizations perceive work with process management to be problematic. Implementing processes appears to be rather demanding: “In practice, however, the process approach seems difficult to understand and to put into action” (Rentzhog, 1996 p. 13). Why do many change initiatives involving process management run into problems? DeFoco & McCabe (1997) state that a change towards process management requires, not just the use of a set of tools and techniques, but a change in management style and way of thinking. Through a literature review of the area of process management, Hellström & Peterson (2005) conclude that the literature is foremost built on theoretical reasoning, resulting in a large number of checklists on how-to-do. Furthermore, they argue that there is a lack of empirical research of the effects of process management. Hellström & Peterson (2005) believe that despite a decade of experience of practicing process oriented management, certain fundamental problems still beset its successful application and causes practitioners concern.

This leads to the idea that improved systems thinking visualized in a process based system model could maybe improve readiness and support management teams in the execution of change.

Research Methodology

The working hypothesis in this paper is that systems thinking captured in a process based system model can help organizations to accelerate change. Being a practitioner and a management consultant, it is fair to say that my research interest is mainly driven by an urge to better understand problems and challenges in my professional life and hopefully contribute to a broader understanding in the field of change management and process management based on systems thinking.

From 2002 to 2006 I worked with the studied organizations on implementing a process based system model (presented in Figure 1) in order to improve systems thinking and help management to reach change objectives. In spring 2007 I conducted a first case study (Hallencreutz et al, 2007). One year later I conducted a follow-up to track the long term impact of the adopted process based system model. The outcome of the second study is presented in this paper.

For this research I chose the following three organizations. The criteria for choosing these organizations were:

• Representation from different areas (public and private, service and manufacturing)
• Similar change objectives and process based approach
• Management interest in change management
• Long term relationships (3-6 years)

1 The studied organisations need to remain anonymous due to non disclosure agreements.
Table 1: Studied Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Change Drivers</th>
<th>Change Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case A: State agency</td>
<td>App 500</td>
<td>Responsible for regulation and surveillance of the development, manufacturing and marketing of products (within a certain market).</td>
<td>Need for increased internal efficiency</td>
<td>Implement a process based system model to improve performance Period: 2002-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case B: Construction company</td>
<td>App 100</td>
<td>A fast growing company, focusing on acquisition of land and construction of residential buildings</td>
<td>Fast growth Need for internal structures and procedures</td>
<td>Implement a process based system model to improve performance Period: 2004-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case C: Food industry company</td>
<td>App 100</td>
<td>The company is responsible for marketing, selling, producing and delivering certain foodstuffs.</td>
<td>Nr 4 in the market Need for growth and increased internal efficiency</td>
<td>Implement a process based system model to improve performance Period: 2004-2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The change projects in all above presented organizations were based on a commercial process based system model including implementation steps. To understand how the change projects were executed, the model and implementation steps are briefly presented below.

The model is built on process management theory, see for instance Egnell (1995), Isaksson (2006), Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) around the organization’s main processes, management processes and support processes. The model also to some extent complies with the criteria for a formal system presented by Checkland (1985):

1. An on-going purpose or mission
2. A measure of performance
3. A decision making process
4. Components which are themselves systems
5. Components that interact
6. An existence in a wider system with which it interacts
7. A boundary for the decision making process
8. Resources
9. Some guarantee of continuity.

A system implementation process follows six steps (executed in the studied organizations) inspired by Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage process for implementing change.

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2 For further information, see www.implement.se
Step 1: Set change objectives
The first step is to create a sense of urgency, stakeholder focus and set tangible change objectives in the management team.

Step 2: Define the strategic process map
The defining of the strategic process map is a top-down process. The management team discusses and answers at set of questions around the above presented general process chart (based on the model in Figure 1). The questions are:

1. Do we know our customers? Do we know their demands, needs and expectations? Do we know our other important stakeholders?
2. Which is our most important value creating main process? Input? Outcome? Crucial interactions, activities and events?
3. How do we secure the fulfillment of our stakeholders’ demands, needs and expectations? How do we measure performance?
4. Do we know our management processes? Chain of command? Balance between functions and processes?
5. Support and service to the main processes?

The outcome of the work in the management team is documented in the organization’s “strategic process map” which sets the framework for next step. Another important outcome is a shared view in the management team of the organization as a system.

Step 3: Diagnosis and analysis
Strategically important improvement areas are defined by the management team and a well defined set of process analysis projects are launched. The projects are carried out in multifunctional teams, always linked to the strategic process map and decided change objectives.

Step 4: Set improvement potential
The project analysis projects map the chosen processes in detail and identify bottle-necks, constraints, waste, overlapping, unclear responsibilities, poor communication etc.

Step 5: Implement process management
The defined and analyzed processes are linked to the strategic process map and a process owner is assigned. Identified, prioritized and decided improvement projects are launched.

Step 6: Measure, control and improve
Process performance indicators are linked to the organization’s performance measurement system. The management tracks the process performance and takes action if the change objectives are not reached.

Being a researcher assessing the results of my own consultancy assignments, I have to apply an open minded yet critical approach to my empirical observations. Gummesson claims that (2000, s 25) “access to reality is the researcher’s number one problem”. The quality of collected data depends on the researcher’s and the informant’s relationship, background, position, competence, feeling, interests etc. Yin (2003, p 34) has defined four crucial quality aspects in case study research: Construct validity, Internal validity, External validity and Reliability. In Table 2 I outline how I have adopted these quality aspects.

Table 2: Quality Aspects and my Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crucial Quality Aspect</th>
<th>My Adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity</strong>: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.</td>
<td>To accomplish trustworthy construct validity, I have adopted a well established business excellence model (the SIQ-model) as an assessment tool (see Figure 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validity</strong>: establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.</td>
<td>To accomplish trustworthy internal validity, I use data, investigator and theory triangulation to secure relationships. For instance, assessment results are compared with management interviews about the use of the process based system model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validity</strong>: establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.</td>
<td>It is possible, but not certain that case study results can be generalized (Yin, 2003). However, multiple cases enforce the possibility to generate general conclusions and knowledge (Andersen, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong>: demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results.</td>
<td>To accomplish trustworthy reliability, I have used documented data collection procedures that can be repeated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 SIQ, The Swedish Institute for Quality, www.siq.se
The data collection period started in spring 2007 and was completed one year later. The sources of evidence have been documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations as well as physical artefacts.

To ensure construct validity and minimize risk for bias and subjective conclusions, I chose to use a well established business excellence model based on a set of core values in line with Total Quality Management (TQM)-principles as a means to assess the development of operational excellence in the studied organizations and track if the process based system model has had any tangible impact on the business results. Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) describe TQM as a constant endeavor to fulfill and preferably exceed customer needs and expectations at the lowest cost, by continuous improvement work, to which all involved are committed, focusing on the processes in the organization. However, how to objectively evaluate operational excellence could well be a topic for future study. Here I lean on the fact that research has shown that Swedish organisations successfully working with TQM-principles, such as customer focus and process orientation, reach better results than the general index (Hansson & Eriksson, 2003).

The business excellence model used in this study is divided in seven criteria, with sub criteria (SIQ, 2007). The seven criteria are internally and externally assessed against a set of developed systems maturity levels (Garvare, et al, 2007).

A “Level 5 organization” can be seen as a system operating on a high level of excellence, showing best in class results in every aspect of every criterion, including a high degree of systems thinking. A “Level 1 Organization” is an immature system with great improvement potential. A move from low score to a high score indicates that the organization has improved its performance, and vice versa. A wide spread in scores suggests that the organization is fragmented. By letting representatives from the studied organizations perform a self assessment twice (spring 2007 and 2008), the results indicate how the change initiatives are proceeding. Further longitudinal studies would provide more stable results, and these assessments could well be done again in years to come.
The assessment output has been triangulated with output from other sources of evidence such as interviews with management representatives, archival records and results from other surveys.

Results from Case Studies
The data collection period started in spring 2007 and was completed one year later. The first internal and external assessment was performed in May 2007, the follow-up assessment was done in June 2008. Other sources of evidence used to challenge the assessment output have been documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations as well as physical artefacts. These sources (and a vast amount of data not displayed in this paper) were individually analyzed and assessed per criterion in spring 2007 (Hallencreutz et al, 2007). The findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Findings. All Cases are based on the Seven main Criteria in the SIQ-Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>State Authority</th>
<th>Construction Company</th>
<th>Food Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership</td>
<td>A state authority is governed by legislation and regulations which have influenced the management culture in Case A. A shift towards a more service and process oriented management style is ongoing.</td>
<td>The construction company is driven by an entrepreneurial spirit. The management style is informal and action oriented. New processes for planning, measuring and follow-up have been implemented.</td>
<td>The division director (with background from the car industry) introduced a management style influenced by classic TQM-principles such as customer focus, process orientation, empowerment and holistic thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Performance measurement</td>
<td>The authority has implemented a balanced performance measurement system tracking economy, process efficiency, quality and HR.</td>
<td>The company has worked out what they describe as an “economy handbook”. The measurement system is mainly focusing on economic results, but the implementation of a more balanced measurement system is in process. Staff motivation and satisfaction and customer satisfaction is tracked on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Conceptual work on a new performance measurement system was done, but not implemented. The current performance measurement system was built up around a set of traditional productivity indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strategic planning</td>
<td>The authority has since many years fully adopted a business planning tool (Lots® - a structured process for customer and stakeholder driven business development).</td>
<td>The company has implemented planning processes including procedures for:  • strategy and budget planning  • forecasting  • strategic and operational business control</td>
<td>The division director launched a new strategic platform and a business planning process was developed and implemented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. Staff involvement

The change project was run by a multifunctional approach and well anchored in the organization via several internal conferences. In this case study, I have not had access to internal staff surveys.

The company is tracking staff satisfaction. In 2007 the following areas were scored as crucial:
- The process management system
- Cooperation with other functions
- Seeing the whole improvement areas were customer focus, leadership and internal order.

The authority has since many years carried out internal surveys to keep track of staff satisfaction and motivation. In the year 2006 survey the following areas scored high:
- I am proud of our organization.
- I fully understand the authority’s mission.
- I do my best to contribute to an open cooperative climate.
- I fully understand the objectives of my department.

In this case study, I have not had access to internal staff surveys.

### 5. Business processes

The project defined a strategic process map which was not properly anchored in the management team.

The company has defined a strategic process map according to the adopted process based system model. The process map is the framework of the company’s quality management system. Process owners are assigned, but do not spend enough time on process improvement. A dedicated development manager was recruited in January 2008.

Process analysis was started, but not completed and the work stopped when the division director left.

The authority has implemented the process based system model and has defined a strategic process map. Detailed standard operating procedures are accessible to all via the internal web. Process owners are assigned and spend 10-50% of their time on process improvement.

### 6. Business results

The business has in three years grown from 35 employees to 100. The turnover has during the same period grown from 150 MSEK to 1 000 MSEK (about 100M Euro), with stable profitability.

During 2004-2006 the business result improved, but has now declined.

The annual report of 2005 reports of a 30% raise in productivity. In May 2006 a peer review was carried out by external auditors from EU. The review concluded that the authority has a “systematic process approach, good results and positive trends”.

### 7. Customer satisfaction

The company tracks customer satisfaction through surveys and scores stable results.

During the period of the change project the division gained market shares in strategically important segments. In this case study, I have not had access to customer satisfaction surveys.

Traditional customer satisfaction surveys are not carried out on a regular basis. There is an ongoing formal and informal dialogue with the “Industry”. Other stakeholders report that they are satisfied with the authority’s performance.

Representatives from the organization carried out a self assessment assisted by the author in 2007 and again in 2008. The results of the internal and external assessments of the seven criteria are explicitly resumed and commented below. In Figures 5 to 7, the results are presented based on the scale in Figure 3.
The State Authority assessment results in Figure 5 indicate an even score between the external and internal assessments in 2007 and a mark up in the self assessment score 2008. These results indicate that the organization has put an effort in a broad based systems approach instead of boosting certain areas. An observation is that criteria 4 “Staff Engagement” is the only criteria where no improvement seems to have taken place. This might indicate that the process based system model still is mainly a top management tool and not a widespread part of the culture. The overall improvement suggests that the adopted process based system model has helped the organization to achieve better results.

The construction company assessment in Figure 6 shows a spread of scores both between the external and internal assessments in 2007 and the self assessment score 2008, which could indicate that the organization is still searching for direction and systematic management approaches. Some criteria score higher in 2008, others lower. There is no improvement trend between the years and the overall picture suggests that the adopted process based system model has not significantly helped the organization to achieve better results. The organization seems to be “stuck in the middle”. An interpretation could be that the management team seems to have put some effort in improving performance measurement and strategic planning.
(criteria 2 and 3), which might lead to a better systems impact in the future. Here, further investigations are needed.

Figure 7: Self Assessment Result – Case C: The Food Industry

The food industry case assessment in Figure 7 shows a gap between our external assessment and the internal assessment carried out in 2007. Here, we might see an example of what according to Kotter (1996) happens when managers measure themselves and the performance of others against low standards: the self assessment score in this case is more positive compared to the external which might indicate that there was no real sense of urgency in this organization. The division director left and I lost contact with the organization in 2007. A renewed self assessment was never done and in this case the adopted process based system model seems to have had no persistent impact.

Taking these findings back to the studied organizations, I have discussed the adoption of the process based system model, the outcome of the change projects and critical success factors in the acceleration of change with management representatives of all cases. The result of these discussions is resumed in the following ranked short list of success factors, based on my earlier study, Hallencreutz et al (2007):

1. Strategic clarity – direction and clear long term objectives
2. Decisiveness in top management – A sense of urgency
3. Perseverance – To stand the distance
4. Multifunctional involvement – Teamwork and horizontal thinking
5. Down-to-earth methodologies – Keep it simple
6. Customer focus (“the mission”) – Remember why we are here
7. Integrated control systems – Focus on the vital few indicators
8. Process measurements – You can’t manage without facts

Conclusion

This multiple case study does not unambiguously show that the adoption of a process based system model as such helps top management to accelerate change initiatives. Empirical data as well as internal and external assessments indicate that Case A – the state agency – has reached “Level 4” in the self assessment model and can be seen as successful in executing change. The assessment score shows a positive mark up between 2007 and 2008. Management representatives claim that the choice of the Implement model was a successful approach. Case B – the construction company – seems to be “stuck in the middle”, struggling with some fundamental problems and shows no clear direction in terms of improved system maturity. A new managing director is in place, and respondents ask for a more decisive and aligned management team. Case C – the food industry company – is a failure due to the absence of management commitment. A major reason was that the division director left his assignment. According to Yin (2003) it is possible, but not certain that case study results can be generalized. However, a general conclusion could be that the Implement model itself presented in Figure 1 could provide enough thrust to accelerate change, but there is not enough empirical evidence in this study to prove it.
The ranking of success factors looks the same in all three cases. Another finding is that the implementation steps in the commercial model as well as above ranked success factors align to some extent to existing change management concepts such as Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage process.

Table 4: Alignment between Kotter (1996), the Implement Model and Identified Success Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kotter’s Eight Stages</th>
<th>The Commercial Implementation Steps used in the Cases</th>
<th>Identified Success Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Establishing a sense of urgency | Step 1: Set change objectives | • Strategic clarity – direction and clear long term objectives  
 • Decisiveness in top management – A sense of urgency |
| Examining the market and competitive realities  
Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities. | | |
| 2. Creating the guiding coalition | Step 1: Set change objectives | • Decisiveness in top management – A sense of urgency  
 • Perseverance – To stand the distance  
 • Multifunctional involvement – Teamwork and horizontal thinking |
| Forming a group with enough power to lead the change.  
Getting the group to work together like a team. | | |
| 3. Developing a vision and a strategy | Step 1: Set change objectives  
Step 2: Define the strategic process map | • Strategic clarity – direction and clear long term objectives  
 • Customer focus (“the mission”) – Remember why we are here  
 • Integrated control systems – Focus on the vital few indicators |
| Creating a vision to help direct the change effort.  
Developing strategies for achieving that vision. | | |
| 4. Communicating the change vision | Step 2: Define the strategic process map | • Multifunctional involvement – Teamwork and horizontal thinking  
 • Down-to-earth methodologies – Keep it simple |
| Using all possible ways to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies.  
The guiding coalition acting as role models for the behaviours expected of employees. | | |
| 5. Empowering broad-based action in the organisation. | Step 3: Diagnosis and analysis  
Step 4: Set improvement potential  
Step 5: Implement process management | • Multifunctional involvement – Teamwork and horizontal thinking  
 • Down-to-earth methodologies – Keep it simple |
| Getting rid of obstacles for the change process  
Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision.  
Encouraging risk taking and new ideas, activities and actions. | | |
| 6. Generating short-term wins | Step 3: Diagnosis and analysis  
Step 4: Set improvement potential  
Step 5: Implement process management | • Integrated control systems – Focus on the vital few indicators |
| Planning and creating visible improvements in performance, or “wins”  
Visibly recognising and rewarding people who make the wins possible | | |
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures and policies that don’t fit together and that don’t fit the change vision. Recruiting, promoting and developing people who can implement the change vision. Strengthening the process with new projects, themes and change agents.

Step 5: Implement process management
• Integrated control systems – Focus on the vital few indicators
• Process measurements – You can’t manage without facts
• Perseverance – To stand the distance

Step 6: Measure, control and improve
• Integrated control systems – Focus on the vital few indicators
• Process measurements – You can’t manage without facts
• Strategic clarity – direction and clear long term objectives

8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture
Creating better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behaviour, more and better leadership and more effective management. Clarifying the connections between new behaviours and organisational success. Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession.

The Implement model does not fully address the resource perspective (such as people, management, culture, and infrastructure) which is a weakness in the model that needs to be strengthened. This weakness might have had negative effects on management discussions about resource allocations along the change process and could have hampered the early stages of the implementation process.

Table 5: Compliance with Formal System Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal System Criteria (Checkland, 1985)</th>
<th>Adopted Process based System Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An on-going purpose or mission</td>
<td>To transform customer needs to value and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A measure of performance</td>
<td>Results (customer, process, finance, HR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A decision making process</td>
<td>Strategic processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components which are themselves systems</td>
<td>Sub processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components that interact</td>
<td>Needs, processes and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An existence in a wider system with which it interacts</td>
<td>Interacts with customers and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A boundary for the decision making process</td>
<td>Defined management processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Not clearly defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some guarantee of continuity.</td>
<td>Results give feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
The working hypothesis in this paper has been that systems thinking captured in a process based system model can help organisations to accelerate change. However, my findings indicate that the Implement model and implementation steps itself do not provide enough thrust to accelerate change. This insight raises some questions. Does the model lack vital principles, methodologies and tools? Did I do a poor job as a management consultant? Did top management do a poor job? Are there other crucial economical, cultural and environmental differences between the studied organizations?

An important observation is that the adopted process based system model that could be seen as a tool box comes only in fifth place in the ranking list –
other aspects such as a dedicated top management and clear strategic objectives are more vital success factors in accelerating change. Yet another reflection is that none of the managers in my follow-up discussions talk about the need for “systems thinking”, although some of them stress that the Implement model supported them in “seeing the whole”. Could it be that successful leaders are “systems thinkers” by heart? Could it be that systems thinking is more of a management principle that cannot be captured in an instrumental model? Or could it maybe be captured as a management resource in an improved process based system model?

1. Strategic clarity – management competence as a resource
2. Decisiveness in top management – management competence
3. Perseverance – management competence
4. Multifunctional involvement – organizational structure or the method of management, process focus
5. Down-to-earth methodologies – methods of work as part of the competence resource

6. Customer focus (“the mission”) – clarity of mission which is a result of management communication
7. Integrated control systems – Measurement system as a resource
8. Process measurements – Measurement system as a resource

The assessment of the used model indicates that there are areas to be improved in the model as such. My research interest is mainly driven by an urge to better understand problems and challenges in my professional life and hopefully contribute to a broader understanding in the field of change management and process management based on systems thinking. This study reflects the early stages of my research journey and might not fully stand a thorough academic scrutiny. Yet, I believe it has uncovered some interesting areas for further research such as:

- Extended longitudinal studies in these three cases to find the root causes
- Conceptual development of process based system models and implementation steps
- Deeper analysis of the indicated success factors in change management

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PAPER 2

Under the skin of change
– Reports from the trenches of organizational change management

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29 May 2006. There are no windows in the conference room – that is why we call it “the bunker”. On this meeting the CEO, The Business Unit Director and Robert are about to decide the way forward. Robert, manager of the consumer claims department, sees a need to drastically transform his organization. The productivity is too low and the cost is too high. Something needs to be done. I am there as his external advisor. It is tension in the air. When the CEO says “go”, I think this is for real. Here is where it all starts.

This paper addresses the complex reality of organizational change with a specific focus on leadership and culture. A common notion is that seven out of ten change initiatives fail to fully meet intended objectives. According to Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008), the failures are often explained by implementation problems such as cultural resistance, lack of communication and weak management. Moreover, there seems to be a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of organizational change (Stuart, 1995, 1996). Some scholars claim that the literature is more theoretical and the empirical articles describing change processes are inadequate (Shanley, 2007, Burnes, 2009, Hartley et al., 1997, Doyle et al., 2000. Being both a scholar and practitioner it is fair to say that my research interest is mainly driven by an urge to better understand problems and challenges in my professional life and hopefully contribute to a broader understanding of the field of change management in practice. This research process, literally starting with the “bunker meeting” in May 2006, follows a three year change effort in a Swedish insurance company. I have observed it from the inside, both as a scholar and a change management consultant. It started as a regular consultancy assignment, but as I came closer to the people involved they gave me the opportunity to also examine it scientifically. The studied change effort involves transformation of organizational structures, business processes as well as leadership style and culture. From a traditional management perspective, the change might be seen as successful. Gummesson (2000) claims access to reality is the management researcher’s number one problem.). As a replica sporadic calls have been made for the relevance of ethnography for addressing quite traditional
Concerns within organizational and management research. Forms of ethnographic research have been utilized in order to address questions of culture, strategic practice and change (Neyland, 2008). Thus, I have chosen to use ethnography based on Neyland’s (2008) *ten sensibilities* as my methodological approach in this study in order to come as close to “reality” as possible. A central feature of ethnographic research is developing observational skills. According to Neyland (2008) “everything” should be observed. Nothing should be taken for granted and nothing should be assumed to be uninteresting. Bate (1997) criticizes some management research on ethnography for being too quick and hasty. In this study that would not be the case. During 2006-2009 I had hundreds of meetings, phone calls and mail conversations with Robert, some thirty meetings and workshops with his management team and days in their office premises observing processes on the ground. This has resulted in about 4,600 text files with a plethora of meeting notes, memorandums, slideshows and reports. In the fall 2006 me and two colleagues carried out a thorough organizational analysis of the claims department, including some 30 semi-structured field interviews with members of the staff. In March 2011 I also carried out 12 retrospective video documented interviews with a cross section of people to capture their story of this period. It has seldom been possible to record observations as things happen. Instead I have relied on my memory and ability to effectively retain all relevant detail and take down supplementary field notes afterwards, which is a possible approach according to Neyland (2008) as long as your notes are reasonably well organized. The analysis has been conducted through a series of iterations, where I have triangulated data from different sources, searched for affinity patterns and matched the findings against current theory. The process has been repeated several times. My guiding question has been: When do leadership and planning overcome hindering cultural forces? There is no doubt that I could be criticized for having been a too participating observer. I suppose it can be discussed if this even is an orthodox ethnography since it contains elements of action research. Nevertheless, my contention is that this engagement offers an opportunity to really go under the skin of a change initiative that actually fulfilled intended objectives.
Understanding organizational change

For society at large, and organizations in particular, the magnitude, speed, impact, and unpredictability of change, are greater than ever before (Burnes, 2009, Foley & Zahner, 2009, Helms Mills et al., 2009, Todnem By, 2005). Despite the need for unceasing transformation, there seems to be a general consensus between practitioners and scholars that few are successful when trying to lead organizational change (Hallencreutz & Turner, 2011, Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The field of organizational change is a paradox - organizations must continually change in order to survive but the very nature of organizational change itself means inherent risks (Klarner et al, 2008). Although debated a common notion is that seven out of ten change initiatives fail to fully meet their objectives (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Beer & Nohria, 2000, Burnes, 2009, Haines et al, 2005, Kotter, 1996, 2008, Oakland & Tanner, 2007). According to Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008), the failures are often explained by implementation problems such as cultural resistance, lack of communication and weak management. Other reasons cited include the lack of attention given to the human dynamics of change and a lack of knowledge of the underlying processes of change (Armenakis et al, 1993, Burnes, 1996, 2009). Kotter claims after decades of research that the single one crucial reason for failure is the lack of a sense of urgency among senior executives and middle management (Kotter, 2008). Other reasons could be that Senior Executives launch too many parallel change projects and seem to have unrealistic expectations about the outcome (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). From an academic point of view there is no universal, prescriptive and systematic model of change management to cover the diversified nature of change in organizations (Dunphy & Stace, 1993, Sheldrake & Saul, 1995, Hallencreutz & Turner, 2011). According to Hughes (2011), there is no empirical support for preoccupations with either the best way to manage change or the worst way to manage change. Carr et al. (1996) describes change as a re-aligning process of people, resources, and culture. Ragsdell (2000) defines it as a movement from current state to a more desirable state. According to Helms Mills et al (2009) organizational change can be defined as an alteration of a core aspect of an organization’s operation. My own definition (Hallencreutz, 2009) guiding my research resumes that organizational change can be seen as a structured, proactive approach to relocate individuals, groups and organizations from a current state to a desired future state.
Organizational change through two beliefs

The body of knowledge can be divided in two underlying beliefs about how organizational change occurs, which have shaped much of the development of change management theory, see for instance research by Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008), Burnes (2009), Todnem By (2005), Collins (1998), Fay & Lührmann (2004), Helms Mills et al (2009), Kotter (1996, 2008), Weick & Quinn (1999), Senior & Swailes (2010) and Turner et al (2009). The first belief is that organizational change can be planned and managed through an understanding of a set of sequential steps, see for instance Burnes (2009), Dawson (2003) and Kotter (1996, 2008). The planned change belief, emerged from Kurt Lewin (1951) and the tradition of Organizational Development (OD), views change as externally driven and episodic and attempts to explain the stages or steps an organization must go through in order to effect the necessary or desired outcome (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Burnes, 1996, 2009, Todnem By, 2005, Porras & Silvers, 1991). The second belief, mainly evolved due to the criticisms of planned change, has been the belief that change is an organic process which cannot be managed (Burnes, 1996, 2009). Emergent organic change, or the process approach, reflects an understanding of change as an ongoing learning process that emphasizes the analytical, evolutionary nature of change rather than a pre-defined series of steps (Burnes, 1996, 2009, Shanley, 2007). According to the organic, emergent viewpoint, change is about acknowledging local, emerging interpretations and constructions of meaning through series of dialogue (Balogun, 2006). Ford & Backoff (1988) explain that this kind of change needs a movement to a different level of understanding. Recent studies reveal the crucial role of cultural and behavioral change during transformational projects (Jorgensen et al., 2009). People are the essential contributor to successful change, and managing change within the culture is important (Oakland & Tanner, 2007). According to Geertz (1973) and Reed (2011) the most fundamental aspect of a human social setting is that of meanings or sources of illumination. Meanings are also referred to by social analysts as culture, norms, understandings, social reality, and definitions of the situation, ideology, beliefs, worldview, perspective or stereotypes (Lofland & Lofland, 1996). We impose order on the world we perceive by introducing models and structures in an effort to construct meaning; meaning lies in cognition not in elements external to us (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990).

Theory development provides the contemporary organization with a wide range of options and choices as to lead change but there is no “one best way” to go about it (Burnes, 1996,
2009, Dunphy & Stace, 1993, Hallencreutz & Turner, 2011, Hughes, 2011, Rothwell & Sullivan, 2005). However, there seems to be enough empirical evidence to believe that a combination of planned and organic approaches to organizational change is needed (Hallencreutz & Turner, 2011). Among the plethora of guru statements and management models Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage change process outlined in his book Leading Change, although now being more than fifteen years of age, still stand out as one of the most recognized (Prosci, 2009). Kotter continues the Lewinian tradition of planned change.

According to Kotter (1996, 2008) a major success factor when leading change is how well managers handle resistance. Some of the most common mistakes when transforming an organization are, according to Kotter (1996):

(1) Allowing too much complacency,
(2) Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition,
(3) Underestimating the power of vision,
(4) Under communicating the vision by a factor of 10x-100x,
(5) Permitting obstacles to block the new vision,
(6) Failing to create short-term wins,
(7) Declaring victory too soon,
(8) Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture.

Kotter argues that these errors can be handled and possibly avoided. He breaks down the approach of creating and leading change within an organization into an eight-stage process.

Table 1. Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage change process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Establishing a sense of urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Examining the market and competitive realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Creating the guiding coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Forming a group with enough power to lead the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Getting the group to work together like a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Developing a vision and a strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Creating a vision to help direct the change effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Developing strategies for achieving that vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Communicating the change vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Using all possible ways to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The guiding coalition acting as role models for the behaviours expected of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Empowering broad-based action in the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Getting rid of obstacles for the change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Encouraging risk taking and new ideas, activities and actions.</td>
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</tbody>
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6. Generating short-term wins
- Planning and creating visible improvements in performance, or “wins”
- Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who make the wins possible

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- Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures and policies that don’t fit together and that don’t fit the change vision
- Recruiting, promoting and developing people who can implement the change vision.
- Strengthening the process with new projects, themes and change agents.

8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture
- Creating better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behaviour, more and better leadership and more effective management.
- Clarifying the connections between new behaviors and organizational success.
- Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession.

The text below is narrated as a chronological report, based on a triangulation of different types of empirical evidence from my visits in the trenches of practical management at the studied insurance company. The eight-stage change process will serve as the theoretical framework for the analysis and discussion since it captures the essentials in current theory on organizational change.

The year of preparation

27 April 2006. “This is nothing but strategic fuzz…” bursts Robert. He has been sitting laid back fiddling with his cell phone during my presentation about systems thinking and business processes. It is after noon and we are at one of these uncountable conference centers around Stockholm. Eva, his boss, has initiated a discussion in her management team on objectives and prioritized areas for 2008. I have fueled the discussion with some change management theory. The colleagues in the management team are looking a little awkward after Robert’s sudden outburst. He is stating his position quite clear; less conversation and more action please. Eva, knowing Robert well, tells him to cool down. This is the first time we meet in three years. Apparently he is not impressed. But nonetheless we set up a meeting afterwards and start to sketch on a transformation of his claims department. It is Eva who has been pushing in the background, “Robert needs a speaking partner and he will listen to you”, she says to me.

A week later: The office premises - an anonymous and modest high-rise – is situated in a suburb to Stockholm. On the entrance floor is a lobby and a lunch restaurant, shared with other companies in the business park. I am sitting in a sofa in the lobby, browsing today’s
paper and waiting for a lunch meeting with Robert. He is a couple of minutes late. People are coming and going. About five hundred people are working here, a hundred of them in the claims department. The dress code is casual, the tempo is moderate and the atmosphere friendly and pleasant. This is not the high street. The insurance company was founded more than 150 years ago. Since a decade it has been a part of a nationwide insurance group. The company has been successful and prosperous throughout the years, as well as the rest of the group. But nevertheless, in May 2005, the board decides to change CEO. Mats, the new CEO, recreates his first impressions from that time:

“\textit{I came to a sleepy and introvert organization. The company did not have enough bite in the market. It was institutionalized and not customer orientated. My mission from the board was to establish growth and focus on sales and also align the company closer to the federation. It was also some internal fuzz. High performers were leaving the company. The analysis on what to do was quite simple. We needed to change from product to customer orientation and from focus on internal functions to business processes. We also needed a new leadership style, and a more extrovert business culture. My first call was to outline a new strategy and reorganize the company. In December 2005 we had a new structure in place, with a Business Division and a Consumer Division.}”

My cellphone is buzzing – a text message from Robert: “5 minutes”. I am changing to another paper. I first met Robert in May 2002, literally in an outdoor hot tub at a conference center in Sigtuna. Robert is born in the mid-60s, went to work straight from high school and has built a career in the insurance business both in the front end as a sales representative and manager and in back end handling support processes and claims. In the fall of 2002 Robert and I run a short project about mapping business processes in the group’s life insurance division. Eva, Robert’s future boss, is the head of this assignment. We have a couple of meetings. Robert is always eager to go forward but stumbles on methodological issues. “When I leave our meetings, I think I get this with processes… but, hell, you have to explain this once again.” We laugh. Theoretical analysis is not Robert’s favorite task. This first assignment ends sometime in 2003. The outcome is mediocre and we lose contact for a couple of years.
Robert shows up, we share a quick meal in the restaurant and take the lifts to the floor of the consumer claims department. 101 clerks are working here, in an open office. The office environment is bright, the furniture is mostly light wood. In the center of the floor is a coffee room. We grab a cup from the coffee machine and pass by two indoor cabins for smokers, empty right now. Clerks are sitting at their desks, talking in phones or tapping on computers. Robert points at the open office area. “I am sitting right there. I need to be in the middle of things, so I can get a feel of what is going on. I had a separate room at first, but that didn’t work.” Here and there are small clusters of people, discussing quietly. Robert, always neatly dressed in suit and tie, says “hello” to everyone we meet. Not all of them answer. One looks down, two are suddenly busy and one just gazes at him silently. Robert doesn’t seem to bother. He shows me a 50 square meter conference room, crammed with piles of documents. He shudders: “Hell, you should have seen the situation a couple of month ago. It was papers all over the place… Now we at least have this room. I guess we have about 200 000 claims in here. But the administration is all manual. If someone puts a paper in a wrong place, then it is gone forever. I get at least one mail a day about missing files. This is simply not acceptable.”

We move to a small conference room. Robert is frustrated and impatient. “I have done interviews with all people in this organization and I am worried. Everyone is whining about all kinds of things, but no one wants to change anything. There is no order. My managers are not in command. They have no track of facts or figures…” He presents a slide summarizing the findings of his first own analysis of the current state in his organization:

- 100 companies within the company
- Poor productivity
- Poor focus on process improvement
- Difficulties in managing change
- Focus on the individual customer
- People see themselves as "unique"
- Poor technical competence
- Not seeing the whole
- No individual responsibility - it is the manager's responsibility
- Legally correct but dull approach to the customer
- Managers who are not managers but more employee representatives
- Major problems between Business department and Consumer department

1 An insurance claim is a formal request to an insurance company asking for a payment based on the terms of the insurance policy. Insurance claims are reviewed for their validity and then paid out to the insured once approved. Insurance claims cover everything from homes and vehicles to death benefits and accidents.
Robert concludes that his organization is in a poor state and needs to be reorganized. The figures look bad. The costs need to be cut. He wants new managers and a shift in mindset. Eva, his superior, has told him to focus on both the handling cost and the actual cost for claims. His cellphone beeps. It is his wife. She wants to discuss some child issue. I recognize that his voice turns mild and soft, very unlike the firmness he just put up against his colleagues. He ignores me totally. The call ends with a cuddly “kiss for you”. He hangs up. “Well, what do you want to do?” I ask. We discuss alternative ways forward and leave the meeting with a sketch of a new assignment called “Project Toolbox”. The aim is to set a new organization by the end of 2006.

The CEO remembers: “We also had to cut costs and felt intuitively that something was wrong at the consumer claims department, but we didn’t know what. The productivity was low, but everyone seemed very busy. Once I was called to a meeting with the staff at the claims department – they wanted me to explain myself. This was sometime in the middle of 2005. Afterwards, I realized that we had a major management problem. Middle managers saw themselves as mouthpieces for their staff, and not as management representatives. I also realized that we needed someone who knew property insurance. That was certainly not my turf, since my background is from banking and life insurance. Robert’s predecessor said all the right things, but nothing happened. The situation was not ok. We needed a manager with a documented knowledge about property insurance and an ability to execute change. We wanted things to move forward. We wanted change.”

Eva, Business Unit Director and Robert’s superior, fills in: “I knew Robert from before and was convinced that he would execute the needed changes. So I pretty much hand-picked him for this assignment.”

21 June 2006. Robert holds a breakfast meeting. At the previous meeting in May he has started to establish a sense of urgency and need for change, now he is about to introduce the way forward. All personnel are attending. They come in small groups, taking coffee and sandwich and sit near the back of the room. The mood is cautious, almost reluctant. Robert is concentrated and decisive but also a little nervous behind the smart and stiff facade. A week
before, we have prepared a slideshow and the message is clear: “We need to change”. The mission is “to create a modern, efficient and delivering claims organization”. Robert delivers his presentation, showing statistics saying that the costs are too high and the productivity too low. He also includes slides from the CEO about the company’s new strategic direction. He concludes: “It’s not enough to be busy. The question is: What are we busy with?” Robert also launches “Project Toolbox” and forecasts a structural change later in the year. The last slide holds a variety of an alleged Einstein quote: “Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

Figure 2. The slide ending all Robert’s public presentations 2006-2009

After the presentation Robert opens up for questions. Someone in the auditorium raises his hand and asks: “Well, what if we don’t want to change?” Without hesitation, Robert answers: “You can be sure that the job will change. But you are not forced to work here. There are other jobs…”

Employee “Adam” comments the early stages: “Well, Robert gave the impression of being a good listener and ran around to everyone in the beginning. But that was quite easy to see through. Come on, we have been around for a while and you don’t fool us that easy. I mean… He wanted to play hardball and had made up his mind quite early. We were too many and too slow. He was not really interested in hearing people’s opinions. But… I must say that I learnt to respect him, in a way. At least he was clear, consistent and decisive. It was “my way or the highway”… I kind of liked that.”
Employee “Bertil” fills in: “Personally, I don’t remember much from that time. Robert was anonymous back then. We didn’t see him... No... I don’t recall that I spoke to him at all...”

Employee “Carin”: “My first impression of Robert was very good. I mean, he had an individual meeting with everyone! Then he drove a little too fast and hard, maybe. We didn’t catch up. The attitude was also a bit hard, especially among some of the team leaders. They said things like “take it or leave it” or “there is the door”. Many were afraid to speak out. But I have always felt that Robert is easy to talk to.”

Employee “Daisy”: “I remember that he noticed that I am from Dalarna. You know... he is married to a dalecarlian... Yes, I think it was the first thing we talked about. Another thing that I also recall from that day is that it was a strange staff meeting about business orientation in a sports hall and that an old colleague described our company like a big pike that would always survive in the lake. Strange... I don’t know why I remember that...”

10-11 August 2006. The day is warm and humid. I am driving in my car bound for a conference center in the Stockholm archipelago. For the first time, I am about to meet Robert’s management team. We have planned for a “lunch to lunch”. I am a little late and nervous and do not know what to expect. Robert is displeased with their performance as a team and he wants me to be tough. “We need to test them”, he has said although he already knows that he will replace some of them. It is one of these late summer days when the heat turns tropical. I park my car next to Robert’s. I notice that it is just as untidy as my own. The team is sitting on the restaurant veranda enjoying the sun. I meet a group of middle-aged, casually dressed people. Two women and six men, Robert included. This is the first time I see him without suit and tie. The atmosphere is calm and a little hesitant, perhaps also a bit complacent. During the afternoon we discuss the need for change and Robert outlines his vision for the claims department. The discussions lack energy. Before dinner Robert takes me aside; “Jacob. I would appreciate if you could stay around and listen to the small talk afterwards. I can’t stand these social events and will go to bed.” I do as he says and follow five of the team leaders down to a jetty, where Stefan, one of the most experienced leaders in the group, insists on taking a bath in the Baltic Sea. As the evening turns to night they get more and more outspoken; “You see Jacob, we are a real team and inspire each other. Don’t
let Robert spoil that…” I feel uncomfortable. I do not want to become their mouthpiece. They go on: “We have had so much fun along the years…” Politely, I say good night and leave them there on the jetty. The next day we have prepared a calculation exercise. Robert provides a set of facts and figures about production results, performance indicators and such. We discuss the need for improved business control but no one is more than dutifully interested. Someone asks: “Why do we have to play around with figures?” The exercise fails and Robert is troubled. We talk on the phone on our way home: “I can’t work with these people… how can I work with them if they don’t understand the importance of measurement and monitoring?!”

*September 2006.* I and two colleagues are doing 30 individual semi-structured interviews with members of the staff. This is a vital part of “Project Toolbox”. We sit in small anonymous windowless meeting rooms in the conference premises of the business park. We also sit in the open office and try to blend with the daily work. People are easy to talk to, friendly and willing to share their thoughts. The picture that emerges strengthens Robert’s own analysis. In the end of September, we present our findings to Robert and Eva. I quote from our report:

- *The ambition of top management has been to get involved and listen to employees’ views and ideas during the development of the new strategy. The organization has not perceived this effort as genuine (evidenced by both the interviews and employee survey 2006).*
- *There is an appreciation and understanding of the need for change among the interviewed employees, but no deeper insight into the background, root causes (market position, cost structure, etc.) and consequences.*
- *There is a concern for the future and what ongoing change projects will lead to. The interviewees’ suspect that “something will happen” and call for clarity.*
- *There are gaps in the management of the claims organization, control systems as well as a weak focus on business development.*
- *The organization has gone through a series of change projects over the years which have not led to any significant change or improvement.*
- *The prevailing corporate culture does not support management’s desired development.*
The organizational learning is limited. There is no overarching structure that dictates how knowledge sharing within the claims department, the company at large and the federation should be carried out.

There is a wide spread in the claims process efficiency, on both a group and individual level.

We recommend a range of short and long term actions, and support Robert’s own structural solution with a front office handling “easy” claims and a back office handling “complex” claims. However, this solution implicates a major reorganization of the whole claims department. Robert is pleased with this report. It fuels his ideas and he decides to move forward. Mats and Eva back him up.

9 October 2006. Another conference center. Today is the moment of truth, after months of planning and preparation. Eva and Robert are about to inform Robert’s management team that they will be redundant. Some of them will be offered retirement others will be reassigned. Two has been handpicked and will stay throughout the change process. “It should be cool, I have talked to everyone and they pretty much know what to expect”, says Robert. But both Eva and Robert are tense, the mood is irritable. They bicker about who should start, which slides to use and where to sit. I stay in the background. When the team leaders arrive, Eva and Robert get focused and we move to our conference room. They launch the news that will be presented to the whole company the day after: A company-spanning retirement plan and a reorganization of the consumer claims department. Eva is cool, she has done this before. Robert is a little keyed up. But they deliver the message clearly: A new consumer claims organization from 1 January 2007.

Afterwards an awkward silence… My task is to facilitate the debriefing. I turn to Bernt, a man in his sixties. “You have heard Eva and Robert. What about your thoughts and feelings right now?”. He shrugs. “I feel like the Social Democrats - knocked out… but we will come again”. We all chuckle. In the election a fortnight ago Prime Minister Göran Persson and his Social Democrats was defeated by the right wingers. The Social Democrats experienced their worst election since 1914. Bernt’s comment lightens the mood a little. We talk around the table about losses and opportunities. Some opens up, others are more silent. No one seems really surprised or chocked, rather pleased that a period of rumors and speculation has come to an end. My feeling is that Robert has done his footwork well. Later, Eva, Robert and I resume
the day on the parking lot before we part and go home. They are relieved. But they also realize that we just passed the point of no return. I exhale. Tomorrow the change goes public.

Employee “Bertil”: “I still remember that day. It was a complete chock... A bomb… A flash from a clear blue sky. I had no premonition what so ever. I knew nothing. I was devastated. Suddenly, we were about to reorganize the whole department.”

Employee “Adam”: “Personally I was not affected. But I felt sorry for my colleagues.”

Employee “Carin”: "Oh... it was such a jumble... but I decided not to go down that road again. I felt so bad during all the changes that took place in 2005 so this time I said to myself: do I want this or not? Then I made up my mind. I made a deliberate choice to see the possibilities and like the change. I... just refused to turn negative again...”

Employee “Daisy”: “I was not surprised. It was obvious to me that something needed to be done. We had too little to do and the figures looked bad...”

November-December 2006. Robert is busy recruiting new team leaders and preparing the big transformation planned for 1 January 2007. We have a couple of meetings during this period, where he is thriving and radiating self-confidence. There is growing unease in the organization, but Robert steams on. In the course of a month he recruits a new management team, negotiates and mans a new organization and prepares for an internal relocation of the staff. All is set till Christmas. Employee “Bertil” recollects the last months of 2006: “Those months were like working in a vacuum. We were waiting to be placed and got no information what so ever... Can you imagine that?! We asked our team leaders but they had nothing to say. Everything was governed by Robert and he was not available. Is that how you handle experienced senior clerks?! No one wanted to be put in the new front office. But I was placed there...”

The HR Director: “I am impressed that Robert stood up during this period. He made some really tough decisions. But he had a lot of support from Eva, in the background.”

The year of transformation
One of the recommendations from “Project Toolbox” was to provide management support to the team leaders during the transformation. Robert and Eva have decided to invest in his new management team and we set up a series of six management seminars. Eva also wants Robert to grind down some of his own edges and focus more on group dynamics and social processes but Robert is reluctant to all kinds of “soft” stuff. “No sissy psychological nonsense in velvet pants. I want us to talk about our mission and how we can reach our goals”. So we label the effort “Productive Leadership” and I downplay the “soft” exercises.

24 January 2007. It has been a relatively mild winter and the ground is bare. I am early and go for a quick walk around the premises, a beautiful building at the shore completed in 1889. The view of the inlet to Stockholm is stunning. Today is the first meeting with Robert’s new management team. He is very pleased with his new colleagues and has high hopes for the year to come. Only two “oldies” remain, the rest (two women and one man around 30) is newly recruited. Robert has picked talented leaders and not claims specialists. The team members arrive, full of energy. Robert is enthusiastic: “I am so pleased to have you onboard and have very high hopes for the year to come”. The new organization has just been launched and the day is full of laughs and excitement. We discuss desirable team properties and conclude that the new management team should be characterized by a good blend of personalities, goal orientation, trust, responsibility and innovation. We all leave the meeting in good pioneering spirit. Two weeks after the January meeting my cellphone rings. It is Robert. “Hey, we need to do some planning. I have run into a major drawback. Erik has left after three days. He couldn’t stand the pressure. I am really disappointed. I feel betrayed. Can we meet and talk…” Erik is one of the new young team leaders and one of Robert’s favorites. Apparently, he has literally U-turned in the doorway when facing all the challenges at the new claims front office. For the first time Robert is shaken. When we meet some days later he looks tired. He has taken this defection personally. “I thought I knew this guy… Why didn’t he say something?!” Luckily, there is a plan B. The runner up for the job, Elisabeth, is still willing to take on the challenge.

17 April 2007. We immediately abandon the agenda for this third meeting. Elisabeth, head of the newly established claims front office and Erik’s successor, feels worn out. “I have been at these corporate management training sessions were everything is rosy and nice. That’s fraud!
No one told me that managing people is a mess. I am fed up with all the whimpering. Everybody is whining about everything! Why can’t people just bite the bullet and work?!

We focus on her distress, and talk about ways forward. Everyone in the group is letting off steam. Robert is forced to stop and listen.

4 May 2007. Since a couple of weeks Robert has invited all employees to “change breakfast” every Friday. The idea is to offer a cup of coffee, a sandwich and a casual opportunity to meet Robert and the team leaders for a chat. This Friday morning is calm. About half of the staff is here. Robert is informing about forthcoming training sessions for the front office. The whole setting is quiet and tuned. But it is turning messy behind the scenes.

Employee “Bertil” describes the situation: “Many came in new and knew nothing about claims. We, the seniors, were looked upon as reactionary old-timers. No one listened to us. We were told by our superiors to adapt and work. It didn’t fit with the company culture that I was used to. But I bit the bullet and fought on. Never give in, that’s not my style.”

Employee ”Carin” fills in: ”I came to back office, were most of us seniors wanted to be. But some were forced into the front office and were very sad. They literally threw people in there. It went too fast and out of control.”

12 June 2007. The theme of this afternoon management seminar is ”To be in the shit” and I have prepared some slides about change communication and handling resistance. But once again the agenda is overridden by an urgent matter. The day before Robert has informed me about a fraud investigation in one of the teams at his department. Employees held in high esteem are suspected. Now the ground is really shaking. He informs the management team about the investigation and urges them to be strictly confidential. There might be arrestsments and police interventions to come. Two weeks later the following is published in one of the morning papers:

2007-06-26: “An employee at the insurance company XX is suspected of committing economic crimes in the service. The man was taken at his home on Tuesday and was arrested for gross breach of trust. Elsewhere in the Stockholm area a businessman was arrested on...”
“Jacob, is it worth it?” Robert looks out the window. It is mid-July and he is in the middle of what he calls “a shit storm” of accusations and back talking. We are sitting at my office and eat some take away salad. He feels abandoned and on his own. Everyone seems to be against him. The fraud affair has kicked off a chain of troublesome events. The whole department is in turmoil. We talk about leadership and the importance of standing the distance. I try to highlight the need for stamina, stubbornness and clarity. For the first time, he seems uncertain and vulnerable. But when he notices my concern, he lightens up and grins: “Hey man, don’t worry, I won’t give up. I am just pissed off and need a vacation.”

The CEO has bad memories from those weeks: “We should have handled that fraud situation in a different way. I was really disappointed with our employers’ organization. They advised us to play hardball, but then left us in the lurch. Well, one guy was convicted so that was nothing to talk about, but the other two… It took too long and caused a lot of damage internally. Robert had to take plenty of beating.”

The summer weather in the year of transformation is mediocre, but the change keeps pounding on. Robert builds an application for digitalizing claims in Outlook more or less on his own and sets up a scanning service with a subcontractor in Östersund. Overnight most of the documents “disappear” from cupboards and shelves. “People say it’s no good but, hell, it’s good enough! 70% right is better than 100% nothing…” Our management seminars go to Amsterdam in September and Gotland in November. We focus more and more on the “soft” aspects that Robert wanted us to neglect. The last session in December we meet at a hotel in the center of Stockholm. The conference room is weird, sandwiched in behind the reception and a corridor. We laugh and shake our heads. This time, we perform a new calculation exercise like the one that failed in August 2006. Now, the awareness and urgency is tangible. The productivity is still too low. Stefan, the guy who took a swim in the Baltic Sea, shakes his head…”This is simply not good enough”. After that, everyone is asked to draw an “energy line” of the year 2007 on the whiteboard and share tops and downs with each other. We both laugh and shudder. All the team leaders’ curves converge and show a dip around July. It has been a really tough year, but it feels better now for everyone. Things are settling. Elisabeth,
team leader of the front office, shares one of her best moments: “A lot of new people started in September. Just the other day I saw a couple of them chit-chat at the coffee machine. I got curious and went there to listen in. And I became so glad! They talked about their work and how they could help each other, instead of running to me! Breakthrough!” When I interview Elisabeth four years later she looks back and emphasizes the importance of the management team during this rough period of change: “I wrote diary the first five months of 2007. Very monotonous! Eat-work-sleep… (laugh)... Honestly, I hadn’t made it without this gang. We were tight. We had fun. We helped and supported each other. It was super and made this a good journey, despite all the mess along the way. For instance, I remember once when Anna and I just sat 40 minutes in a conference room without saying anything. We didn’t have to because we both knew the situation we were in. It just felt good to be there in the same room together...”

The year of consolidation

January 2008. I and two colleagues are assigned to facilitate the company’s “dialogue days” which take place in the very beginning of January. The theme is “We are heading at the right direction – keep up the pace”. 500 people are attending, split in four occasions. This dialogue activity is well prepared. People follow a schedule and interact in small intense group sessions. One station is called “Ask management”, were people can ask questions to the CEO and other senior executives. Afterwards, the CEO is frustrated. “The strategy deployment is too slow. People still don’t understand”. He also gets questions about what would happen if the strategy fails. Will there be redundancies? He answers: "Well…if our strategy fails, the first that will be fired is me…” Another station is about claims handling and productivity. We have rigged an Excel application and some calculation exercises. “Awh, this measurement hysteria!”, bursts one of Robert’s employees when her group comes to the station. “It doesn’t work like that! What about the quality! Everything is about figures these days… I am so fed up with all these ignorance.”

29 February to 2 March 2008. The inflight to Ireland is bumpy. The claims department has reached set goals and is about to celebrate with a conference trip to Dublin. I am invited. We land safely and go by bus from the airport to a spectacular conference center at an old Guinness factory and museum. The mood is high. Both Robert and Eva are very appreciative
and thank everyone for their efforts during the year of transformation. The vast majority of
the group is glad and positive, but I also notice a few reserved individuals. My task is to work
with the group which experienced the fraud affair last summer. That event is still an open
wound and their team leader has not had enough management experience to resolve the
situation. She has stayed home and will eventually leave for another job.

We sit in a dull room in the basement of the hotel. The night before has been merry, and the
group of seven clerks that I am supposed to work with is a little worn. I arrange the chairs in a
circle, so that we all can talk face to face. The rest of the team leaders are conducting their
own workshops based on a set agenda, but we will concentrate on discussing the leftovers
from the fraud affair. We talk all day about the feeling of losing a good comrade, about guilt
and loyalty and rumors. In the afternoon we talk about reconciliation and possible ways
forward. After a nice dinner, the night ends in a crammed pub where cheerful group members
offer me “Slippery Nipples” and other indecent drinks. “Jacob, you’re one of us now”, squalls
one of the seniors. I share a Guinness with them and withdraw. Two years later one of the
participants comes up to me when I am standing in their lunch restaurant waiting for Robert. I
barely know the man and we have not talked much since that day. He says: “I just want to say
that you did a damn good job with us in Dublin. That day made a difference. I should have
told you before but you know how it is…Now that I saw you I figured what the hell,
consultants also need praise”. He grins, shakes my hand and disappears.

Robert and I meet occasionally during the rest of the year. The intensity in our collaboration is
lower and the new organization seems to settle. They launch a huge investment in training
called “the claims lift”. Robert monitors and fine-tunes, but he is also a little restless. He feels
that he is not getting enough internal praise for his achievements. The fraud affair still feeds
rumors that stick to him. Everything is his fault. “There are still people around who actually
believes that I personally reported these three guys to the police because I didn’t like them…”
Some individuals call him “the devil”. I notice as the year go by that he starts to ponder about
his future. “What should I do when I grow up?” is a recurrent question.

14 January 2009. This is the first time we meet after the Christmas holidays. Robert has been
promoted and is very content. His new area of responsibility covers all delivery and support
processes for both business units. He has also become a member of the top management team
and reports directly to the CEO. I notice his new glasses with leather bows and tease him:
“Aha, you are a senior executive now – new suit, new glasses and a new car…”. We laugh.
He has definitely taken a career step. I ask him if he would be willing to talk about our mutual
change journey at one of our breakfast seminars. He approves immediately.

On April 24 Robert holds a presentation for some 40 of our clients and gets a lot of attention
and appreciation. In his presentation he summarizes his own lessons learnt as follows:

- Have a long term plan - extend it every year and discuss it with a speaking partner.
- Make sure you have a management team onboard that fills the bill.
- Ensure resources to resolve issues not planned for (i.e. organic).
- Dare to take decisions without all the facts on the table.
- Keep an open and honest dialogue with the employees throughout the change process.

Afterwards, we leave the dim conference center and go out in the sun. The bright light makes
us squint. I pat his back and say “See you.” He nods and walks away to his car. And so ends
this story and another one begins.

3 march 2011. I meet “Adam” in the insurance company’s new premises. “Adam” is one of
the employees selected by Robert for my retrospective interviews. He has been around for 20
years, and it turns out that he has a lot to tell. In fact, he is very critical. For most of our
conversation, he thrashes the “new era” from 2005 and onwards. Management has done
“weird and crazy stuff”. Most leaders are “narcissists” and “brainwashed”. The solutions are
“crappy”. Their invitations to collaboration have been “false” and “dishonest”. Very little has
changed for the better. But during the last minutes of our conversation something happens.
“Well… reflecting about it retrospectively, I must admit that we have changed a bit after all.
Before I met you, I attended a meeting with our colleagues at group headquarters. Recalling
the conversations from that meeting I realize that we are now much more proactive,
enterprising and modern compared to some years ago. I might sound terribly negative, but
here I must give some credit to the change process. There has actually been a change in our
company culture.”
Practice meets theory

The transformation narrated above resulted in a 50% productivity increase in two years (Key performance indicator: claims handled/full time employees) with a retained level of customer and employee satisfaction according to internal measurements. By means of a new organizational structure, new leaner digitalized processes, a new management team and a general change in attitude the number of employees could be reduced by 30% which led to a cost reduction of approximately SEK 25 million/year. The shortened lead times made it possible to achieve SEK 40 million in settlement results and SEK 60 million in decreased cost for claims already in 2007. Robert’s superiors were very pleased with that outcome. From an instrumental and reductionist point of view this change process might be seen as successful. The figures speak for it. Thus, this study could serve as empirical evidence that a planned approach to organizational change can be successful in terms of reaching intended objectives. The story can also be said to fit into Kotter’s (1996) eight stage change process. Robert, supported by his superiors, immediately established a sense of urgency by identifying and discussing crises and threats. By doing so, he challenged the complacency within the claims department and attacked one of the root causes of failure, according to Kotter (1996, 2008). The complacency had grown for years due to the absence of a visible crisis, too much happy talk from Robert’s predecessors and low overall performance standards. He also, although the findings indicate that he himself was the actual powerhouse, formed a group with enough power to lead the change and got the group to work together like a team. According to Kotter (1996) four key characteristics seem to be essential to effective guiding coalitions; position power, expertise, credibility and leadership. Robert ensured these characteristics when forming his management team. Throughout the change process, he also had a firm support from top management. Underestimation of the power of vision is another cause for failure, according to Kotter (1996) and others. In a change process a good vision serves three purposes. First, by clarifying the general direction for change it simplifies more detailed decisions. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction. Third, it helps coordinate the action of many people. In this case the CEO developed a vision and a strategy for the whole company, in 2005. Robert embraced that and created clear change objectives and strategies for his own department. However, gaining understanding and commitment is never easy. Not winning over the hearts and minds of the people in the organization is another reason for failure, see for instance Kotter (1996), Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008) and Burnes (2009). The company in general invested time and money in communicating the new
vision and strategies through a wide range of meetings and management support throughout the whole change process. The guiding coalition was by some accused of brainwashing and propaganda, but eventually the messages permeated. By investing in trustworthy communication, repeating simple messages and allowing resisters to take part in dialogue the risk for what Kotter (1996) calls “under communication” was reduced. Robert also used himself and his management team as role models for the behaviors expected of employees. He empowered broad-based action in the organization and got rid of obstacles for the change process, such as managers not willing to lead. He changed systems and structures that undermined the change vision and took risks in executing new ideas, activities and actions without having all the facts on the table. In fact, he intuitively performed most of the actions described in Kotter’s Leading Change. By implementing the short list from “Project Toolbox” Robert could visualize a “100 list” of short term activities and generate short-term wins. He visibly recognized and rewarded people by taking the whole department to Dublin in February 2008. He also consolidated gains and produced more change by recruiting, promoting and developing people who could implement new projects. Through massive regular communication efforts from top management, new control systems and means to ensure leadership development and succession new approaches were anchored in the culture. The last statement from employee “Adam” – one of the resisters and late adopters – serves as a testimony of just that. He, almost reluctantly, admits that there has been a cultural transformation. Thus, we could conclude that the theoretical framework is valid and applicable, at least in this studied case. Practice and theory converge, as long as our underlying ontological assumption is that there is an objective, true reality which can be generalized, understood and visualized by models and structures. According to this worldview a change process, such as the one narrated above, can be observed, measured, replicated and generalized. The answer to my guiding question would then be: Leadership overcome hindering cultural forces when all the eight stages in Kotter’s change process are completed.

But, this is not how reality works, is it? Hughes (2011) concludes, having studied the literature on organizational change, that there is no empirical support for polarized preoccupations with, either, the best way to manage change or the worst way to manage change. Instead of implicitly accepting the traditional notion that organizations are rational, logical places, we should perhaps consider wider evidence from other domains which reflect a different reality (Kitson, 2009). If we instead see that the world is complex and dynamic and
constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems, we should perhaps be a little cautious in drawing to hasty conclusions. For instance, no one of the interviewees from the retrospective interviews done in March 2011 could recall a coherent story from the studied period – not even Robert. Dates, events and even years were mixed up. They all perceived a different reality from their respective viewpoints. “Reality” seems in this case to be more of a social construction – or what Reed (2011) calls “a landscape of meaning” – rather than an objective measurable truth. And the objective fact that the studied change process reached set goals did not mean that everyone in the organization perceived success. There seemed to be a gap between the measurable facts and the social construct of success. As mentioned, there was no widespread sense of urgency in the organization. In fact, there was much complacency and very little insight that major changes were needed. Thus, the change as such was by many perceived as unnecessary. The guiding coalition consisted in reality of three individuals: Mats, Eva and Robert. My own role must also be taken into account. The team leaders’ importance could be discussed. The progress of the studied change process was totally dependent on Robert’s stamina and will to succeed. There were several occasions were everything could have ended by a phone call, a simple misunderstanding, a wink of an eye or just a bad day. Top management was also accused by the resisters of brainwashing, top-down management and not knowing the business. The strategy was disseminated on a slideshow level, but not in depth. Robert ignited a lot of activities, but it was not broad based. He dictated most of it himself. In 2009, when the new business oriented culture can be said to have been anchored, 75% of the staff at the claims department had shifted. The organization had shed its skin. So a more humble answer to my guiding question would be: Leadership appears to overcome hindering cultural forces if the leaders are persistent enough to stand the distance and powerful enough to handle the resistance. It takes years to change a culture and the resistance can be fierce. In this case, the capacity of the change leader in person seems to have been crucial.

Lessons learnt and ways forward

What is a “success” and what is a “failure” when leading change? There is no objective answer. The literature provides no clear evidence based guidance. “Success” and “failure” are elusive phenomena which seem to relate more to social constructs among certain stakeholders.
than to measurable facts. The answer depends on who you ask. The social context, where the actual change is taking place, seems to override no matter what management concept you introduce. The context beats the concepts. However, to learn more about the landscapes of meaning in organizations about to change seems like a good investment for change leaders. First make sense, then change.

Gumnesson (2000) states that science is a journey and not a destination. This work could continue forever. The learning process is ongoing and new thoughts emerge every day. This ethnography shows how complex the reality of organizational change is and this vast material should be a subject of further research. There is more to find under the skin of change. “Culture always beats strategy” is a popular management cliché. This study has shown that a decisive leader with a long term strategy can influence a deeply rooted culture and reach intended objectives.
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PAPER 3

Process and Stakeholder Focus for Change Sense-making

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Abstract
Organizational change efforts often fail to reach their objectives. One reason for this is the difficulty to translate change theory into change practice. Planned change might be viewed as a process where a start and a stop can be defined. A process perspective could be used to highlight critical elements of change including all stakeholders in the system to be changed. Better visualisation of change could support sense-making of change. This paper discusses the use of a process perspective to visualise and assess planned change. The process perspective is applied on Lewin’s three step model of unfreezing, moving freezing. A proposed model including the state before change, the change and the state after it is presented. The process model has been compared with the change philosophies/change strategies Total Quality Management, Lean Management, Six Sigma and Kotter’s eight step model of change. None of the studied change strategies seem to have any clear requirement to assess the state before change. This could increase the risk of working with the wrong change, contributing to the high rate of failures. Future research is proposed for correlating the level of change needs assessment and change success.

Key words
Introduction

The pressure continues to rise for quicker and more effective organizational adaptation. For society at large, and organizations in particular, the magnitude, speed, impact, and especially the unpredictability of change, are greater than ever before (Burnes, 2009, Foley & Zahner, 2009, Helms Mills et al., 2009, By Todnem, 2005). Despite plenty of information, advice and assistance that leaders can and do call upon in planning and executing change, the failure rate is still estimated to be approximately 70-80% (Hallencreutz & Turner, 2011; Senturia et al., 2008 or Burnes, 2009).

The reasons for change failure appear to fall into one of three broad but interrelated areas. The first is a lack of attention to the human dynamics of change (Aremenakis et al., 1993, Burnes, 1996, Kotter 1996). The second is leaders’ lack of understanding of the change process (Burnes 1996, 2009). Ironically it may be leaders’ lack of knowledge and understanding of how to use the change process that contributes to the lack of attention to the human dynamics of change. Finally, change failure is often attributed to implementation problems (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008). Implementation problems could include a lack of urgency or understanding of the need for the change (Kotter, 1996) or that too many change projects are being launched or launched with unrealistic expectations about the outcome (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008).

There is a fourth area or reason for organizational change failure that is not often explicitly addressed, whether the change is the “right” change to address the organization’s problem or opportunity. Ensuring the right change has been selected, may be a critical area in the success of any organizational change. If the proposed change does not seem rational for those who should participate in carrying it through, then the necessary sense of urgency might be difficult to achieve. Kotter (1996) claims that successful change requires the support of a majority of the key players on all levels. It could therefore be important to focus on how a change project has been constructed and to analyse how change needs have been defined. The question here is if it was the right change to focus on. A particular issue of interest is to define where the change process starts and how this decision was taken. Another interesting issue is the choice of the change strategy.

Sense-making, according to Weick (1999), involves sizing up a situation, trying to discover what you have while you simultaneously act and have some effect on what you discover. If something does not make sense, people are not likely to support it (Kotter, 2002). It could be inferred that some important prerequisites for successful organizational change are, that the actual situation has been correctly assessed, that this assessment clearly indicates the need for the proposed change and that the strategy chosen corresponds to the needs of change. Finally it could be a prerequisite that the change analysis and the change strategy proposed have been communicated in such a way that this makes sense to a majority of the key players involved.

Freeman (1984) proposed that the contemporary business enterprise can be better understood and managed by the use of a business model that has a stakeholder rather than a competitor perspective. This discussion is developed by Foley (2005). In the system subjected to change and in its interrelated systems there are a number of stakeholders that could have an effect or be affected by the change. The stakeholders of a business organization may include creditors, customers, directors, employees, government (and its agencies), owners (shareholders), suppliers, unions, the
community from which the business draws its resources and the bio-physical environment, see for instance Follet (1941), Freeman & Reed (1983) and Garvare & Johansson (2010).

Another consideration in a stakeholder perspective is that not all stakeholders are equal, and different stakeholders are entitled to different considerations (Mitchell et al., 1997). In contexts where shareholders have a strong position, change success is often measured from their perspective. Within the quality movement a core principle is customer focus and the customer is often proclaimed as the main stakeholder. A common assumption is that with satisfied customers business will thrive. In public organisations and non profit organisations the focus might be to contribute to a more general community development. It could be argued that change should be assessed using a systemic view based on consequences for each group of relevant stakeholders. We define stakeholders broadly as all those who could affect or are affected by the organisational activities studied. One of the challenges in assessing success of planned change is aligning the different stakeholder views with the level of success.

Change can be initiated, driven and experienced differently depending on the context (Palmer et al., 2006). In simple terms change is often seen as a project with objectives. The fulfilment of those objectives is used as a measure of success. Not reaching the objectives is often viewed as failure, see for instance Kotter (2008). However, if change objectives or scope are considered to be “wrong” by influential stakeholder groups, analyzing success becomes difficult. Change success might have to be analysed from the perspective of the main stakeholders. This would indicate that change should start with identifying the main stakeholders and their needs.

Change could be viewed as a process, that starts with the sum of stakeholder needs in a studied organisational system, and that then in response to some trigger undergoes change actions over a period of time resulting in a new state for the organisational system. Lewin (1951) described changing as a three step process of unfreezing, moving and freezing of group standards.

The purpose of this paper is to use the process perspective combined with stakeholder focus to describe organisational change and thereby contribute to sense-making of change. The starting point is Lewin’s (1951) three step model for planned change (1951) as a planned change process. Some widely applied change strategies and philosophies such as Lean Management, Kotter’s eight step model, Six Sigma and Total Quality Management (TQM) are viewed in the perspective of Lewin’s model and with special focus to input and output of the change process. The purpose is to see if the process perspective can contribute to sense-making of change and to identifying critical elements in successful organizational change. A process based system model that aspires to include all critical elements of change is proposed. The model is intended as an overarching visualisation of different phases of change and should enable further breakdown.

**Organizations and change as a processes**

The process perspective where organisations are viewed as networks of value adding activities is one of the core principles within quality management, see for example Bergman & Klefsjö (2010) and the ISO 9000 quality management system (ISO 9000:2005). Different applications of process orientation exist and different effects can be expected from these applications (Hellström & Eriksson, 2012). There are also various process definitions. Processes can be defined as: “A
process is a related group of tasks that together create a result or a value to a customer” (Hammer, 1996); “A process is a logical, related, sequential (connected) set of activities that takes an input from a supplier, adds value to it, and produces an output to a customer” (Harrington et al., 1997); “A process is a network of activities that are repeated in time, whose objective is to create value to external or internal customers” (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010). A customer is by Bergman & Klefsjö (2010) defined as those that we create value for and includes coming generations. This definition of a customer aligns closely to the stakeholder definition stated previously. Processes deliver value to both customers and stakeholders. With our focus on stakeholders, including customers we here use a process definition by Isaksson (2006): “A process is a network of activities that, by the use of resources, repeatedly converts an input to an output for stakeholders”.

Any company or organization can be described as a process of value creation with the input being stakeholder needs and the output a value delivery. When this delivery is not leading to expected satisfaction change might be needed. Change can be seen as a process with the need for organizational change as its input and realized change as its output. Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis is one of the earliest change models (Lewin, 1951). The essence of the model unfreeze, move, freeze can be found in most change models today. Kotter’s eight step model starts with creating a sense of urgency and ends with anchoring changes into the organization (Kotter, 1996). The widely used Six Sigma change model launched by Motorola in 1987 consists in the executive part of five steps, Define (what to change), Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control (DMAIC), see for instance Kwak & Anbari (2006).

There is a wide range of ways to describe processes, from simple flow chart to more elaborate models for entire systems. One common way of distinguishing between different processes is to divide them into management, main and support processes (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010). Main processes are those that have external customers and that carry out the organizational mission. Support processes have internal customers such as employing people, carrying out maintenance and providing IT-solutions. Management processes also have internal customers and are a specific type of support processes providing for example control, motivation and planning. The model depicted in Figure 1 organizes an organization’s main process of producing value with the support process of changing performance.

| Purpose: To create value for stakeholders |
| Management processes |
| To plan, to control, to motivate etc. |
| To manage change |
| Main processes |
| To communicate and market |
| To produce goods and services |
| Support processes |
| To employ, to measure, to support etc. To improve performance (unfreeze-move-refreeze) |
| Resources |

Figure 1. A proposed generic process model with some typical processes as examples and with change related processes under management and support processes.

In the model in Figure 1 activities are described with names indicating the ongoing character whereas resources are described with nouns. Resources could be concrete or abstract and are fixed in the short time perspective. Examples of resources are such as personnel, equipment, wealth, culture and routines.

In most organizations there is a continuous effort to improve performance (Brown, 2012). The process of improving performance could be seen both as continuous small changes (described as
Kaizen (Ohno, 1988) and breakthrough change (Juran, 1995) when a visible step change is carried through. Burns (2009) describes a steady state that is interrupted by a burst of transforming activity as punctuated change. Our focus in the development of this process model was on the punctuated change, which is often the one, according to literature referred to earlier, that often fails. Because punctuated change is usually large, and represents a unique change it should be easier to detect the unbalance in the force field that triggers the unfreezing. There should also be a distinctive endpoint corresponding to freezing.

**The change process**

In Lewin’s force field analysis model, unfreezing may begin with the identification of the need for punctuated change. A pertinent question is how the change case has been described and presented. In the ideal situation of an evidence based change process, there should be a clear description of what to change, how to change and what the expected outcome is as well as how it can be assessed. Diagnosis of the change case needs to take into consideration the clarity of the change situation, which guides the openness of the change objective (Beech & Macintosh, 2012). Additionally the arguments for the chosen change, strategy and outcomes should be clear. The level of transparency can vary, but at the very least the leaders and managers of the situation need to have clear understanding and consensus about the need for change and the chosen strategy. Kotter (2008) identified creating the sense of urgency for change as a major success factor, and challenge. This could be seen as the situation where the opposing forces in the change field have been weakened by management grasping the necessity to change views and to start unlearning, which could be seen as Lewin’s first step of unfreezing. Kotter’s fourth stage of communicating the change vision could then be seen as the start of moving. This is where the entire organisation is presented with a change project. Here, there could be different interpretations. Preceding the stage of establishing a sense of urgency there must have been a decision based on the change case that there is urgency for change. Here, change needs assessment is defined as a process preceding unfreezing, see Figure 2.

![Figure 2. A process for leading change based on Lewin’s three steps of change.](image)

In Figure 2 the interface for how change is perceived to be commonly managed starts with unfreezing and ends with freezing, Kotter’s eight step change process that starts with establishing a sense of urgency implies that management or at least a CEO knows what needs to be changed (Kotter, 1996). The decision that change is needed has already been made.

Since it commonly is part of the managerial right to make dictatorial decisions the quality of the change analysis might not be known and could in some cases be based on a gut feeling. Doing the right change with stakeholder focus would require identification of stakeholders and stakeholder needs. This would mean a more thorough description of the existing force field as described by Lewin (1951). The force field analysis identifies forces driving change and opposing them with different attributed strengths. Each stakeholder being over a certain threshold as driver or as opposing force could be included in the change needs analysis. The quality of change needs analysis carried out could be an important factor when identifying factors to explain the level of change success.
From the point of view of sense-making of change it is important to properly assess achieved results – the output of the change process. In the Six Sigma improvement philosophy the last step of Control includes a check of how change objectives have been achieved and also makes a point of communicating these (Magnusson et al., 2003). Ideally there should be an analysis of the change output seen from a stakeholder perspective. Here, it is important to distinguish between output of the change, which can be related to measurable change objectives and the outcome which is the level of stakeholder satisfaction based on the interpretation of the output. Without clear communication of output to all stakeholders, it could be that results from a change initiative are perceived as insignificant. Especially, if the change has gone over a longer period it is easy to forget where change started. A structured assessment should support sense-making and should improve the measurability of the level of change success.

It seems that clarifying the change process interfaces – input and output – could help identifying elements affecting the success of planned change and the perception of change success. The organizational situation before “Unfreeze” and after “Freeze” in Figure 2 could be carried out based on a model like the one in Figure 1.

**A process based system model**

Organizations can be viewed as systems. A system could be seen as a link between management and employees, see for instance Zelnik et al (2012). Organizational systems could be described using a process based system model (Isaksson, 2006). This type of model could be used to assess the system to be changed before and after the change process. The system has to be viewed in its context.

Figure 3 defines the context of the change process model as the external resources. Generally external resources include Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal and Environmental (PESTEL), (Burnes, 2009). Changes in any of these resources will change the force field and will at a certain level merit an assessment of the need for change. In steady state the stakeholder satisfaction forces are balanced with what the system is delivering. A change like a new competitor or customer demand (Economic or Social resources) above an equilibrium threshold could trigger a change process. The combination of external factors based on PESTEL and feedback from stakeholders create the drivers for change, which are assessed to decide if punctuated change is needed. Similarly changes in internal resources could trigger the need for change. This could be aging equipment or aging personnel as well as cultural changes in the personnel.

A systematic change needs assessment will result in objectives for changed outcome (level of stakeholder satisfaction) and output (results from the organizational process). Achieving the targeted output could require changes to the way the network of activities work, as well as in the resources of the process. At present there does not seem to be any consensus on what the output of the process of assessing the change need in Figure 2 is and consequently where the process of unfreezing starts. The first stage of assessing the change need could be to establish that there is a need to address the gap between expected performance and actual performance. In order to make a proper analysis the gap needs to be expressed in terms of stakeholder satisfaction that can be translated into measurable terms of output. The next stage is to make a proper analysis of the causes for this gap identifying which parts of the system need to be changed. Depending on the focus, the change need analysis should
include relevant parts of resources. Changing a culture and core principles requires changes mainly in the people category. However, a cultural change almost always requires structural changes to the organization to get at the unwritten rules of behaviour. When main causes for the existing gap have been established solutions need to be found. This leads to a proposed change strategy. This process of analysing change drivers by diagnosing needs, analysing causes and suggesting solutions could be similar to innovations processes. This would mean that change ideas would pass several iterations and that the final iteration would deliver a decision to change and the strategy to follow. This would be defined as the input of the process of unfreezing. That is, only when there is a case for change does the unfreezing start, with for example “establishing a sense of urgency”. For the change process of unfreezing, moving and freezing different change strategies could be used. In the ideal case the strategy fits to the culture to be changed. This indicates that the preparatory process of change needs assessment should include an assessment of the organizational change competence and change ability.

The Extended Process of Leading Change

In Figure 4 a visualisation of how system change needs, a change process and the resulting system and the change success assessment could be linked.

Figure 4. A proposed process of leading and managing change.

The proposed model can be viewed in relation to four common areas for failures in change, presented in the beginning of this paper. The first was the lack of attention to the human factor. In a system change needs analysis the human factor is addressed both in the stakeholder needs analysis and as part of the system resource analysis. The second area of change failure is that management does not understand the change process. Using a system perspective and carrying out a system change needs analysis should contribute to understanding the complexity of change. The third area is related to implementation, which at least partly relates to change competency. Carrying out an assessment of the change competency as part of the change needs analysis should improve change implementation. Another part of this is the choice of change strategy. The change needs assessment could include matching change requirements, change competency and chosen strategy. The fourth area for change failure, raised in the introduction, was embarking on the wrong change project. This could happen when management without analysis assumes that they have identified the right area of change. Taking time for system change needs analysis should reduce this risk. This echoes one of the Lean principles, make decisions slowly and implementation quickly (Liker, 2004).
Common change strategies and the proposed change process

Total Quality Management and Lean Management are often called change philosophies. However, since both are often used to drive change we consider these also as change strategies.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000) state that TQM can be seen as a management system made up of values methodologies and tools. The system has to have an aim, see Checkland (1999). The aim of the TQM-system according to Bergman & Klefsjö (2010) is to: “Increase external and internal customer satisfaction with a reduced amount of resources”. The values proposed by Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000) are: Focus on customers; Focus on processes; Base decisions on facts; Improve continuously; Let everybody be committed; Top management commitment.

The aim of the system indicates that this is a model for improvement and thereby a model for change with its focus being on customers. However, the road map for change is not included - the part of unfreezing-moving-freezing. Rather, the model describes the elements that should be there in the desired future state and leaves the road to be taken open. The issue of doing the right change is not highlighted. Listening only to customers could be a problem since customers do not innovate (Juran, 1995). In the model (presented in Figure 4) the main TQM elements would be the TQM values that would form part of the resource element and more specifically part of the organizational culture. The strength of these values could be a key success factor. An organisation aspiring to work with TQM should first see that the existing culture include the values, which might often not be the case. A precondition for the methodologies and tools proposed within TQM would then be a cultural change. Irrespective of the problem of how to measure TQM values, the level of adherence to these values could be seen as part of the organisational resources of the system both before and after change. The methodologies and tools supporting the core values could be seen as support processes and resources in the change part.

Six Sigma

The Six Sigma improvement methodology has, unlike TQM and Lean Production, a clear recipe for change (Magnusson et al., 2003). Improvement is described with what could be seen as a generic problem solving process using the steps: Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control (DMAIC). The change needs are mostly defined as a list of projects and normally within a limited context. The first step Define identifies the scope of work and the parameters to improve. When a project is chosen after the Define step this could be seen as the start of the change process and unfreezing. To some extent the steps Measure and Analyze highlight the causes for non-performance and the proposed solutions could be seen as unfreezing. However, it is important to remember that the Unfreezing is not just the hard elements of the organization but represents people preparing for the change. Improve corresponds to Moving and Control to Freezing.

Customer focus, decisions based on facts, top management commitment and continuous improvement are obvious parts of the change philosophy. In some literature focus on processes is also mentioned (Magnusson et al., 2003). The value of letting everybody be committed is not clearly in focus. The methodology starts with preparing a project list with priorities. This is however only a partial description of the current state. Preceding the work with the DMAIC improvement process the Six Sigma structure must be deployed. This requires training in change competencies and a managerial structure as
well as the introduction of a specific performance measurement system. The change strategy does not offer any other proposal for how to introduce Six Sigma in a company except that the CEO has to be the number one believer (Magnusson et al., 2003). There is little in the change strategy itself to guide the interested organisation if the strategy is relevant or not. However, emerging topics in TQM-research involve TQM implementation and, subsequently, its effects on firms (Qin-Qin & Kah-Hin, 2012).

**Lean Management**

Liker (2004) summarized the basic idea of Lean into 14 principles bundled into four sections. Section I with one principle is Long-Term Philosophy and includes the component of “Generate value for the customer, society, and the economy...”. This supports the inclusion of stakeholder focus in the proposed change process. Section II states that the right process will produce the right results. This supports the chosen process perspective. Section II includes seven principles:

- Create a continuous process flow to bring problems to the surface (supports the visualisation of the change process)
- Use “pull” systems to avoid overproduction (relates to the proposed change needs analysis)
- Level out the workload (heijunka). (relates to change management competency and embarking on a manageable number of change projects only)
- Build a culture of stopping to fix problems, to get quality right the first time (relates to focusing on the right change)
- Standardise to create conditions for continuous improvement (could be interpreted as a need to also standardise the change process)

Section III is called: Add value to the organization by developing your people. This points at the importance of the human focus and is similar to the TQM value of: Let everybody be committed. The three principles included are:

- Grow leaders who live the philosophy (leaders that have internalised TQM values)
- Develop exceptional people and teams who follow your company’s philosophy
- Respect your extended network of partners and suppliers by challenging them and helping them improve

Section IV is called: Continuously Solving Root Problems Drives. This supports the need of a continuous improvement and learning process that could be described as an organisational support process as suggested. This principle is similar to the TQM value of: Improve continuously. The three principles included are:

- Go and see for yourself to thoroughly understand the situation (genchi genbutsu). This could be interpreted as the TQM value: Based decisions on facts.
- Make decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options; implement decisions rapidly (nemawashi). This supports the proposed change needs analysis.
- Become a learning organization through relentless reflection (hansei) and continuous improvement (kaizen).
Like TQM, Lean Management is presented as a philosophy that describes how the end result should look like – the future state. However, there is no clearly proposed change process. The assessment of the current situation is similar to Six Sigma and is based on identifying improvement potential in the form of waste, often using value stream mapping. As with TQM and Six Sigma, the choice of Lean Management as a change philosophy can be seen as an act of fate. Lean Management includes many components that support the presentation of change as a process based system.

**Kotter’s eight step model**
The change model by Kotter seems to aim to improve the shareholder satisfaction (Kotter, 1996). The model does not seem to identify the change aim as an important element. Values are not explicitly mentioned. The underlying assumption is that values such as focus on shareholders and focus on economic performance are important. The change starts with “Establishing a sense of urgency”, which presupposes that somebody, normally top management, already knows what has to be changed. Creating the sense of urgency could be seen to start the Unfreezing. The steps of “Creating the guiding coalition”, “Developing a vision and strategy” and “Communicating the change vision” could also be seen to be part of “Unfreezing”. The steps of “Empowering broad-based action”, “Generating short-term wins” and “Consolidating gains and producing more change” could be defined as Moving. Freezing would then be the last step of “Anchoring new approaches in the culture”.

The proposed process in Figure 4 is further elaborated in Table 1. Each proposed step is compared with critical elements of the studied strategies.

**Proposed change process combined with studied improvement strategies**
The proposed change process in Figure 4 has in Table 1 been divided into subprocesses as an indicative proposal to enable detailed comparison.

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**Table 1. Proposed change process with sub-processes compared with TQM, Six Sigma, Lean Management and Kotter eight step change model.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process steps</th>
<th>Sub-processes</th>
<th>TQM</th>
<th>Six Sigma</th>
<th>Lean Management</th>
<th>Kotter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessing the current state: From assessed driver to decision of change</td>
<td>Diagnosing potential Analysing causes Proposing solutions in several iterations</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Only included when strategy has been introduced in organisation as Define in DMAIC</td>
<td>Introducing LM principles and methodologies – not explicit as change process – relies on having an expert Value stream mapping Discovering Muda (waste)</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfreezing</td>
<td>Establishing motivation Working with values Creating the change team Developing a stakeholder based vision Anchoring the change plan</td>
<td>Introducing values methodologies and tools of TQM - not explicit as change process</td>
<td>Introducing Six Sigma structure Measure and Analyse in DMAIC</td>
<td>Establishing a sense of urgency Creating the guiding coalition Developing a vision and a strategy</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process steps</th>
<th>Sub-processes</th>
<th>TQM</th>
<th>Six Sigma</th>
<th>Lean Management</th>
<th>Kotter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>Improving by using the chosen appropriate strategy for change</td>
<td>Various methodologies</td>
<td>Improve in DMAIC</td>
<td>Various methodologies</td>
<td>Communicating Empowering Generating short-term wins Consolidating gains and producing more change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezing</td>
<td>Anchoring (management system, new control, knowledge management including values)</td>
<td>Not explicit Working with ISO 9000 Introducing Statistical Process Control</td>
<td>Control in DMAIC</td>
<td>Not explicit standardising</td>
<td>Anchoring new approaches in culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing the final state and communicating results</td>
<td>Assessing output and outcome for the included stakeholders Communicating results</td>
<td>Not explicit</td>
<td>Communicating project results as part of Control</td>
<td>Not explicit</td>
<td>Not explicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table I none of the studied change strategies have any clear requirement to assess the state before or after change. Only Six Sigma has a structure that partly addresses both the start and the end but there are no criteria specifying when to use Six Sigma or how to create a sense of urgency. The CEO should be the number one believer (Magnusson & al., 2003). “Control” in Six Sigma includes a follow up of how objectives have been realised, but this is often focused only on measurable economic performance and is sometimes limited to the shareholder perspective. With TQM it is unclear how the core values can be introduced if they are not found in the organisation. Lean Management focuses on finding Muda – waste, but the introduction of the core principles is not elaborated. Kotter’s eight steps originate from practice and highlight the criticality of the input. Successful change seems to require a powerful CEO who has the right objectives and methods.

**Conclusions and Discussion**

Applying the presented process perspective on a change process based on Lewin’s model and extending it with change needs and change success assessment (see Figure 4 and Table 1) provides a base for analysing change process elements. Applying stakeholder focus enables visualising the entire system and should help in identifying critical elements.

Our contention is that with some further elaboration the proposed critical elements could be used both in qualitative and quantitative research relating the maturity level of these elements to stakeholder based change success. The brief summary in Table 1 indicates that there could be reason to focus on the sub-process of assessing change needs and assessing change success, since none of the examined change strategies fully cover this part. Broadly used improvement philosophies might share a common systematic flaw – they assume that management knows what to do without any requirement of external assessment.
A system does not understand itself (Deming, 1993) or as Salman Rushdie puts it, you cannot see a picture when you are in it. A management that cannot present good evidence for an intended change could be taken unwanted risks. When analysing a change process there should be focus on how the change case has been prepared since it is not unlikely that many failures are founded already at this stage. As a starting point for further research the maturity level of change needs assessment could be compared with change success.

**References**


PAPER 4

Exploring organizational change best practice: are there any clear-cut models and definitions?

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore whether there are some existing widespread and common models and definitions for organizational change best practice in the literature.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper builds on previous research to define a model of evidence-based change management best practice. A structured literature review is used to search for contemporary models and definitions of organizational change best practice.

Findings – No consistent definitions of organizational change best practice are to be found in the literature.

Originality/value – The paper provides a snapshot of the current literature on organizational change best practice. Implications of the findings on organizational change best practice are discussed and further research suggested.

Keywords Change management, Organizational change, Best practice

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Organizations are undergoing unprecedented change and, while that could be said about any period in its history, the change occurring today has a speed and character that is unique (Burnes, 2009; Foley and Zahner, 2009; Helms Mills et al., 2009; Todnem By, 2005). Organizational change can be defined as an alteration of a core aspect of an organization’s operation (Helms Mills et al., 2009). Organizations continue to struggle with the implementation of change. It is estimated that 46 percent of organizations are undergoing three or more complex changes at any one time (Barel et al., 2007). For most organizations implementing change is a risky endeavor (Stebbings and Braganza, 2009) and there seems to be a general consensus between practitioners and academics that few are successful when trying to implement change (Haines et al., 2005; Kotter, 1996, 2008).

It is estimated that 70 percent of organizational change initiatives fail completely (Beer and Nohria, 2000). Of the ones deemed successful as many as 75 percent of these fail to achieve their intended result (Nikolaou et al., 2007). Despite these low success rates, the need for organizational change continues as companies attempt to adapt and respond to the changing economic conditions, customer and client expectations and a shifting workforce. Change is normality (Senior and Swailes, 2009). Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising leaders looking to increase their success are looking toward change management best practices as the solution. “best practice” has become a term...
synonymous with success. Leaders adopt so-called best practices with the belief that implementing another organization’s successful practices is some sort of magic bullet (Sanwal, 2008; Turner et al., 2009).

The use of so-called best practices may lure leaders into a false sense of security. They may create the possibility of two organizational blind spots. First is the lack of a consistent definition for organizational change best practice. Todaro (2002) discusses three possible definitions of a best practice. First “as a practice that is award winning” which could advocate the use of business excellence models as benchmarks for best practice. Second “a practice that has industry wide acceptance” which would imply that the most popular and widespread practice is the best. Finally, the definition includes “practices implemented by admired companies and shown to have helped them” which would promote anecdotal evidence and success stories as best practice. The lack of a consistent definition also extends to other management literature focusing on organizational change. In one study, best practices are self-identified on the basis of practices that have worked for the organization (Prosci, 2009). Carter et al. (2001) included return on investment and money invested for the change as well as openness to learning, collaboration, humility, innovation, creativity, integrity, a regard for people’s needs and perspectives and a passion for change as criteria for defining best practice in change management. A similar overview of change management best practice identified four attributes to define a best practice organization which included setting objectives, ability to change perceptions and support from the top (Carter et al., 2001).

The second potential blind spot leaders need to be aware of when using so-called best practices is the lack of consensus on one best way to implement change (Burnes, 1996, 2009; Dunphy and Stace, 1993; Rothwell and Sullivan, 2005; Turner et al., 2009). The lack of consensus and the lack of agreement on the one practice that is necessary for successful transformations may also contribute to the lack of a clear best practice definition (Sirkin et al., 2005). Finally, there is the lack of consistency in the codification or transference of a successful practice in one organization, to a best practice for many organizations (Turner et al., 2009). The lack of codification makes it difficult for leaders to evaluate which of the associated elements of a change implementation represent best practice (Turner et al., 2009). To further explore the advancement of evidence-based change management practices, a review of the literature for current organizational change best practices was completed. The purpose of the study presented in this paper was to explore if widespread and common models and definitions for organizational change best practice exist in the literature.

2. Methodology

A structured literature review was used to search for definitions and models for organizational change best practice. The structure of the literature review was inspired by Palmberg (2009) and her work to explore widespread definitions and models in process management.

Emerald and EBSCO were the primary databases used to make the initial search. Since Emerald is a recognized publisher of management research and provided a greater number of hits, Emerald was chosen as the source for the further literature search. The next step was to narrow the search to the exact phrases of “organizational change”, “change management”, “change leadership” and/or “best practice” in keywords and titles in Emerald journals.
3. Results

Searching all fields on any combination of the phrase “best practice” made 48,667 journal hits on Emerald and 22,703 on EBSCO. Searching all fields on any combination of the phrase “organizational change” made 31,827 journal hits on Emerald and 26,830 on EBSCO. Results are shown in Figure 1.

A categorization of the articles in the Emerald journals was completed and divided on decades 1961-2010. Results are shown in Figure 2.

A further scan of the articles containing the keyword best practice was completed. When the keyword best practice is used, the number of hits drops from 48,667 to as small as 160. When the search is further narrowed to organizational change and best practice the number of articles drop from 15,956 to as low as 2. Results are shown in Figure 3.

It was identified that 65 percent (104) of the articles were published over the period 2006-2009. Figure 3 shows a chronology of the best practice articles published.

The 160 best practice articles were sorted based on relevance (Figure 4). All 160 articles were reviewed based on title and abstract, including the two containing both “organizational change”, “change management” and “best practice”. Using Emerald’s
definition of paper categories, the articles were sorted into seven categories. Table I defines each category and the number of articles in each category.

4. Analysis
Having studied a random sample of journal papers in our search results, it is fair to say that two underlying beliefs about how organizational change occurs have shaped much of the development of change management theory (Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008; Burnes, 2009; Todnem By, 2005; Collins, 1998; Helms Mills et al., 2009; Kotter, 1996, 2008; Lewin, 1951; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Senior and Swailes, 2009; Turner et al., 2009). The first belief is that organizational change can be planned and managed through an understanding of a set of sequential steps (Burnes, 2009; Dawson, 2003; Lewin, 1951). According to this belief, change management can be described as a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organizations from a current state to a desired future state. The planned change belief, emerged from the tradition of organizational development, views change as externally driven and episodic and attempts to explain the stages or steps an organization must go through in order to effect the necessary or desired outcome (Burnes, 1996, 2009; Todnem By, 2005; Porras and Silvers, 1991).

Figure 3. Search results "organizational change" (OC), "change management" (CM), "change leadership" (CL) and/or "best practice" (BP) in keywords and titles in journals

Organizational change best practice

Figure 4. The articles containing the keyword best practice published over the period 1997-2009
The second belief, mainly evolved due to the criticisms of planned change, has been the belief that change is an organic process which cannot be managed (Burnes, 1996, 2009). Emergent organic change, or the process approach, reflects an understanding of change as an ongoing learning process that emphasizes the analytical, evolutionary nature of change rather than a pre-defined series of steps (Burnes, 1996, 2009; Shanley, 2007). Both beliefs include organizational change management processes and individual change management methodology, which together are used to manage both the “softer” systems, such as people and culture and the “harder” systems such as strategy, structure and technology (Beer and Eisenstat, 1996).

The discrepancy between the two approaches to the management of organizational change and this literature search reinforces the significant challenge in defining any practice as “best” and in particular organizational change practices. The American Productivity and Quality Centre noted, “best” is a moving target and the idea of a “best practice” is always contextual (Jarrar and Zairi, 2000). Even organizations acknowledged for their best practice in change management use different and unique change management methods (Turner et al., 2009). If there are success stories to be found, the originators often lacks the discipline to fully document and communicate all the variables that contributed to the success of the practice (Karn and Highfill, 2004; Szulanski and Winter, 2002). Many so-called best practices seem to lack any form of empirical evidence (Karn and Highfill, 2004). According to Sanwal (2008), it is not uncommon to have competing practices even within the same discipline both identified as best practices.

Despite the fact that the authors’ general search found thousands of articles evolve around aspects of organizational change and best practice, the Emerald search resulted in only three articles containing “organizational change” or “change management” and “best practice” in keywords. The authors also observed that less than 10 percent of the 160 Emerald articles containing “best practice” in keywords were actually labeled as case studies. The majority of articles were different kinds of research papers, reviews or viewpoints. This finding would indicate that just a fraction of the research striving to define organizational change best practice is actually based on demonstrated and documented practical applications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerald article category</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study – description of actual projects or experiences within organizations. May include subjective descriptions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual paper – describe the development and testing of hypotheses. Frequently discursive and cover philosophical discussions and comparative studies of others’ work and thinking</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General review – provide an overview or historical examination of a concept, technique or phenomena. Papers are descriptive or instructional (“how to” papers) than discursive</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review – main aim of the paper is to annotate and/or critique literature in a particular area</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper – present any research undertaken by the author(s) using any method</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical paper – describes and evaluates technical products, processes or services</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoint – a paper, primarily dependent on the author’s opinion and interpretation, including journalistic pieces</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Label</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Articles included in study by publication category
5. Discussion

The authors’ contention is that the area of organizational change management appears to be in a tangled state without clear boundaries. It appears that many popular management practices labeled as best practices (such as total quality management, Six Sigma and Lean) are based on anecdotal evidence rather than empirical data. For instance, although there have been numerous case studies, comprehensive discussions, books and web sites addressing Six Sigma, very little scholarly research has been done on Six Sigma and its influence on management theory and application (Goffnett, 2004; Schroeder et al., 2005).

The findings of this literature review supports the conclusion of the authors’ previous study (Turner et al., 2009); there are no coherent models and definitions of evidence-based organizational change best practice to be found in the literature.

Our contention is that the terms “organizational change”, “change management” and “best practice” appear to be used in a variety of perspectives and research applications but the search for affinity patterns have not resulted in any stable conclusions. As such, we have not succeeded in clarifying the concepts. The lack of any stable conclusions and the sweeping use of the term best practice may possibly fuel the academic criticism of the fields of organizational change management for being driven by consultants and practitioners. The critics find the offered solutions general, simplistic, shallow, not evidence based and therefore misleading (Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008; Helms Mills et al., 2009). Therefore, instead of using the term “best practice” in a routine manner, the following alternative labels could be proposed (Table II).

Despite the lack of standards and stable conclusions, we believe that a combination of hard and soft approaches to organizational change is needed. During this iterative research process, we have also been asking ourselves: is it even meaningful to strive for an elusive thing as one best change management practice? We argue that organizations exist and function in a complex, multiple context, ever-changing, volatile social environment and one of its constants is change. Any meaningful description of the organization must begin from an understanding that all but the most trivial of decisions are taken without certain knowledge of the outcome (Foley and Zahner, 2009). Many qualitative researchers, as well as practitioners, also operate under different ontological assumptions about the world and do not assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from our perceptions. Thus, it can be argued that the researcher is a unique individual and that all research is essentially biased by each researcher’s individual perceptions. There is no point in trying to establish validity in any external or objective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of “best practice”</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icon practice</td>
<td>Practices implemented by admired companies and/or prominent executives – “if IKEA does it, it must be the best”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award-winning practice</td>
<td>Practices adopted by winners of business excellence awards such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award – “if the winner does it, it must be the best”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common practice</td>
<td>Practices that have industry wide diffusion, adoption and acceptance – “if everyone else is doing it, it must be the best”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal practice</td>
<td>Practices based on anecdotal evidence and widespread success stories – “if it worked for them, it must be the best”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Inspired by Todaro (2002)
sense (Trochim, 2000). Since each of us experiences from our own point of view, each of us experiences a different reality (Krauss, 2005). Therefore, there might not be such a thing as a single, generalized, organizational change best practice to be found.

Where organizational change evidence-based practice may offer some assistance is to organizations attempting to implement change. This could be done through the identification of empirically grounded practices that has been successfully applied in practice.

Gummesson (2000, p. 97) resumes this discussion by stating that:

As long as you keep searching for new knowledge and do not believe you have found the ultimate truth but, rather, the best available for the moment, the traditional demand for generalization becomes less urgent.

References


Further reading


**About the authors**

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Hallencreutz, J. (2010), Who is in charge of change management around here, Conference proceedings, 13th QMOD conference on Quality and Service Sciences ICQSS 2010 in Cottbus, Germany, August 30-September 1.
Who is in charge of change management around here?

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Abstract

Purpose
Change has become a vital business partner for many organizations whose survival depends on their ability to adapt to a varying situation. The purpose of the survey presented in this paper is to explore relationships between types of organizations, roles and responsibilities and perceived success when implementing systems for change. Common denominators are described and areas for future research are proposed.

Design/methodology/approach
Questionnaire-based data were obtained from change managers in 26 large Swedish organizations. Analysis of multiple crossing and profile analysis were used to investigate related differences in types of organizations, roles and responsibilities and perceived implementation success.

Findings
The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents call for corporate methodologies and tools for leading organizational change. Modeling the change reveals that those organizations which have adopted a corporate approach to the planning and implementation of organizational change perceive better results from their change initiatives.

Originality/Value
This paper presents new data about how large Swedish corporations organize and manage organizational change. Thus, it can contribute to the development of a common body of knowledge about ways to lead organizational change in large corporations, and also highlight areas for further research.

Keywords
Change management, organizational change, change implementation.

Type of paper
Research paper

Introduction
Organizational change can be defined as an alteration of a core aspect of an organization’s operation (Helms Mills et al, 2009). Organizations are these days experiencing changes of great magnitude, complexity and rate. In many cases organizational change can be seen as a direct result of external cultural, political, technological or economical forces (Child, 2005). Examples of external driving forces for change are new legislation, globalization and new market demand or more dramatic threats such as the global financial crisis or clouds of volcano ash. Organizational changes can also be triggered by internal driving forces such as new key players with new ideas in managerial positions, new products and services or internal
demand for reengineering or reorganization (Dawson, 2003). There seems to be no clear cut between external and internal driving forces for change (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008).

For most organizations implementing change is a risky endeavor (Stebbings & Braganza, 2009) and there seems to be a general consensus between practitioners and academics that few are successful when trying to implement change (Hallencreutz, 2009). A common notion is that seven out of ten change initiatives fail to fully meet their change objectives (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2008, Beer & Nohria, 2000, Haines et al, 2005, Kotter, 1996, 2008). For instance, statistics suggest that 75% of all studied American initiatives of total quality management (TQM) during the last decade failed (Helms Mills et al, 2009). Hansson (2003) arrives at a similar conclusion having studied Swedish TQM projects in middle-sized organizations. This is a paradox - organizations must continually change in order to survive but the very nature of organizational change itself means inherent risks (Klarner et al, 2008).

Change management can be seen as a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organizations from a current state to a desired, future state (Hallencreutz, 2009). However, contextual driving forces based on rational decisions do not solely govern a change process. There is always room for people to act according to their own interpretations and understanding of the real life context around them. There seems to be general agreement that without careful attention to the people or human dynamics, organizational change will not be successful (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). According to Doyle (2002) change management in many organizations has shifted from being the responsibility of an internal or external change agent dedicated to its implementation and management, to increasingly being identified as a core competency for most organizational leaders. As such the skills required to lead, manage and implement change are being incorporated into the existing expectations, roles and responsibilities of managers together with other employees. According to the Prosci Benchmarking Report (2009) over 60% of the study participants used a structured methodology to manage what they call the people side of change. The top factors for choosing a methodology included ease of use, previous experience with the methodology and approaches that were proven to be effective.

But, despite the overload of books, articles and research reports on the subject, there does not appear to be one best way to implement change (Turner et al, 2009). Even organizations acknowledged for their best practice in change management use different and unique change management methods (Carter et al, 2001). Many so called best practices seem to lack any form of empirical evidence (Karn & Highfill, 2004). If there are success stories to be found, the originators often lacks the discipline to fully document and communicate all the variables that contributed to the success of the practice (Karn & Highfill, 2004, Szulanski & Winter, 2002). According to Sanwal (2008) it is not uncommon to have competing procedures even within the same discipline all identified as best practices. Some researchers also criticize the change management industry for being driven by consultants, see for instance Alvesson & Svenningsson (2008) and Helms Mills et al (2009). They find the offered solutions general, simplistic, shallow, not evidence based and therefore misleading.

However, it is fair to say that theory about change management outlines some general success factors which need to be in place, such as a defined need for change, an effective leadership, a change plan, an enabled commitment and a suitable environment (Hallencreutz 2009). Thus, it seems to be quite clear what is needed in theory, yet many organizations fail to execute organizational change in practice. People know what and how to do things, but don’t do it. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) call this phenomenon the “knowing-doing gap”. Since the field of
change management is in a tangled state without clear boundaries, it could be relevant to go back to the roots and try to explore some fundamental questions: How do the big ones in Sweden do it? Are there any consistent organizational structures, methodologies and tools used? Is there something close to a “common” or “preferred” practice? Is there a relation between chosen structure and perceived results? This study can be seen as a first step on such a research journey.

How the work was done

To explore how large Swedish organizations organize and manage organizational change, I first conducted open interviews with clients and colleagues. The purpose of these interviews was to find areas to pinpoint in a survey. Based on these interviews, previous studies (Turner et al, 2009, Hallencreutz, 2009) and internal seminars at Implement MP AB a web survey was designed. The top 100 Swedish organizations (government and public authorities excluded) were then extracted from a database (www.largestcompanies.se), based on turnover and number of full time employees. The selection seemed reasonable; recent studies indicate that knowledge about change management in large enterprises is still immature (Prosci, 2009).

The organizations were contacted by phone. We (me and two research colleagues) called the switchboard operators, presented ourselves and the survey and asked: “Who is in charge of change management in this organization?” The result was documented. In a second round of calls the procedure was repeated. This time the questions were addressed to the names on the list scored from the first round. After a series of loops, we ended up with a list of 80 assured names, said to be in charge of or at least willing to answer questions about change management in their respective organization. 10 organizations declined immediately due to internal policies. 10 organizations were rejected by us due to invalid data in the database file.

We then made the final round of calls to the selected organizations, where we asked if the spokesperson would be willing to answer a web questionnaire about change management. From that round we counted 47 positives. The main reasons for saying no were lack of time or due to internal policies (“we never participate in surveys”).

Finally, the web questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the 47 persons willing to participate. The questionnaire was sent out in November 2009. After three reminders, we ended up with 26 completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire

Background questions

1) How many employees have the organization where you are employed?
2) What type of business is your organization involved in? (main orientation)
3) Organization ownership?
4) Your role in the organization?

Organization and strategy for change

5) Has the organization common settled methods and tools for change management when dealing with large scale change?
6) If yes at question #5, please describe the chosen methods and tools.
7) Who has the main responsibility for change management when dealing with large scale changes in the organization (multiple choice)
8) How many members have the special headquarter function?
9) To whom does the special headquarter function report?
10) What is the objective of the special headquarter function within change management? (multiple choice)
11) If other; what is the objective of the special headquarter function within change management?
12) Where in the line organization is the main responsibility of change management?
13) What is the objective of the line organization within change management? (multiple choice)
14) If other; what is the objective of the line organization within change management?
15) How is the change management project organized?
16) What is the objective of the project within change management? (multiple choice)
17) If other; what is the objective of the project within change management?

Follow-up

18) How do you document/measure the effects of your change initiatives?
19) If other; how do you document/measure the effects of your change initiatives?
20) How well do you think the organization manages change?

Results

Table I. Switchboard operator performance, round one (total 90)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Switchboard operator performance</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct connection to CM-spokesperson</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No known connection, call re-routed</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switchboard decline (“send a mail”)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. CM-responsibility/spokesperson – functions and division (total 80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of HR</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Communication/Information</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Manager</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. CM-responsible/spokesperson – willing to take part in study (total 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO/MD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of HR</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Communication/Information</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Highlights from the questionnaire

Figure 1. Number of employees?

Figure 2. Type of business (main orientation)?

Figure 3. Ownership of the organization?
**Organization and strategy for change**

Has the organization common settled methods and tools for change management when dealing with large scale change?

**Figure 5.** Response to the question on methods and tools

Who has the main responsibility for change management when dealing with large scale changes in the organization? (multiple choice)

**Figure 6.** Response to the question on change management responsibility
**Follow-up**

How do you document/measure the effects of your change initiatives?

![Figure 7. Response to the question on change management measurement system.](image)

How well do you think the organization manages change?

![Figure 8. Perceived change management performance.](image)

**Analysis**

Analysis of multiple crossing and profile analysis is used to investigate related differences in types of organizations, roles and responsibilities and perceived implementation success.

General relations, CM methodologies tools and organizational responsibility and the perception of results:

- 90% of the respondents having set methodologies and tools perceive that they are "very good" or "good" at change management
- 38% of those *not* having set methodologies perceive that they are "very good" or "good" at change management
- 100% of the responding companies having a corporate staff function perceive that they are "very good" or "good" at change management
- 60% of the responding companies having a line function or project perceive that they are "very good" or "good" at change management
Differences in scope of responsibility; staff, line, project:

- 80% of the respondents with a staff function state that the staff function has a general change management responsibility.
- Most frequent answers among respondents with a line responsibility for change management: manage (100%) and measure/follow-up (67%).
- Most frequent answers among respondents with a project responsibility for change management: support the organization (100%) and measure/follow up (73%).
- Scope of responsibility among respondents perceiving that they are “very good” or “good” at change management (irrespective of function):
  - General responsibility (100%)
  - Develop competence/Support organization/Manage (100%)
  - Manage/Measure & follow-up (67%)
  - Develop competence /Manage/Measure & follow-up (50%)
  - Support Organization/Measure & Follow up (50%)
- Change management responsibilities respective share of respondents perceiving that they are “very good” or “good” at change management:
  - Staff (16%) → 100%
  - Staff/line/project (4%) → 100%
  - Line/project (36%) → 78%
  - Project (16%) → 25%
  - Line (20%) → 20%
  - Project/Not set (4%) → 0%
  - Not set (4%) → 0%
- Main CM responsibility with set corporate methodologies and tools:
  - Staff 80%
  - Line 47%
  - Project 33%

Conclusion and discussion

According to Gummesson (2000), access to reality is the management researcher’s number one problem. This study can serve as an example of that. It is not easy to get access to senior executives in large organizations and it is even more challenging to get them to reveal themselves in a survey. Thus, the output of this study needs probably to be taken with a pinch of salt.

In less than 10 percent of the cases, the switchboard operator knows the answer to the question: “Who is in charge of change management in this organization”. According to the Prosci Benchmarking Report (2009) the HR department is the most common response for where the change management responsibility is placed. In 70 percent of our cases we ended up talking to the Head of Communication/Information. It should therefore be discussed if that function truly reflects the change management responsibility in these organizations – but for sure it reflects the complex and immature reality of change management in Sweden.
62% of the respondents claim that they do not have corporate change management methodologies and tools. This result, in combination with the fragmented picture from the phone call sessions, could indicate that many large Swedish organizations still use ad hoc approaches when organizing, planning and executing organizational change. These findings also correspond with the Prosci Benchmarking Report (2009) where over 60% of the study participants used a structured methodology to manage change – nearly double the rate from the 2003 Prosci study.

58% of the respondents perceive that their organizations are “very good” or “good” at executing change management. No less than 90% of the respondents having set methodologies and tools perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management. 38% of those not having set methodologies perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management. These results, although not all statistically significant, could fuel a further discussion that investing in corporate change management methodologies and tools improves the ability to execute organizational change.

Regarding the organizational structures it can be observed that all respondents having a staff solution in place perceive that they are “very good” or “good” at change management, while around half of the responding organizations having a line- or project solution perceive that they are “very good” or “good”. This could indicate that an assembled, holistic and corporate organizational approach to change management is more effective than a decentralized one.

Bearing its limitations in mind, the study indicates that large Swedish organizations with a holistic approach to the organization, development, planning and execution of organizational change generally perceive a greater outcome from their efforts. This result is not contradictory to other international studies (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008, Prosci, 2009).

The study also reveals a fragmented scene. Through the literature, research reports and numerous conversations in academic seminars and business meetings we learn that change occupies more or less every modern organization throughout the globe. But when theory turns to practical applications most organizations seem to fall into a gap between theory and practice (Hallencreutz, 2009). Being both a researcher and a practitioner, I think it is high time to accelerate a discussion on how change management can be boosted both as a function and a profession, and not a thing that busy managers are supposed to deal with on top of everything else. This basic study shows that there is a lot of work to be done in this aspect.
Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Andreas Demander, Jörgen Finbom and Johanna Westling at Implement MP AB for valuable research support in this study.

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The Economist Intelligence Unit (2008). *A change for the better – Steps for successful business transformation*, The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd


PAPER 6
Abstract

Purpose: There is a lack of a recognized conception of quality management (QM) comprises of, as well as a clear roadmap of where QM is heading. The purpose of this article is to investigate how QM is perceived today by scholars at three Swedish universities, but also how and into what QM is expected to develop into in twenty years.

Methodology: Data have been collected through three structured workshops using affinity diagrams with scholars teaching and performing research in the QM field affiliated with three different Swedish universities.

Findings: The results indicate that current QM is perceived similarly among the universities today, although the taxonomy differs slightly. QM is described as a fairly wide discipline consisting of a set of core of principles that in turn guide which methods and tools that currently by many are perceived as the core of the discipline. The outlook for the future differs more where three possible development directions for QM are seen: [1] searching for a “discipline X” where QM can contribute while keeping its toolbox, [2] focus on a core based on the traditional quality technology toolbox with methods and tools, and [3] a risk that QM, as it is today, may seize to exist and be diffused into other disciplines.

Originality/value: This article contributes with a viewpoint on QM today and its future development from the academicians' perspective.

Keywords: Quality Management, Business Excellence, Change Management, Total Quality Management, Future.

Article Classification: Viewpoint.

Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s the Japan originated quality movement with its emphasis on customer focus was largely seen as the leading way for effective change towards competitiveness. Focus has since shifted from Total Quality Management and models of Business Excellence to Six Sigma improvement and Lean Management in parallel with behaviorally oriented change programs with emphasis on leadership. We argue that it still remains unclear in the literature
Whether quality management (QM) is a collection of techniques, a management philosophy, a management method, a strategy, a theory for managing only quality and service processes, or a master theory for managing the entire enterprise— or all of the above? From this point of view, several scholars have concluded that management concepts cannot be narrowly defined but should rather be considered multi-dimensional constructs (Pettersen, 2009; Hellsten and Klefsjö, 2000; Dean and Bowen, 1994).

The time when the quality domain was confined to the inspection personnel of the manufacturing industry is long gone. Throughout the 20th century, managing for quality has moved from being an arena for specialists understood and appreciated by few to being repackaged to a top management concept in the form of Total Quality Management (TQM). In the TQM guise, quality was often considered to be panacea for organizational problems, and as such, it did not take long before being designated a fad status (van der Wiele et al, 2001; Young & Wilkinson, 2001), whereas others criticize different aspects of TQM, for instance lack of common definitions and its cure-all prominence (Bergquist et al. 2005).

In the public domain of many western countries, especially in health-care, quality management seems to hold a status similar to the popularity peek seen in manufacturing in the late 1980s. The ability to meet product specifications or to satisfy customer needs have other meanings in service production, where the products are co-produced by the customers. Product quality may also have a different interpretation in situations where branding is increasingly more important for sales and for customer satisfaction. The ongoing globalization and the rising competitive pressures continuously change how organisations are run. Growing environmental concerns by governments, consumers and other stakeholders add to the pressure to change. Constant change is an oxymoron describing the current organizational environment and perhaps also the QM discipline.

Within a world of change, the role of quality must relentlessly be redefined so that its current nimbus remains. New management concepts are frequently introduced, and while some are merely new makeups on yesterday’s concepts, some remakes are more extensive. Pyzdek (1999) stated, after summarizing some criticism against the field of QM, that professionals within this discipline constantly need to improve the knowledge of quality and the methodologies for attaining it to manage the changing concept of QM. Foley (2004) claimed that, due to the critics of QM, many consultants and quality promotion institutions are trying to expunge “quality” from their lexicon, and that QM now regularly appears under a different guise, often with a new set of gurus and new “catchy” slogans; but in substance it remains the same. The quality movement has a long and complex history, and its evolution from the industrial revolution to present day has been interpreted in many different ways and stages, from Quality Control to Total Quality Management and beyond. Boaden (1997) stated that “attempting to define TQM is like shooting at a moving target. As it is more widely practised, and other initiatives emerge, the emphasis on different aspects change.” Against this backdrop, we saw it fit to study how QM management scholars in Sweden view the discipline, and let them speculate what role, if any, quality management will play in the future. The purpose of this article is to investigate how QM is perceived today by scholars at three Swedish universities, but also how and into what QM is expected to develop into in twenty years.
We present a theoretical background to QM, followed by a brief discussion about the chosen method. Then we present the results from the conducted workshops and an analysis. Finally, we provide some general conclusions and a discussion.

**Theoretical Background**

There are many terms that indicate the same thing: Management concepts, management recipes, or management models. Regardless of the chosen term, the reader will probably know that QM is not the only one of these out there. Following Dean and Bowen (1994), we define a management concept as a multi-dimensional management approach consisting of principles, practices and techniques. At the most abstract level, a ‘principle’ in this context is an organizational norm that underpins the various activities related to the concept at hand and guides people’s attention towards certain aspects of the organization. At the other end of the scale, the least abstract and most readily observable of these three are the techniques. These are usually quite specific and well defined. The various techniques associated with a management concept are more or less related to one another. Depending on this relatedness, the techniques are aggregated to form ‘practices’.

According to Furusten (1999), management concepts are developed in three steps. First, a management practice is observed in one or several organizations. The observations are then analyzed to establish patterns and relationships between variables. Finally, the outcome of the analysis is transferred to a text of some sort; usually a book. In order to find relevance in contexts outside the one that has been observed, the text is decontextualized; what is context specific in terms of material representation and how the practice is described in the context of origin is detached from the conceptualized practice (Røvik, 2007; Lilrank, 1995). The finished ‘product’ (management concept) is less dependent on context and therefore more easily transferable and applicable for other contexts. However, since it has been stripped of contextual dependencies, there are several questions that are left open for interpretation, which will have implications for its application.

Sahlin & Wedlin (2008) discuss three modes of dissemination. Most closely linked to the supplier side of idea dissemination is the broadcasting mode. This mode has many similarities to Rogers’ theory of diffusion (Rogers, 1995), indicating that there is one, mainly unchanging, idea that spreads from a single source. Another mode of dissemination is mediation, which also is closely linked to the conception of ‘idea suppliers’, the meaning being that there are persons and organizations that promote certain ideas and help their dissemination. The third mode of dissemination is the chain mode, indicating that the idea spread from organization to organization, in a sequential manner. With this perspective, there is no particular supplier of ideas; rather each organization has an active role in disseminating the idea. These three modes of dissemination will have different effects on the idea that is communicated.

Just as all fashions and trends, the popularity of management concepts goes up and down. We can see ‘new’ concepts come and go, and these will eventually be replaced by ‘newer’ ones (Abrahamson, 1996; Barley and Kunda, 1992; Giroux and Landry, 1998). As with every other fashion, management concepts are usually contrasted to an ‘old’ paradigm (Røvik, 2002). This helps to define concepts as a ‘modern’ solution, which in turn contributes to further their dissemination (Røvik, 2000).
While the abstract descriptions in the popular management literature may be easily disseminated and attractive, they are not directly applicable without some adaptation; the *contextualization* of management concepts becomes a mirror image of the decontextualization process, in which the abstract description is translated into a specific practice. Given this chain of translations, it is unlikely that the initial practice and the final one will be identical, leading to large variation in how specific management concepts are interpreted.

From a practitioner point of view, one might disregard the diversity of descriptions in academic literature as being merely an ‘academic’ discussion that has no impact on practice. This may be true, to some extent, but the argument alone does not confine the tendency of diversity to academia. In fact, the same variability is present in industry. Based on a survey among Swedish production managers, Poksinska et al. (2010) demonstrate that the application of management concepts differ significantly between organizations as well.

Organisations have for many years focused on the quality of their products in order to be competitive. Different initiatives to improve the quality of products and services have evolved. The early focus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was on inspection, which included checking that the manufactured products met the specifications. During the past few decades the focus in organisations has shifted from inspection to quality control. Through quality control organisations are trying to identify, directly in the process, flaws that can be corrected before producing too many products that do not meet the specifications. In the evolution of quality, the focus on quality has moved even further upstream in the process. Quality assurance has become a recognised term for planning and preventing problems at the source before starting to manufacture products. The latest focus in the evolution of quality is considered to be on Quality Management (QM), which involves the application of quality management principles to all aspects of the organisation, including customers and suppliers, and their integration with the key business processes (Dale, 1999).

However, there are also other views of the evolution of quality than the single-path evolution presented by Dale (1999). Kroslid (1999) identifies a dual-path framework with two different schools of QM, “the deterministic school of thought” and “the continuous improvement school of thought”. The deterministic school of thought has developed from a deterministic view of reality, with a belief in the existence of one best way, while the continuous improvement school of thought is founded on a reality full of variation, with an awareness of the improvement potential in every aspect of work. Kroslid (1999) argues that China, Japan, South Korea, Sweden and the United States, in terms of their current national approach, predominantly position themselves within the continuous improvement school of thought, while Australia, Brazil, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Norway and Saudi Arabia belong more to the deterministic school of thought. In particular, Japan, Sweden and the United States are in terms of development on a “high” level within the continuous improvement school of thought, with a great focus on practices based on culture.

Sila & Ebrahimpour (2002) review, that the most frequently covered QM factors in the literature are (after analysing 347 survey articles published between 1989 and 2000):

- Customer focus and satisfaction
- Quality information and performance measurement
- Process management
Different definitions of QM have been presented over the years. Oakland (1993) states that QM is “an approach for improving the competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of a whole organisation”. Dale (1999) describes QM, in accordance with ISO 8402, as “a management approach of an organisation, centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long-term success through customer satisfaction, and benefits to all members of the organisation and to society”. Dahlgaard et al. (1998), on the other hand, define QM as “a corporate culture characterized by increased customer satisfaction through continuous improvement, in which all employees in the firm actively participate”. Shiba et al. (1993) argue that QM is “an evolving system of practices, tools, and training methods for managing companies to provide customer satisfaction in a rapidly changing world”. Foley (2004) condenses some of the criticism against quality management and claims:

- is not universally or even widely accepted
- has no generally accepted definition or agreed content
- does not have a theoretical foundation
- has not found a place in mainstream Western management literature
- has failed to deliver promised results

Method
The data collection of opinions from scholars working with quality management at the three universities was conducted using three independent workshops at three Swedish universities. The sole purpose of the workshops was to perform structured brainstorming sessions. Affinity diagrams were used to provide a structure for the activity and to document the results. The method used was tailored for this event based on generic methods for structured brainstorming and affinity analysis, see for instance Brassard et al (2002). In the Luleå workshop, the invitation to participate was sent to nine people within the Quality Technology & Management research group. Of these, five persons attended the actual workshop (two professors, two senior lecturers and one PhD student. The Linköping workshop was performed in a similar fashion as that in Luleå. All members of the division for Quality Technology and Management were invited to participate, and six persons attended. Among these were three PhD students, two senior lecturers and one professor. At Chalmers, all members of the division Quality Sciences were invited, and seven persons (three PhD students, two researchers, one assistant professor and one associate professor) attended. Below we describe the general steps of the method used. The brainstorming sessions were organized around the two questions:

1. What does Quality Management stand for today?
2. What will Quality Management stand for in 20 years?

The structure of the workshop and the brainstorming session

- Preparation: A few days prior to the workshop, the purpose and the two research questions to be discussed was sent to the participants. In the Luleå workshop, the invitation to participate was sent to nine people within the Quality Technology &
Management research group. Of these, five persons attended the actual workshop (two professors, two senior lecturers and one PhD student.

- **Start:** At the start of the workshop, the research questions were written on a whiteboard and the workshop methodology was presented to the participants. Everyone around the table then freely and shortly expressed what thoughts they had, related to the workshop, and this was done without anyone taking notes.

- **Silent individual work:** The next phase included silent work, where all wrote answers to the two research questions on white Post-It® notes. There were no special rules for the answers or the number of notes at this point. Answers from this phase could be expressed as, e.g., values, principles, models, tools, expressions of opinion and so on. After some time the participants patched the notes on the whiteboard below the current research question. This was done without guidance.

- **Grouping of notes:** First all participants silently assisted in grouping the notes. The silence was broken when there was a need to discuss the grouping of a note with several possible belongings. In such cases, the most appropriate grouping was decided after a short discussion.

- **Heads for groups:** When all notes had been grouped or considered as single outliers, the groups were given headings written on yellow notes. Some related yellow headings were grouped together in an additional iteration, and were given headings on pink notes.

- **Discussion and revision:** The group reviewed the outcome for each research question and some headings were revised and some notes were moved to fit under another heading. Some general conclusions were drawn based on the outcome and a short discussion.

- **Documentation:** The outcome was documented electronically immediately after the workshop.

Moreover, the websites of each research group were studied in order to understand how they are presenting themselves and the subject of Quality Management.

**Results**

The results from the three workshops are presented in the three tables below together with some brief comments for each brainstorming session.

**Chalmers University of Technology – “the searchers”**

The notes clusters from the workshop at Chalmers are given in Table 1. The department of quality sciences at Chalmers was started in 1999 with support from the Swedish bearing manufacturer SKF. The group focuses on developing knowledge and competence in quality management and technology and its supporting methods for use in the ongoing improvement process in the Swedish society. The department’s website statement is that “*quality management and technology means to continuously strive to fulfill or exceed the needs and expectations of external and internal customers in all processes in which everyone are committed to their continuous improvement.*”

However, in 20 years, the group portrays a wide set of parts that are there today, but in this scenario will grow in importance. Such features include innovation, sustainable development, sectorial QM, quality in life and these features will substitute concepts like ISO, Lean and Six Sigma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QM today</th>
<th>QM in 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System Thinking</td>
<td>System Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Focus</td>
<td>Customer Satisfaction/Customer Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement/Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>Variation Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Management</td>
<td>Change Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes</td>
<td>Process Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Quality in Product Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics/Facts</td>
<td>New Methodologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
<td>Quality in Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardization</td>
<td>Sectorial Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean</td>
<td>Quality in Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Sigma</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Notes clusters from the workshop at Chalmers University of Technology.

In the future, quality science is seen to be integrated and embedded. But the direction is not clear. The participants of the Chalmers workshop can be seen as “the searchers”, where QM continues more or less as it is seen today, but with an increased focus on integration, into a systemic perspective. As such QM moves into a concept where the focus is on a greater whole while keeping the quality toolbox intact. The participants proclaim that in the future “Quality management should include quality of life”. In 20 years quality is about “survival” and “change”, but it is also about “standardization” and “toolbox”. The theorists discuss the role of quality within a world of change and the department of quality sciences at Chalmers is no exception. A conclusion of the workshop is that the views of the direction forward for QM differ.

Luleå University of Technology – “the doubters”

The notes clusters from the workshop in Luleå are given in Table 2. The website describes the group’s activity as to “...develop and spread methodologies and methods for continuous improvement of processes and products to create a sustainable society.” The participants at the Luleå workshop report a core set of features constituting QM today similar to that of Chalmers although slightly different terms are used: Umbrella discipline (i.e. System Thinking), Customer focus, Improvement focus, Effectiveness and efficiency. The QM discipline is also viewed as somewhat introspective and normative. However, the department also airs pessimistic and doubtful future scenarios, where it is forecast that QM might be diffused or even non-existent. If not, a focus on sustainable development and CSR will have turned the subject more “green”, but fundamental questions such as “Do we still speak of Quality Management?” are raised. At Luleå we find “the doubters”, hesitating about the future of the QM discipline. The participants in Luleå join critics like Foley (2004) and highlight problems such as that QM has no coherent theory, no generally accepted definition or theoretical foundation, and has failed to deliver promised results.
Table 2. Notes clusters from the workshop at Luleå University of Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QM today</th>
<th>QM in 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umbrella discipline</td>
<td>Diffusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Focus</td>
<td>Diversification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement focus</td>
<td>Prolongation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness and efficiency</td>
<td>“Greening”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values, Methods, Tools</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undefined concept</td>
<td>Theory-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inrospective</td>
<td>Misc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linköping University – “the technocrats”
The notes clusters from the workshop at Linköping University are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Notes clusters from the workshop at Linköping University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QM today</th>
<th>QM in 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Quality</td>
<td>Seeing the whole, processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paper reality (management systems/ISO 9001)</td>
<td>Service quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive customer focus</td>
<td>The customer as co-creator, long term relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising/organisation</td>
<td>Integration/systems perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAN business (production) development</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Flexibility/Innovation/Renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>Employer focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td>Quality development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants at Linköping University also report a similar core set of features constituting QM of today. The participants discuss a perceived “gap between business and academia” and one note calls the subject “amoeba”. More structural approaches are advocated – a conclusion is that the Linköping group sees QM in more technocratic terms, but we also recognize the systems integration aspect, as also indicated at the Chalmers workshop. Linköping forecasts that in twenty years the subject QM still consists of a core based on traditional quality technology – it is “a structure integrated in practice” and might even consist of “more standards”.

Analysis
Boaden (1997) states that “attempting to define QM is like shooting at a moving target” and this study strengthens that metaphor. Hence, the results of this study should also be viewed as a “snapshot” of QM today and a prognosis of the future state. By using “Wordle” - a shareware for generating “word clouds” from text – we can visualize the most frequently used words used by the three universities to describe QM today (Figure 1) and in twenty years (Figure 2). The words “quality”, “management” and “customer” stand out in both word clouds. However, it can be observed that the word “improvement” is in fourth place to describe QM today in Figure 1, but it is substituted by “development” in the cloud describing QM in twenty years in Figure 2.
Moreover, as the questions in the workshops concerned quality management, we also did a “Wordle” excluding the word of “quality” and “management”. The results of these two “Wordle” are shown in Figure 3 and 4.

A conclusion from tables 1-3 and figures 1-4 is that although the three universities mention tools in QM such as statistical process control, the focus on both the notes clusters and in the word clouds is on what Dean and Bowen (1994) define as QM principles. We also see that the participants mention “other” management concepts and disciplines such as Lean and Sustainable development while discussing QM. The three universities forecast that a merger of these concepts and disciplines in the future.
Quality Management today
The results indicate that the differences, between the three universities taking part in this study, are small. Obvious words like “quality”, “management”, “customer”, “processes” and “improvement” along with widespread concepts such as Lean, Six Sigma and ISO 9000 are identified by all three. Thus, although there is no coherent taxonomy there seems to be a mutual understanding of what QM currently contains. All three universities seem to follow the continuous improvement school of thought (Kroslid, 1999). However, it can be observed that Chalmers highlight “change management” as a separate area of interest and Luleå applies a more critical approach to the subject QM as such, whereas improvement and the concepts Lean and Six Sigma where more frequently seen at the Linköping workshop. The differences are nonetheless small and may be related to views of individuals in these groups and the general result is the relative agreement of what QM constitutes, rather than the differences.

Quality Management in 20 years
There is a core of mutual understanding of what QM is composed of in twenty years, but the suggested direction of QM development diverges between the workshops. The commonality is
seen in a direction or integration of sustainable development that is increasingly more important. Integration is also a common theme, although both the Luleå and Chalmers workshops saw an alternative scenario, where diversifications of different sub-subjects within QM continue.

The differences seen from the workshops can be seen as alternative development patterns. At Chalmers, we find “the searchers” envisioning a change into a more systemic concept, integrating parts that today are seen and developed individually under the QM umbrella into a QM system. In Linköping “the technocrats” hold on to the core of quality technology. Up north in Luleå we find “the doubters” forecasting a possible scenario that the subject as such might be dead and forgotten in twenty years.

Despite the limitations of this study, it can be concluded that there are many similarities among the universities taking part in this study and no profound differences on what quality management is today. But the thoughts about the future diverge in three: the searchers, the technocrats and the doubters. But there is probably no revolution around the corner – “the core remains the same” as one post-it note from Linköping puts it. Luleå is the only participant questioning the subject as such. A move from the tool boxes towards a more holistic management approach focusing on sustainability, integration and change could perhaps be seen as the overall forecast from all universities.

Conclusions
We conclude that the way QM is perceived today at the three participating universities is similar. QM is today described as wide discipline consisting of a set of core of principles that in turn guide the content of the QM method toolbox. Examples of core principles on which all three universities clearly agree are: Customer focus and Continuous Improvement. The three universities also agree that the QM discipline is constantly, but slowly, changing and today QM is “driving while under the influence of” other management concepts and disciplines, such as: Lean production and Six Sigma. The wider stakeholder view within QM also leads to a shift towards research closely related to other disciplines, e.g. sustainable development and corporate social responsibility.

The view on the future of QM differs more among the three universities. Although all forecast a possible scenario of further integration with other disciplines like sustainable development, the forecasts of the development direction is more diffuse. We conclude that the three universities convey three possible development directions for QM in the future:

- The “searchers” at Chalmers University of Technology propose that QM can find its place within a discipline where QM will contribute to a “greater whole” while keeping the quality toolbox intact.
- The “technocrats” at Linköping University suggest that QM returns to its roots and consist of a core based on traditional quality technology toolbox with its methods and tools.
- The “doubters” at Luleå University of Technology forecast a risk that QM, as it is today, may seize to exist and instead the research may be conducted within other disciplines or under a different concept name than QM.
Discussion

A shift for QM towards a focus on sustainable development is evident at all three universities. This move is somewhat surprising since none of the departments’ websites mention anything in this regard today. In Luleå, this development started in year 2000 when Professor Rick Edgeman visited the department and held a PhD course with focus on sustainable development. A discussion started that led to a merger between the quality technology unit and the environmental management unit. Even though the concepts of “sustainable development” and “sustainability” were often mentioned at the workshops, it should be noted that we cannot be certain that the participants mean the same thing since these concepts by themselves are broad and have many definitions. There is often some confusion when these concepts are discussed in various forums. For example, sustainability has been a central concept at the quality management and organizational development (QMOD) conference the last two years. The sessions relating to sustainability has often consisted of a mix of presentations that either includes environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and sociopolitical sustainability in the concept or presentations that use the term sustainable for describing long term survival of an organization.

A possible shift towards the sustainable development area will probably not be without problems for the quality management departments. Since the quality area is mostly concentrated on issues and phenomena connected to organizations rather than overarching societal issues, we can assume that a shift will be towards organizations’ contributing to suitable development. Today, this area is commonly referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR) (ISO, 2010). The CSR field of research seems to already today interest scholars coming from various backgrounds, at least if it is assumed that authors mainly publish their work in journals within their main discipline (Ranängen and Zobel, 2011). The most dominating discipline is corporate environmental management represented foremost by core journals within this field such as for example Journal of Business ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, Corporate Governance and Journal of Cleaner Production. If scholars in quality technology want to successfully find their place in the CSR field, they have to carefully analyze how they best can contribute to the already existing research.

The future will tell if quality management scholars will turn their attention towards sustainability issues and what the impediments and contributions will be. One example of a problematic area that at the same might be worthy of scholarly interest is the role of process orientation and process management in organizations’ work with sustainable development. Previous studies have shown that major elements of this work, at least the environmental related elements, is conducted in the context of environmental management system (EMS) (Zobel, 2010), often in accordance with the international standard ISO 14001, which follows a similar path of development as the ISO 9000-series. In practice, it has been found that continuous environmental improvements in the EMS context often are based on identified environmental aspects. These aspects are mostly connected to organizational functions or aggregated for the whole organization. Objectives, targets and action plans are then established based upon the aspects, and hence they are established with an environmental aspect focus rather than a process focus, which has been identified as central to quality management by the departments in Linköping and at Chalmers.

Another challenging area for quality management in the future might be to address issues in innovation management (identified by Linköping and Chalmers as important in 20 years) in an
organizational context where continuous improvements is a central concept. Previous conceptual research has shown that organizational management based on continuous improvements can potentially have positive effects initially but that such a management system limits the organizational focus to the development of current production systems in very small steps rather than to explore larger innovations that are more discontinuous in nature (Könälä and Unruh, 2007). We can possibly see signs of this development in empirical research, in which it has been found that management systems based on continuous improvements lack real influence on the product development process (Kautto, 2006; Schylander and Martinuzzi, 2007).

References


