No going back: 
a review of the literature on sustaining strategic change

David Buchanan  
Diane Ketley  
Rose Gollop  
Jane Louise Jones  
Sharon Saint Lamont  
Annette Sharpe  
Elaine Whitby

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Summary of conclusions

- Sustainability can be defined in a variety of different ways in relation to large- or small-scale change. The definition that matters is the one that applies to a specific organizational setting at a given point in time.

- Sustainability is a process that unfolds with time in a manner unique to the context of the organization. It is not a static condition. It is therefore necessary to understand and to manage the process of sustainability in context.

- Sustainability may be vital in some organizational settings. However, maintaining an improvement programme can cause initiative fatigue, and shifts in context can render work methods and performance goals obsolete. Decay may be a valuable option.

- The process of sustaining strategic or large-scale change is influenced by a range of issues, operating at different levels of analysis, and across different timeframes:

  - **substance**: nature and scale of change, fit with the organization
  - **individual**: commitment, competencies, expectations
  - **emotional**: emotions affecting response to change
  - **managerial**: style, approach, preferences, behaviours
  - **leadership**: setting vision, values, purpose, goals, challenges
  - **organizational**: policies, mechanisms, procedures, systems, structures
  - **cultural**: shared beliefs, perceptions, norms, values, priorities
  - **political**: stakeholder and coalition power and influence
  - **processual**: implementation, project management structures
  - **contextual**: external conditions, stability, threats
  - **temporal**: timing, pacing, flow of events

- Sustainability is a time-sensitive and potentially fragile process, which depends on the alignment of a range of interdependent issues.

- The relative significance of each of these issues and their interactive effects cannot be determined *a priori*, and will depend on characteristics of the local setting.

- The sustainability problem appears to display soft complexity rather than hard complexity. This means that it has to be researched and managed from a process-based perspective, not a variance-based view.
What’s the problem?

Why do some changes to internal organization structures, working practices, systems, procedures, and culture appear to be irreversible, while others decay more or less rapidly? Relatively little is known about ‘the sustainability problem’. This report reviews relevant literature, identifying eleven sets of issues influencing sustainability: change substance, individual, emotional, managerial, leadership, organizational, cultural, political, processual, contextual, and temporal. Further empirical research is required to confirm the significance of these issues in different organizational contexts and sectors.

For many organizations, it is a strategic imperative to anchor, to embed, to have ‘stickability’, to sustain major changes and their contribution to organizational effectiveness, such that they become irreversible. However, sustainability has become problematic as organizations encounter ‘initiative decay’, losing performance gains, perhaps because resources are diverted to other areas, because or changes in working practices and procedures are abandoned as their novelty fades. Surveys suggest that initiative decay is widespread (Buchanan, Claydon and Doyle, 1999; Doyle, Claydon and Buchanan, 2000). The Modernisation Agency (2002, p.9) criticizes the ‘improvement evaporation effect’, where new processes and increased performance are not maintained. Green and Plsek (2002) note that American hospitals cannot sustain innovations in step with their changing environment.

Sustainability involves, broadly, the maintenance of new working practices, structures, systems, cultures, and performance improvements, for an appropriate period. This issue has attracted limited research attention, for at least three reasons. First, researching change is more interesting than studying stability, and for most managers, the next change initiative promises more excitement and career value than does continuing with established routines. Second, while change initiatives may be studied over relatively brief periods, sustainability requires both longitudinal study and resources to which most researchers do not have access. Third, and perhaps most significant, in a turbulent and uncertain environment, organization
structures, cultures, and practices that fail to adapt are regarded as legitimate targets for change interventions. Sustainability has traditionally been regarded, therefore, not as a condition to be achieved, but as a problem to be solved.

This report considers the small but growing literature concerned with the sustainability of organizational change. Most commentary is based on commercial experience, and deals with large-scale or strategic organizational changes. However, recognition of the sustainability problem in healthcare is shifting this balance (Meredith, Ham and Kipping, 1999; Gollop, 2002; Sharpe, 2002; Whitby, 2002; Appleby et al., 2003; Jones, 2003; Matrix MHA, 2003).

The purpose of this report is to develop understanding of the generic issues influencing sustainability, through a synthesis of perspectives. A subsequent report will examine the relevance of the framework outlined here to healthcare. This approach is also designed to provide a platform for the empirical research work of the Research Into Practice team concerning the spread and sustainability of large-scale organizational change and modernization in the National Health Service.
Defining sustainability

A review of the literature concerning an issue, phenomenon, or concept, must rely on a definition of the issue, as a basis for selecting relevant sources. One problem for this review is that the concept of sustainability with regard to organizational change can be defined in various ways. Sustainability can be considered on a continuum (figure 1), concerning the stability of work methods, the consistent achievement of performance targets independent of underpinning methods, or the introduction of further developments in organizational configurations and performance, beyond initial expectations. Maintaining work methods suggests a static view. A focus on ongoing development suggests a more dynamic or evolutionary perspective. There is no ‘one correct’ generic definition of this term which will acquire different meanings in different organizational contexts, at different times.

Figure 1: Sustainability - a continuum of practice

Determining whether or not organizational changes have been sustained in a given context will depend on the specific nature of the pattern of change under consideration. If this involves performing work operations in a particular manner or new sequence, or if it involves meeting clear performance targets, then sustainability may be assessed as a matter either of observation, or of objective, quantifiable calculation. However, if changes involve attitude as well as behavioural changes, cultural as well as structural and procedural changes, continuous improvement beyond a minimum or benchmark level of performance or target, then an assessment of sustainability may also require informed but subjective judgement. How much attitude change is required? How will desired changes in organization culture be evaluated? How much improvement should be demonstrated and over what timescale? How many conditions must be met for sustainability to have been achieved? Judgements can only be
reached in response to these questions when applied to specific organizational contexts. The answers will differ over time, as confidence grows in the observations that the changes and their outcomes have indeed become ‘the norm’, as relevant adaptations and transformations take place, and as further improvements are demonstrated. In other words, the sustainability of organizational change is not a condition, but a process.

It seems self evident that change which is sustained is more desirable than that which is short lived. However, an evolving social, economic, technological and political context can render work methods and targets obsolete. This observation supports an evolutionary concept of sustainability based on continuous developments. However, that is what many organizations sought to achieve during the 1990s, generating ‘initiative fatigue’ (Buchanan, Claydon and Doyle, 1999; Morgan, 2001). Continuous change may only be effective where the timing and pace are carefully phased (Abrahamson, 2000; Myerson, 2001). Sustainability can thus be damaging, and it may be advantageous for some initiatives to decay. It is unrealistic to regard the concept of sustainability as desirable in all contexts and circumstances.

A discussion of sustainability should perhaps consider the type of change involved. Miller (1982) distinguishes evolutionary, revolutionary and quantum changes. Dunphy and Stace (1990) distinguish fine tuning, incremental adjustments, modular transformations, and corporate transformations. Huczynski and Buchanan (2001) distinguish between shallow, deep, and ‘paradigm’ change. Pettigrew (1985, p.471) argues that incremental changes may succeed, whereas costly, complex, long-term, large-scale, and risky attempts to reorganize may consolidate effective opposition. In contrast, Dawson (1994, p.29) argues that the resourcing of, and commitment to, a particular change is more dependent, not on scale and complexity, but on perceived centrality to organizational performance and survival.

Strategic change may thus be defined as change that is ‘quantum’, transformational at the corporate level, paradigmatic, large-scale, and central to an organization’s future. The focus of this report lies primarily with strategic change, reflecting the aims and arguments of the
sources reviewed. However, empirical research is required to determine the extent to which the issues affecting the sustainability of evolutionary, fine tuning, shallow, incremental, peripheral changes are similar to, or different from, those influencing strategic change.

Plant (1995, p.23) approaches the sustainability problem through a brief discussion of ‘stickability’. Demonstrating the significance of individual perceptions, he argues that stickability depends on the motives of adopters. Stickability may be high if the motive is commitment, rather than compliance. Plant also observes that, where there are powerful ‘winners’ from change, stickability may be high, but not where there are powerful ‘losers’. It is generally accepted in the literature of planned change that motives and perceptions can be coloured by the change implementation processes which management deploy (Leigh and Walters, 1998; Carnall, 2003), particularly those affecting communication with, and the involvement of, those directly affected. Sustainability, however locally defined, may thus be susceptible to influence not only from the nature and objectives of the change or changes in hand, but also from a range of related change implementation processes and practices.

This exploration of the concept and implications of sustainability suggests four observations:

1. There is no ‘correct’ definition of sustainability which can focus on combinations of work methods, goals, and further development. The process of sustaining organizational change must be defined and assessed in relation to each unique organizational context, taking into consideration the nature, scale and timescale of the changes in hand.

2. Determining whether change has been sustained or not is likely to involve a combination of quantifiable metrics and subjective judgement, depending on the context.

3. Sustained change can be beneficial or damaging, depending on context.

4. Whether the issues influencing strategic change are different from those affecting incremental changes is an empirical question, requiring further study.
Review methods

The main information source for this review was a database search to March 2003 including:

- Business Source Premier (EBSCO host)
- Proquest
- BIDS Ingenta
- Social Sciences Citation Index
- Emerald

Five search terms were used: sustainability, sustaining change, sustaining organizational change, sustainability of change, sustainability of organizational change. The criterion for inclusion in this review was a focus on the sustainability of strategic, large-scale, systemic organizational changes, interventions, programmes, or transformations.

The search identified and omitted references concerned with sustaining competitive advantage (e.g., Collins and Porras, 1995; focusing on corporate strategy), and sustainable development (e.g., Dunphy, Benn and Griffiths, 2002; Wilhelmson and Döös, 2002; focusing on economic development and environmental issues). It was considered unlikely that frameworks derived from those contexts would directly inform the processes of sustaining organizational changes. Journalistic commentary has also been omitted. A secondary source was the personal literature knowledge of the authors, complemented by direct approaches to a number of leading researchers in the field of organizational change. Those approaches suggested that this review did not appear to have omitted any obviously relevant and significant sources. This search identified only the seven perspectives examined here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The dance of change</th>
<th>Kurt Lewin, Peter Senge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchoring change</td>
<td>John Kotter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalizing change</td>
<td>Ronald Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining best practice</td>
<td>Malcolm Rimmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining TQM</td>
<td>Barrie Dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentum busters</td>
<td>Robert Reisner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of sustainability in context</td>
<td>Andrew Pettigrew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These studies are comparable with each other only insofar as they share a concern with the sustainability of strategic organizational changes. These studies are only cumulative in the sense that they each offer a partial perspective on issues influencing sustainability. In combining these contributions, it must be acknowledged that they have each approached the concept and the study of sustainability from different perspectives, considering different organizational settings, for different purposes, using different theoretical and methodological approaches. However, as the review demonstrates, there is consistent support for a theoretical focus on a process view of sustainability, and there appears also to be consistency across these different accounts with regard to the kinds of issues that influence that process.

The resultant model of sustainability is speculative. This exposes properties of the sustainability problem, serving as a reference point for further empirical study, and as a guide to data analysis. This approach also facilitates the provisional design of a Sustainability Assessment tool, for managing the forces influencing sustainability (see Appendix). Based on a limited evidence base, further work will be required to develop this tool for application to specific contexts, such as service improvements in healthcare. However, it is anticipated that the main dimensions of this assessment are unlikely to undergo dramatic change.
Khan et al. (2001, p.4) define a systematic review of the literature on a topic as, ‘a review of the evidence on a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant primary research, and to extract and analyse data from the studies that are included in the review’. No review of the literature on the sustainability of strategic organizational change can claim, therefore, to be systematic, based on this definition, for at least three reasons.

First, sustainability is not ‘a clearly formulated question’. As already discussed, the concept is multidimensional and contingent, covers a continuum of organizational practice, and refers to varying degrees of stability and continuous change. The definition of the term, and the timeframe under consideration, vary from setting to setting. Evidence shows that apparently well-defined incremental changes can differ in radical ways even when applied to other parts of the same organization (Szulanski and Winter, 2002). The language in which sustainability is articulated can influence perceptions, attitudes, processes, and actions designed to achieve the definition of sustainability in use in a given context. A management directive that ‘we must keep doing this’ may have implications quite different from an imperative which says, ‘we must keep achieving that’. What ‘counts’ as sustainability is thus likely to vary from setting to setting, as well as to attract a variety of interpretations in any one context.

Second, and despite the criterion, ‘focus on strategic change’, the identification and selection of relevant sources is partly judgemental. There is no established research tradition in this area. There are no accepted perspectives and methods. Different commentators have used different research approaches, to generate different kinds of evidence. The commentaries in this review, adopting similar but often implicit notions of sustainability do, however, share concern with the maintenance of strategic changes to working practices, structures, systems, procedures, and organization culture. In contrast, many sources with ‘sustaining change’ in their title explore other aspects of change, and have been omitted, either as irrelevant to the topic, or as contributing in only a marginal respect.
Third, the data available from primary research draw from different sectors and settings, consider different levels of analysis, cover different timescales, and often involve single qualitative case studies or small samples which are often (and perhaps incorrectly) too readily discounted (Iles and Sutherland, 2001). A further complication is that reported studies are typically based on changes that differ in nature or substance. Even where interventions carry the same label (such as total quality management), it is often unclear just what has changed in each setting, and it is thus difficult to infer causality with confidence (Øvretveit and Gustafson, 2002). The accounts considered in this review, therefore, are each idiosyncratic and partial, offering a mix of evidence types and styles of presentation.

Certain challenges are involved in reviewing literature relating to a concept for which there is no agreed definition, and where different researchers have adopted a range of approaches to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of evidence. Different commentators emphasize different facets of the problem, depending on their perspective and methods, and the organizational contexts they have studied. In order to structure these diverse accounts, a coding scheme has been used to categorize the issues identified. This review identifies seven relevant perspectives and concludes that from these there are eleven sets of issues influencing the process of sustaining organizational change. These are summarized in table 1.

To illustrate how this approach has been used, table 2 summarizes and codes the issues that have been identified in this introductory discussion. The sustainability problem has traditionally been defined as a ‘struggle’ between the forces of change and development, on the one hand, and the forces of resistance and decay, on the other (Lewin, 1951; Senge et al., 1999). Table 2 casts the issues in terms of this struggle, suggesting the conditions that appear to support and to jeopardize sustainability respectively. Any framework, model, or theory that explains why organizational change is sustained, therefore, should also be capable of explaining why some changes decay, or continue with further development.
### Table 1: Issues influencing sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>substantial</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>scale of change, fit with organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>commitment, competencies, expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional*</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>emotions affecting response to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managerial</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>style, approach, preferences, behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>setting vision, values, purpose, goals, challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizational</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>policies, mechanisms, procedures, systems, structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural</td>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>shared beliefs, perceptions, norms, values, priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political</td>
<td>Po</td>
<td>stakeholder and coalition power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processual</td>
<td>Pr</td>
<td>implementation, project management structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contextual</td>
<td>Cx</td>
<td>external conditions, stability, threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporal</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>timing, pacing, flow of events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* due to the small number of factors they have been included in ‘individual’ for the sustainability assessment and model

Dawson (1994) argues that change that is perceived central to organizational survival is more readily sustained than change that is perceived to be peripheral. This relates to the nature or substance of the change or changes, and is coded ‘S’. Consideration of the benefits of sustainability suggested that external developments could render work methods and performance targets obsolete. Sustainability is thus more likely to be supported where the external context is relatively stable, whereas a more turbulent external context is likely to jeopardize sustainability. This issue concerns contextual issues, and is coded ‘Cx’.

Abrahamson (2000) and Myerson (2001) imply that sustainability is jeopardized by the careless pacing and sequencing of change, and this temporal issue is coded ‘T’. Plant (1995) argues that sustainability is supported where those directly influenced are committed, but jeopardized by mere compliance, an individual factor coded ‘I’. Plant also observes that change may be under threat if powerful stakeholders consider themselves to be ‘losers’, an issue concerning political forces, coded ‘Po’. Several commentators (e.g., Leigh and Walters,
1998; Carnall, 2003) argue that ongoing commitment to change is influenced by the change implementation process, and in particular by the approach to communication with and involvement of those affected, a factor coded ‘Pr’.

Table 2: The struggle for sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supporting sustainability</th>
<th>jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>perceived central to organization effectiveness and survival [S]</td>
<td>perceived marginal to organizational effectiveness and survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable external context, maintaining the relevance of new practices [Cx]</td>
<td>turbulent external context, rendering new practices quickly obsolete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timing of changes carefully phased [T]</td>
<td>no attention to pace and sequence of changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high commitment from those affected [I]</td>
<td>mere compliance from those affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation process involves high levels of communication and involvement [Pr]</td>
<td>implementation process involves little communication and involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powerful stakeholders see themselves as ‘winners’ from the changes [Po]</td>
<td>powerful stakeholders see themselves as ‘losers’ from the changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 suggests that sustainability may be affected by factors at different levels of analysis: individual (commitment), processual (implementation), contextual (external events), temporal (phasing) and political (stakeholder power), in addition to the substance of change itself. This coding process, applied to each of the perspectives reviewed here in turn, generated the range of issues that are listed in table 1.
The Seven Perspectives

1. The dance of change

While sustainability has become a contemporary concern, the concept dates at least from the notion of ‘refreezing’ introduced over half a century ago by Kurt Lewin (1951, pp.228-9):

A change toward a higher level of group performance is frequently short lived; after a ‘shot in the arm’, group life soon returns to the previous level. This indicates that it does not suffice to define the objective of a planned change in group performance as the reaching of a different level. Permanency of the new level, or permanency for a desired period, should be included in the objective. A successful change therefore includes three aspects: unfreezing (if necessary) the present level L₁, moving to the new level L₂, and freezing group life on the new level. Since any level is determined by a force field, permanency implies that the new force field is made relatively secure against change.

For Lewin, the primary refreezing mechanism is ‘group decision’. The examples with which Lewin illustrates the superiority of group decision include changing the habits of housewives concerning the use of fresh instead of evaporated milk, changing baby feeding practices to use more orange juice and cod liver oil, and changing the styles of ‘recreational leaders’ from autocratic to democratic. Other methods contributing to refreezing concern the commitment of individuals to decisions in which they have taken part, and the desire to follow group norms. Group norms thus serve ‘to stabilize the individual conduct on the new group level’.

Lewin (1951, p.233) emphasizes, however, that group decision alone will not guarantee the permanence of change, and that, ‘in many cases other factors are probably more important’.

The durability of Lewin’s thinking is revealed in the work of Senge et al. (1999, p.10) who argue that, ‘Sustaining any profound change process requires a fundamental shift in thinking. We need to understand the nature of growth processes and how to catalyse them. But we also need to understand the forces and challenges that impede progress, and to develop workable strategies for dealing with these challenges. We need to appreciate “the dance of change”, the inevitable interplay between growth processes and limiting processes’. This is a reworking of Lewin’s (1951, p.204) concept of the ‘force field’, in which the ‘resultant forces’, driving and resisting, determine whether and to what extent change takes place.
As Lewin recommended, Senge and colleagues argue that it is necessary to ‘focus on understanding the limiting processes’ (1999, p.8). They identify four:

1. reaching the ‘difficult’, ‘tough’ or ‘real’ problems, having first addressed the ‘easy’ things, summed up in the phrase: ‘We’ve picked all the low hanging fruit’;
2. reaching the limit of management commitment, when change affects them;
3. reaching the risky ‘undiscussable’ issues which might lead to conflict;
4. lack of systemic thinking, tackling symptoms instead of underlying problems.

This commentary relies on a combination of personal (management consulting) experience and reference to published work rather than on fresh empirical research. Senge et al. (1999) and Senge and Kaeufer (2000) identify the challenges of sustaining change, and suggest coping strategies. The three main challenges concern fear and anxiety (natural responses which can be used as learning opportunities), a concern with performance measurement (which means different things to different stakeholders), and the dangers of innovations becoming isolated from the rest of the organization. Sustainability is regarded as a stage in the longer-term process which begins with implementation and diffusion, then follows with continuous improvement. Senge and colleagues thus regard the implementation, spread, sustainability and development of change ideas as an extended and interlinked process which cannot be understood in terms of discrete stages. Table 3 summarizes the ‘dance of change’ according to these commentators.
**Table 3: The dance of change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting sustainability</th>
<th>Jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>commitment to group decisions and norms [I]</td>
<td>individual decisions about change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tackling the ‘difficult’ or ‘real’ problems [M]</td>
<td>giving up once ‘easy’ changes are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managers accept change to their behaviour [M]</td>
<td>managers reject change to their behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willing to confront high risk ‘undiscussable’ issues even though they cause conflict [M]</td>
<td>unwilling to confront the ‘undiscussable’ because this may cause conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systemic thinking, tackling causes and underlying problems [M]</td>
<td>lack of systemic thinking, tackling the symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progress assessment seen as a priority, considering needs of different stakeholders [Cu]</td>
<td>belief that change is not being effective because there are no measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change has ‘mainstream’ status and is engaged in the organization [Cu]</td>
<td>change has ‘cult’ status and is isolated from the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepting that fear is a natural response, a learning opportunity [E]</td>
<td>not addressing the fear induced by change, jeopardizing further development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regarding sustainability as one stage in an extended process of implementation, spread and further development [Pr]</td>
<td>regarding sustainability as a discrete stage amenable to separate analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Anchoring change

Drawing evidence from a series of organizational case narratives, Kotter (1995), identifies eight lessons why corporate transformations fail, suggesting a number of reasons why changes may not be sustained. Step 7 in his model is concerned with ‘consolidating improvements and producing still more change’. Step 8 involves ‘institutionalizing new approaches’ (p.61). Error 7, on which step 7 is based, is ‘declaring victory too soon’ (p.66). This happens, Kotter argues, when management celebrate ‘the first clear performance improvement’, an action which kills momentum and leads to regression. Changes need to become part of the corporate culture, which he comments is, ‘a process that can take five to ten years, new approaches are fragile and subject to regression’ (p.66). Momentum is also lost when, ‘the urgency level is not intense enough, the guiding coalition is not powerful enough, and the vision is not clear enough’ (p.66).

Error 8 concerns the failure to ‘anchor’ change in the corporate culture: ‘Until new behaviours are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed’ (p.67). Institutionalizing change has two dimensions. The first concerns a clear demonstration of the links between changes in approaches, behaviours and attitudes, and improvements in performance. Kotter argues that people rarely make these links, accurately, for themselves. The second dimension concerns management succession, ensuring that, ‘the next generation of management really does personify the new approach’ (p.67). Successors need to continue to champion the changes of their predecessors, or the change effort degrades. Table 4 summarizes Kotter’s thinking on how to sustain or anchor major organizational transformations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supporting sustainability</th>
<th>jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>allowing time for change to become part of the corporate culture [T]</td>
<td>killing momentum with premature declaration of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of urgency [Cu]</td>
<td>lack of urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powerful guiding coalition [Po]</td>
<td>weak guiding coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear vision [L]</td>
<td>unclear vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new behaviours rooted in social norms and shared values [Cu]</td>
<td>new behaviours not ‘anchored’ as part of the corporate culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly understood link between changed behaviours and performance [Cu]</td>
<td>poorly understood links between changed behaviours and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new managers who continue to champion the changes introduced by predecessors [M]</td>
<td>new managers who want to champion other change initiatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Anchoring change
3. Institutionalizing change

Jacobs (2002) offers a theoretical model for ‘institutionalizing’ change, based on a framework developed by Cummings and Worley (1997), but without empirical support. Observing that most change efforts do not persist, and that change should ideally last until goals have been achieved, Jacobs (2002, p.178) defines institutionalization as change that has ‘relative endurance’ and ‘staying power over a length of time’, or that ‘has become part of the ongoing, everyday activities of the organization’. Among the sources reviewed, only Jacobs offers a definition of the central concept, here described as institutionalization. Other commentators appear to assume that the meaning of the concept is unproblematic. However, this attempt to define the term reinforces the view expressed earlier that this is not a ‘clearly formulated question’, as terms such as ‘endurance’, ‘staying power’, and ‘length of time’ are open to different interpretations.

Institutionalization in this perspective is one element in a complex causal chain. The framework first identifies two sets of factors, concerning characteristics of the organization and of the intervention. The former include ‘congruence’ of change with the organization, stability of the social context, and trade union agreement. Intervention characteristics include goal specificity, control mechanisms, the level of the change target, internal support, and change champions. These two sets of factors influence institutionalization processes, which include training to establish competence and commitment, meeting reward expectations, the further spread of new ideas, and monitoring and control processes. These institutionalization processes are interdependent. Training is a prerequisite for competence. Competence and rewards are prerequisites for commitment. Ability to meet role expectations reduces uncertainty and increases acceptance of change. Rewards are a prerequisite for diffusion.

To the extent that institutionalization is effective, the desired outcomes are more likely to be achieved. The framework suggests that failure to sustain arises from inadequate attention to any combination of the organization characteristics, intervention characteristics, or
institutionalization processes. Thus, to ensure long-term success, institutionalization processes require as much attention as the other parts of the framework, if not more so. Table 5 summarizes the factors identified here.

### Table 5: Institutionalizing change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supporting sustainability</th>
<th>jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consistency of purpose [L]</td>
<td>no vision or unstable vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear and challenging goals [L]</td>
<td>unstable, unchallenging goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fit with organization [S]</td>
<td>inconsistent with organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social stability, union agreement [Cx]</td>
<td>social instability, union hostility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanisms to monitor and control [Pr]</td>
<td>absence of monitoring and control systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change champions and internal support [Pr]</td>
<td>no champions, no support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competence to meet expectations [I]</td>
<td>lack of appropriate skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment to the change [I]</td>
<td>lack of commitment to the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reward expectations met [I]</td>
<td>reward expectations not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diffusion beyond initial setting [Pr]</td>
<td>no further diffusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Sustaining best practice

Rimmer et al. (1996) studied 42 Australian firms to establish through interviews with managers why some organizations adopt and sustain ‘best practice’, while others do not. ‘Best practice’ concerned the integration of strategy, flatter team-based structures, new technology, process improvement, measurement and control, people management, external linkages, change leadership, and empowerment (p.191). They conclude that the conditions which favour the adoption of ‘best practice’ include ‘the cultural and political climate of the enterprise’ (p.34). They also identify three aspects of ‘organizational readiness’: fit with competitive strategy, managerial values and internal power distribution, and the values and relative power of key stakeholders.

Rimmer and colleagues observe that, in a search for catalysts of change, ‘the one most commonly singled out was the support of the Chief Executive Officer’ (p.43). However, change is also dependent on, ‘a more complex and pluralistic political process involving different stakeholders in the decision to seek best practice’ (p.43). They conclude, therefore, that ‘there is scope for many permutations among the political inputs and personal values which interact to stimulate the adoption of best practice. A good balance, however, is not always easy to find’ (p.43). In one case, the CEO provided vision and support, middle managers operationalized plans, external consultants helped where internal expertise was lacking, and union leaders ‘opened the doors to workforce involvement and the development of trust’ (p.43). Rimmer and colleagues also note the importance of business networks and employer associations in ‘augmenting these political groupings’ (p.44).

They argue that, ‘Sustainability is influenced by social conventions which in turn reflect the extent to which best practice has been diffused as a normal business modus operandi’ (p.224). They also observe that, ‘Given the importance of its cultural ingredients, we have to rate the chances of success for any particular experiment largely in terms of whether it is swimming with or against the tide of popular opinion within corporate elites and society more generally’
This suggests that sustainability is affected by wider social norms, beyond the direct control of the individual organization. Shortell et al. (1998) found that late adopters of continuous quality improvement in healthcare were concerned with their external image and credibility, because it was ‘the right thing to do’. From a study of the ‘strategic adaptations’ of two American banks, Fox-Wolfgamm and Boal (1998) conclude that the identity and image of an organization are stronger forces in sustaining change than its success.

This model identifies four environmental factors influencing sustainability:

**Capital markets:** long term investments in human resources tend to be undervalued, relative to initiatives with visible impact on costs and profitability. Management is unlikely to sustain any investment not affecting share prices, and ‘best practice’ initiatives become ‘cash-starved, poorly integrated, and disrupted by insensitive management succession’ (p.222).

**Corporate governance:** dominant stakeholders can exclude professional management and employees from decision making, and take organization culture in other directions.

**Government policy:** labour relations and legislation can either encourage or discourage management-employee partnerships for mutual gain.

**Institutional infrastructure:** where the provision for public goods such as training is weak, ‘free-riding’ by competitors is encouraged, and such investment is discouraged.

The balance of costs and benefits is also significant. If costs outweigh benefits, then change is likely to be discontinued. As Rimmer et al. (1996) observe, ‘best practice’ is difficult to value, but the costs of implementation arise in a number of areas: consultants, benchmarking travel, new equipment, downtime during installation, training, customer and competitor surveys, redundancies, management time. There are ‘twin peaks’ in the typical revenue curve. The first peak comes during the first two years, associated with ‘two transient phenomena’, concerning cost reductions from obvious economies, and the ‘novelty effect’, as those involved become interested and excited. However, after ‘the easy gains of the first
peak, the rate of performance improvement can slow down. ‘Recovery to the second peak begins only when several core elements of best practice are implemented effectively’ (p.218).

Temporal factors thus play a role. Rimmer et al. (1996, p.219) conclude that, ‘The critical problem for sustainability is winning the time, especially during periods when it is perceived that costs exceed benefits - a period of uncertain duration, when best practice may be discontinued as not cost-effective’. Table 6 summarizes this perspective.

**Table 6: Sustaining best practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supporting sustainability</th>
<th>jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consistent with competitive strategy [S]</td>
<td>inconsistent with competitive strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receptive cultural and political organizational climate, change consistent with managerial values [Cu]</td>
<td>unreceptive cultural and political organizational climate, change inconsistent with managerial values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support of powerful stakeholders [Po]</td>
<td>resistance from powerful stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presence of powerful coalitions, supported by external networks [Po]</td>
<td>absence of powerful coalitions, and supportive external networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent with social norms, with the tide of popular opinion, the right thing to do [Cx]</td>
<td>inconsistent with social norms, against the tide of popular opinion, the wrong thing to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on long term goals; investments in change assessed on range of benefits [M]</td>
<td>focus on short term goals; investment with no immediate payback discouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominant stakeholders involve management and employees in decision making [Po]</td>
<td>dominant stakeholders exclude management and employees from decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment legislation encourages management-employee partnerships [Cx]</td>
<td>employment legislation discourages management-employee partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good public provision for training [Cx]</td>
<td>poor public provision for training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perception that benefits outweigh costs [Cu]</td>
<td>perception that costs outweigh benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘winning the time’ to demonstrate benefits through the period when gains from ‘easy’ changes start to slow down [T]</td>
<td>losing the argument that change is too slow when gains from ‘easy’ changes are complete, and development slows down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Sustaining TQM

Dale and colleagues studied factors affecting the sustainability of Total Quality Management (TQM) initiatives in manufacturing (Dale, Boaden, Wilcox and McQuater, 1997a and b; Kemp, Pryor and Dale, 1997; Dale, Boaden, Wilcox and McQuater, 1999). Sustainability is defined as ‘maintaining a process of quality improvement’ (Dale et al., 1997a, p.395). As with ‘best practice’ in the Rimmer et al. (1996) model, TQM comprises several elements; commitment and leadership of the chief executive, planning and organization, quality improvement techniques, education and training, employee involvement, teamwork, performance measurement and feedback, and culture change (Dale et al. (1999, p.370). This perspective is based on case studies of twelve manufacturing sites belonging to six organizations; the research methodology used in this study is unclear as the focus is on the development of an audit tool. The resultant audit tool, tested at seven sites, identifies five categories of factors which can jeopardize the sustainability of TQM.

Category 1: Internal and external environment

External factors can be destabilizing unless management can ‘plan around’ them, and include ability to respond to the behaviour of competitors, and ability to recruit, develop and retain skilled employees. Three internal factors are significant, including meeting customer requirements, willingness to invest in new equipment, education and training, and addressing ‘the fear factor’, or uncertainty about the future. Where fear is present, a protectionist attitude prevails, and decisions become reactive and short term.

Category 2: Management style

The first factor in this category is industrial relations; managers and staff must share the same objectives. The transition to ‘shared goals’ can be problematic, particularly where there is strong unionization, and adversarial ‘us and them’ collective bargaining. The second factor here is management-worker relationships. TQM should lead to high trust, high discretion relationships through empowerment and teamwork, and participation in decision making. A
traditional autocratic management style tends to reinforce a low trust-low discretion climate which is damaging to the project of sustaining TQM.

**Category 3: Policies**

These factors concern the extent to which the organization’s policies conflict with, or overlap with TQM goals. Human resource policies can encourage individualistic practices, undermining a teamwork ethos, for example through the rewards system. The complexity and transparency of salaries can contribute to perceived discrimination in relation to effort and reward, stifling initiative and commitment. A lack of consistency in applying appraisal systems can have a similar effect, as can discrimination between staff levels on issues such as sickness and leave of absence. Financial policies that encourage short term decision making inhibit the pursuit of longer term goals. Maintenance policies focused on cost reduction, rather than planned maintenance, eventually affect equipment performance. Manufacturing policies which focus on output, rather than on quality and customer satisfaction, can also damage TQM sustainability, having a detrimental effect on training, which comes to be seen as a waste of time, as are improvement team meetings in similar circumstances.

**Category 4: Organization structure**

There are five factors in this category. First, the role of the function responsible for change should be clear. Second, the barriers placed between departments, functions and shifts can be obstacles to teamwork and cross-functional co-operation. These barriers are often a legacy of established hierarchies, which lead to empire building, and a lack of understanding of other sections. Third, communications are significant, particularly methods by which achievements are recognized. Fourth, a high level of dependence on key people in specialized functions can put changes at risk if they leave, so degrees of job flexibility and cover are important. In addition, numerical and task flexibility are important in responding to changing demand and circumstances. Without that flexibility, a system under strain may abandon recent initiatives. Fifth, TQM involves reorganization using a team leader type supervisory structure, recognizing the limitations of a traditional autocratic supervisory role.
Category 5: Process of change

This category includes seven dimensions. First is adequacy of the improvement infrastructure in terms of steering committee, facilitators, problem-solving procedures, and confidence in management support. Second, training in relation to individual and organizational needs. Third, effective teams, teamwork, and support mechanisms. Fourth, procedures ‘to counteract problems and abnormalities’; ability of staff to understand procedures; willingness of management to respond to suggestions for improvement. Fifth, effectiveness of the quality management system and the need to ensure that quality manual and procedure owners seek continuous improvements. Sixth, a planned approach to applying tools and techniques and to integrate them with routine operations. Finally, the degree of confidence in top management. Confidence is damaged by lack of success, by an inability to complete projects, by inconsistency between promises and actions, by changes in management, and by conflicting priorities which suggest that improvement is no longer important.

Given the range of factors identified, and indicating just how difficult it may be to sustain major changes, Dale, Boaden, Wilcox and McQuater (1999, p.369) observe that:

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a long-term process. It can take an organization between 8 and 10 years to put the fundamental principles, practices and systems into place, create an organization culture which is conducive to continuous improvement, and change the values and attitudes of its people. It requires considerable effort and intellectual input by the senior management team and a clear strategic direction.

From a review of 55 studies of total quality management in hospitals in America, Shortell et al. (1998) report limited evidence of the impact on quality of care, and describe continuous quality improvement (CQI) as a ‘rose in a garden of weeds’:

For the CQI rose to flourish, it must be carefully cultivated in a rich soil bed (e.g., a receptive organization), given constant attention (e.g., sustained leadership), assured of appropriate amounts of light (e.g., training and support) and water (e.g., measurement and data systems) and protected from damaging pests (e.g., overly burdensome regulation and parochial views. Its strengths may make the ‘gardening’ worth the effort (Shortell et al., 1998, p.605).

These conclusions reinforce the perception that sustaining working practices can be as problematic as attempts to change them. Table 7 summarizes this perspective.
### Table 7: Sustaining TQM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Sustainability</th>
<th>Jeopardizing Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>appropriate response to competition</td>
<td>inadequate response to competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able to recruit, develop and retain high calibre employees</td>
<td>inability to recruit, develop and retain high calibre employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to meet customer requirements</td>
<td>inability to meet customer requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no fear or uncertainty about the future, attitude of innovation and change</td>
<td>fear and uncertainty about the future, survival and protectionist attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shared goals</td>
<td>adversarial industrial relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management style encouraging high trust, high discretion relationships</td>
<td>management style encouraging low trust, low discretion relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human resource policies which encourage teamwork, initiative and commitment</td>
<td>human resource policies that discourage teamwork, stifling initiative and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistency and transparency in reward and appraisal systems</td>
<td>inconsistency and complexity in reward and appraisal systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial policies that encourage pursuit of long term goals</td>
<td>financial policies that encourage short term decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintenance policies focused on planned and preventative maintenance</td>
<td>maintenance policies focused on cost reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational policies which encourage quality and customer satisfaction</td>
<td>operational policies which encourage measurable output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear responsibility for change</td>
<td>ambiguous responsibility for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no structural barriers between units to inhibit cross-functional collaboration</td>
<td>structural barriers between units inhibiting cross-functional collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presence of mechanisms for communicating and recognizing achievements</td>
<td>absence of mechanisms for communicating and recognizing achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high skill levels, numerical and task flexibility, responsive to pressures</td>
<td>high dependency on key staff, inflexibilities, non-responsive to changing pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team leader style supervisory structure</td>
<td>traditional autocratic supervisory style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong improvement infrastructure, steering committee, facilitators, problem solving</td>
<td>weak improvement infrastructure, no steering committee, facilitators, problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training meets individual and organizational needs</td>
<td>no training to meet individual and organizational needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouragement of teamworking</td>
<td>no encouragement of teamworking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procedures to monitor problems</td>
<td>no procedures to monitor problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management open to suggestions</td>
<td>management closed to suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continuous improvement given priority</td>
<td>continuous improvement not a priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planned use of tools and techniques, integrated with routine operations</td>
<td>ad hoc use of tools and techniques, not integrated with routine operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence in top management, due to success, consistency, stability, durable priorities</td>
<td>lack of confidence in top management, due to lack of success, inconsistency, changes, conflicting priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Momentum busters

Reisner (2002) considers the experience of the United States Postal Service which, during the 1990s, ‘transformed itself from the butt of sitcom jokes into a profitable and efficient enterprise (p.45). By 2001, however, morale and performance were low, and losses were predicted. Why was the transformation not sustained? Reisner (vice president for strategic planning for the Postal Service) blames three ‘momentum busters’; the indifference of senior managers who regarded some aspects of strategy as a ‘distraction’; resistance from trade union leaders who felt their role and voice had been marginalized; inability to steer funding through a budget process which favoured traditional initiatives over innovations.

Innovation was also stifled by governance constraints. What one competitor, UPS, achieved the Postal Service could not have initiated without a prior hearing process before the Postal Rate Commission, and major structural changes would have required Congressional sanction. The situation was not helped by a weak economy, problems with e-commerce, and terrorist assaults on the American postal service in late 2001 and early 2002.

Reisner’s (2002, p.52) analysis ends on an optimistic note: ‘Despite the limits to any transformation effort, accomplishing meaningful change in even the largest, most complex, and tradition-bound of organizations is achievable’. Reisner’s account is atheoretical, and is not based on the systematic collection of data. This anecdotal evidence is included here because it meets the criterion of focus on sustaining strategic change, is produced by a senior manager with ‘inside knowledge’ of a large and complex organization, rather than external academic researchers, and because it reinforces the significance of the contextual, organizational, and leadership issues identified by other commentators. Table 8 summarizes Reisner’s commentary.
### Table 8: Momentum busters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting sustainability</th>
<th>Jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>top management commitment and support [L]</td>
<td>top management indifference and resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade union support [Cx]</td>
<td>trade union resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget approval process which welcomes innovative initiatives [O]</td>
<td>budget approval process which favours traditional operational initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rapid flexible decision processes [O]</td>
<td>slow bureaucratic decision processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no external threats and distractions [Cx]</td>
<td>disruptive external threats and distractions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. The process of sustainability in context

The opening discussion made two key observations about the concept of sustainability. First, it is a process to be managed, not a condition to be achieved. Second, the meaning of this term depends on the organizational context. These considerations suggest that it may be relevant to examine the processual-contextual perspective on organizational change.

In addition to emphasizing the impact of issues both within the organization as well as the wider context, process is a prominent feature of the commentary covered in this review. Lewin (1951) describes a process of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Senge et al. (1999) discuss growth and limiting processes, treating sustainability as a stage in a process that begins with diffusion and implementation, and follows with continuous improvement. Kotter (1995) observes that anchoring change in an organization culture involves a process that can take several years. Jacobs (2002) regards the change institutionalization process as one element in a complex causal chain. Rimmer et al. (1996) conclude that sustainability depends on ‘swimming with the tide’, on ‘winning the time’, and on a complex and pluralistic political process. Dale et al. (1997a; 1997b; 1999) discuss the maintenance of a long-term process of quality improvement, identifying the management of the change process itself as a factor contributing to sustainability. Reisner (2002) in his brief anecdotal account argues for the need to maintain momentum over time, in the face of economic, commercial, legislative, and political pressures arising in the wider external context.

The processual-contextual perspective on change, influential since the mid-1980s, derives mainly from the work of Pettigrew (1973; 1985; 1987; 1988) who cautions against looking for single causes and simple explanations for change. He points to the many related factors, individual, group, organizational, social, and political, which influence the nature and outcomes of change. Change is a complex and ‘untidy cocktail’ of rational decisions, mixed with competing perceptions, stimulated by visionary leadership, spiced with ‘power plays’ and attempts to recruit support and build coalitions behind ideas. Pettigrew argues that the
unit of analysis should be *the process of change in context*, highlighting two related issues. First, this involves paying attention to the temporal flow of events, and not thinking of change as static or as neatly time-bounded. Second, this means paying attention to both the local and the wider context of change, and not thinking narrowly in terms of one particular location.

*The process of sustainability in context* may thus be a useful unit of analysis. Pettigrew’s context has three dimensions. The *internal context* includes the organization structure and culture which influence patterns of behaviour and attitudes toward change. Those attitudes may be more or less receptive to change, and to sustaining change (Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee, 1992). The *external context* lies outside, including customer demands, competitor behaviour, and economic conditions, which create opportunities and threats to be exploited or addressed. *Past and current events* and experiences condition current and future thinking. Past history is critical, for two reasons. First, it is easy to forget how previous events have shaped current perceptions and responses, when the focus is on current organizational changes. Second, it is easy to forget the continuities, to ignore those aspects of the past which have not changed and which are still with us, and which again condition current thinking.

Pettigrew’s (1985), seminal study of the chemicals company ICI, exploring change and continuity, established the processual perspective in organization studies. In this account, Pettigrew proposes a four-stage model of strategic change. The first two stages involve problem-sensing and developing concern with the status quo, followed by acknowledgement of the problems that need to be tackled. The two final stages concern planning and acting, and ‘stabilization’. These stages can be lengthy and iterative and do not necessarily follow that sequence. Pettigrew’s evidence suggests that the main triggers of strategic change include a combination of external events and trends, ‘insubordinate minorities’ who identify problems and mobilize an energetic ‘caucus of concern’, and senior managerial leadership.

This model relies on the concept of legitimacy, for what are variously described as ‘dominating ideas’, ‘frameworks of thought’, ‘definitions of core issues’, ‘concepts of
reality’, ‘new rationalities and ideas’, and ‘strategic frames’. The management task, therefore, concerns ‘the way you tell it’, or more accurately ‘the way you sell it’ to other organization members, to legitimize change proposals in the face of competing ideas, and to gain consent and compliance from other organization members. Management must also ‘anchor’, or establish legitimacy for, particular interpretations and courses of action, while delegitimizing the views of opponents. It is the persistence of those dominating ideas which ensure the stability of organizational changes. Pettigrew concludes that the management of change is thus equated with ‘the management of meaning’, with symbolic attempts to establish the credibility of particular definitions of problems and solutions.

Pettigrew observes that, in ICI, continuity was more evident than change. ICI experienced high levels of change activity, from 1960 to 1964, from 1970 to 1972, and from 1980 to 1984. The relatively calm periods in between are described (1985, p.447) as ‘occasions for implementing and stabilizing changes’. There appear to be two main threats to sustainability. The first concerns external events prompting another ‘insubordinate minority’ (often senior management) to challenge and overturn existing thinking. The second concerns loss of continuity of leadership. Pettigrew describes how the Agricultural and Petrochemicals Divisions at ICI demonstrated ‘regression from change’, with the departure of senior managers. These cases, Pettigrew (1995, p.454) concludes, ‘indicate the importance in managerial terms of strong, persistent, and continuing leadership to create strategic change’. As those threats to sustainability are potentially unavoidable, a more realistic goal is ‘periodic stabilization’ of organizational changes.

The processual-contextual perspective has been developed by Dawson (1994; 1996; 2003a). His approach, ‘is based on the assumption that companies continuously move in and out of many different states, often concurrently, during the history of one or a number of organizational change initiatives’ (Dawson, 2003b, p.41). He also argues that, to understand this complex and untidy organizational change process, we need to consider the past, present and future context in which the organization functions, including external and internal factors,
the substance of the change, the tasks, activities, decisions, timing, and sequencing of the
transition process, political activity within and external to the organization, and the
interactions between these sets of issues.

Distilling findings from a number of detailed multi-method qualitative case studies of change
processes, Dawson (2003b, pp.173-5) identifies ten ‘general lessons’:

1. There are no simple universal prescriptions for how best to manage change.
2. Change strategies must be sensitive to people and context.
3. Major change takes time.
4. Different people experience change in different ways.
5. We can learn from all change experiences, not just the successful ones.
6. Employees need to be trained in new methods and procedures, often overlooked.
7. Communication must be ongoing and consistent.
8. Change strategies must be tailored to fit the substance and context.
9. Change is a political process.
10. Change involves the complex interaction of contradictory processes.

Dawson prefaces these ‘lessons’ with the warning that, while potentially valuable, they can
obscure the underlying complexity of the change process. While Dawson’s conclusions do
not directly address the sustainability problem, the processual perspective does appear to offer
a useful lens through which to examine sustainability, focusing on the flow of events in a
wider spatial, temporal, and political context. Fox-Wolfgramm and Boal (1998) emphasize
the importance of ‘organizational biographies’ in understanding change, and also advocate a
processual approach which explores the interplay of internal and external forces, and different
levels of analysis, across time. The following section, which considers different kinds of
complexity with regard to organizational change problems, provides further support for a
process-based perspective on change in general, and sustainability in particular.
Issues in the sustainability struggle derived from the processual-contextual perspective, and primarily from Pettigrew’s (1985) work, are summarized in table 9.

**Table 9: The process of sustainability in context**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supporting sustainability</th>
<th>jeopardizing sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>management plans and ideas are seen as credible and legitimate [M]</td>
<td>management plans and ideas are not seen as credible and legitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a period of relative calm has allowed management to stabilize change [Pr]</td>
<td>continuing turbulence is preventing management from stabilizing change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenges to management plans have been defeated as lacking in credibility [Po]</td>
<td>credible challenges to management plans remain in circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external stability means that there are no challenges to the status quo [Cx]</td>
<td>external events are encouraging a challenge to the status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership is strong and persistent [L]</td>
<td>there is loss of continuity of leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sustainability problem: solvable, or improvable?

Organizational change varies in scale and complexity, from incremental fine tuning to large-scale corporate restructuring. However, complexity is not characterized only by the number of issues involved and the nature of their interaction. Complexity is also determined by the range of different interpretations that can be placed on those issues and their relationships. Paton and McCalman (2000) identify two types of complexity with respect to organizational change - ‘hard complexity’ and ‘soft complexity’. Problems displaying hard complexity can be defined clearly, are well-bounded, lend themselves to quantification, and can lead to an optimal solution. Problems displaying soft complexity have competing definitions, are not well-bounded, defy quantification, and generate dispute over appropriate solutions. Establishing cause and effect in settings of hard complexity is relatively straightforward. Inferring causality in situations of soft complexity involves a combination of subjective judgement and empirical evidence. These are extremes on a continuum. Problems can be more or less hard, or more or less soft, in the complexity they display.

Hard complexity is illustrated by the problem of allocating staff to production lines to optimize output (ensuring maximum machine utilization), while soft complexity is illustrated by the problem of introducing new working practices (which may alter skill requirements, and team composition, for example; Senior, 2002, p.55). Hard complexity can be addressed through the application of reason and calculus. Organizational change at this end of the spectrum follows a logical, linear, phased process in the pursuit of known, agreed, and quantifiable goals. To address soft complexity, emotional, social, and political issues must also be taken into account. Change here reflects an untidy, iterative, and politicized process in the pursuit of a range of subjective perceptions of ‘improvement’, which may be reinforced, but not unambiguously resolved, by quantifiable measures. Paton and McCalman (2000) offer the TROPICS test, shown in table 10, for locating organizational change problems in terms of their complexity.
Well-defined problems displaying hard complexity are amenable to a positivist, deductive, variance-based methodology that defines, operationalizes and quantifies, establishes covariation and causality, and leads to statistical generalizations, from which confident predictions can be derived. Medical problems are often well-defined, and are typically studied from this perspective. The link between research and practice under conditions of hard complexity may appear to be straightforward; problem is identified, research reveals cause, cause suggests solution, problem solved. Experience has discredited this perspective, suggesting that the processes of raising awareness and changing practice are influenced by many factors other than ‘hard’ evidence (Wilson, Richardson, Sowden and Evans, 2001).

Problems characterized by soft complexity are qualitatively different (Senior, 2002, p.54). These problems require a different research strategy, involving inductive, process-based theory (Langley, 1999). Process theory applies to poorly-bounded event sequences, where the organizational and social context are significant influences, where numerous outcomes are affected by many interacting issues and stakeholders, and where causality can be inferred, but
not ultimately confirmed. Process theories are typically expressed as propositions and in explanatory narratives (Pentland, 1999), rather than as universal laws. Their value lies in analytical and naturalistic generalizability, informing theory and local practice respectively. While it is possible to make probabilistic predictions based on process theory, the influence of contextual, temporal, political and other social forces can weaken confidence in such claims. If the use of evidence concerning problems of hard complexity is problematic, then with problems of soft complexity the diagnostic strategy for ‘getting evidence into practice’ advocated by Wilson et al. (2001, p.6) assumes greater significance.

How does the sustainability problem score on the TROPICS test? The answer depends on the context, and on the nature of the changes under consideration. Some limited changes may display hard complexity, even where they contribute to a wider strategic agenda. However, the sustainability of strategic change is more likely to display soft complexity; timescales are uncertain, resource requirements are difficult to estimate, different stakeholders have different views (Jones, 2003), measurable targets compete with subjective perceptions, concern with the issue is widespread, management control is shared with powerful stakeholders, and the source of the problem - the need for sustainability - lies outside the organization. In addition, the issues identified as influences on sustainability (organizational fit, committed staff, open management, goal clarity, powerful winners, time to demonstrate results) are issues which themselves have multiple and contested definitions, and thus also display soft complexity.

Managing soft complexity involves ambiguity, uncertainty, and competing stakeholder perceptions, taking into account contextual, processual, and political issues. Problems that display soft complexity have no definitive or calculable solutions. However, this does not mean that such problems are beyond intervention. On the contrary, while the sustainability problem may not be solvable in a technical sense, the probability of change being sustained may be increased significantly with an understanding of the influential factors, and an ability to address them in a timely and appropriate manner.
Conclusions

These contributions to the literature each offer a partial account of the sustainability problem. In combination, they generate a more holistic overview, which can be used as a template to guide and to assess further empirical research. As the Appendix suggests, the issues identified can also be used to construct a provisional Sustainability Assessment tool, allowing change leaders to identify the issues supporting sustainability in their context, and to identify where sustainability is being jeopardized, with a view to deciding on appropriate remedial action. This review suggests a number of conclusions for further research to explore.

contextual definition

Sustainability can be defined in different ways in relation to strategic change. For one organization, or part of the organization, sustainability may apply to work methods and processes of goal achievement for a specific period. For another organization or section, sustainability may apply to a process of continuing improvements in performance through developments in working practice for an indeterminate period. The definition that matters, therefore, is the one that applies to a specific organizational setting at a given point in time.

process not condition

Drawing from the processual-contextual perspective on organizational change, the focus of concern lies with the process of sustainability in context. Sustainability involves a sequence of events that unfolds through time in a manner unique to the organization, and to its internal and external context. Sustainability is not a static condition. Even maintaining the stability or permanence of a particular combination of work methods involves management processes that are sensitive not only to the sustainability objective, but also to the context in which sustainability is to be achieved, because trends and developments in that context may jeopardize sustainability, and may need to be countered in some manner.
Desirability of decay

Critical in some settings, sustainability may not always be beneficial or desirable. Maintaining a major programme of improvements can cause initiative fatigue, which can in turn reduce individual and organizational effectiveness, and heighten resistance to future initiatives. Shifts in the internal and external context can quickly render work methods and performance goals obsolete, thus triggering the need for further intervention. ‘Initiative decay’ can therefore be a more desirable option in some circumstances.

Contextual significance

Given the wide range of potential influences on sustainability, what is the relative weighting of each? Do organizational policies, mechanisms, procedures, systems, and structures have more impact on sustainability than individual commitment, competencies, and expectations? Do the shared beliefs, perceptions, norms, values, and priorities that condition the organization culture outweigh the stakeholder and coalition power and influence which shape the organization’s political system? Or do the visions, values, purposes, goals, and challenges set by the organization leadership sweep other obstacles aside? From a processual-contextual perspective, the answer is ‘it depends’. The weighting of those issues will be determined by the organizational context, internal and external, past and present. While a rapid and politically acrimonious series of top management team changes may be critical for one organization, a combination of contextual, organizational, and individual issues may be of more relevance to sustainability in an organization that has not had that experience. Interactive effects also make it difficult to assess the significance of those issues without detailed context knowledge. With different organization histories, the management style that elicits enthusiastic commitment in one setting could trigger cynicism and resentment in another. The change substance can threaten to upset the existing balance of power between stakeholders, triggering political behaviour to influence that balance in favour of particular individuals and groups. The relative significance of these issues and their interactive effects, therefore, cannot be determined a priori.
the sustainability process in context

Figure 2 summarizes the findings from this review in the form of a model illustrating how the issues identified may relate to and interact with each other. Drawing on a processual-contextual perspective, the model suggests that the sustainability process has three main components; contexts, configurations, and consequences. In combination, the model argues, the interaction of these three components will influence whether a programme of organizational changes will over time decay, be sustained, or continuously develop.

**Figure 2: The process of sustainability in context**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Configurations</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>external context</td>
<td>organizational . . .</td>
<td>decay, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural . . . political</td>
<td>sustainability, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>development</td>
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<tr>
<td>internal context</td>
<td>individual . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>managerial . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leadership</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The three issues at the heart of this model concern the nature or substance of the changes concerned, characteristics of the implementation process, and the timing, sequencing, and pacing of those processes. With regard to substance, some changes may be central to organizational performance and acceptable to key stakeholders, while others may be regarded as more peripheral, and as threatening to vested interests. The manner in which change is implemented, particularly with regard to the involvement of those affected, also appears to contribute to whether or not change is welcomed and sustained. The timing, pacing, and sequencing of events can either support or jeopardize sustainability. The periods of relatively slow and incremental development that occur between more or less radical organizational upheavals and transformations, without regression to previous practice, may tentatively be labelled as periods of ‘sustained change’, or ‘periodic stabilization’. Change which is delayed may not deliver benefits. Change which is rushed may not allow those affected time to adapt, and can lead to initiative fatigue, encouraging decay.
The substance, process, and timing of change can be influenced by the external context, that is by events and developments taking place beyond the boundaries of the organization. One significant property of the external context in relation to sustainability concerns the degree of change, turbulence and uncertainty. An unstable and unpredictable external context is likely to jeopardize attempts to stabilize internal arrangements, or to maintain a programme of change in a constant direction (Ansoff, 1997). Change is also affected by the internal context, by past events, and by anticipated futures. One key dimension of the internal context concerns degree of receptiveness to change. A consistent past history of effective change and innovation may increase receptiveness (Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee, 1992).

This review has identified six other sets of factors that can potentially influence sustainability; organizational, cultural, political, individual, managerial, and leadership:

- **organizational**
  - policies, mechanisms, procedures, systems, structures
- **cultural**
  - shared beliefs, perceptions, norms, values, priorities
- **political**
  - stakeholder and coalition power and influence
- **individual**
  - commitment, competencies, expectations
- **managerial**
  - style, approach, preferences, behaviours
- **leadership**
  - setting vision, values, purpose, goals, challenges

These factors can be configured in a range of different ways. Some may encourage sustainability and further development (for example, supportive policies, receptive culture, backing of powerful stakeholders). Other factors may encourage decay (for example, lack of appropriate skills, autocratic management style, lack of clarity concerning goals). The nature and relative significance of those factors will depend on the attributes of the organizational setting under consideration, and on how those issues interact with each other.

What is unclear, and where further investigation is required, is the configuration of factors in particular contexts necessary and sufficient to trigger decay, to encourage sustainability, or to
maintain the continuing development of a programme of change. If the ability to sustain strategic and other changes were to depend on the timely presence and appropriate configuration of all or most of the factors in figure 2, then Kotter’s (1995, p.66) observation concerning the fragility of these processes would appear to be accurate.

*soft complexity*

The sustainability problem appears to display soft complexity. There is no agreed definition of the concept. The scope and timescale of the changes to be sustained are matters for local negotiation. Assessing whether or not sustainability has been achieved can be only partially informed by quantifiable metrics, and also relies on subjective judgement. Establishing causality is problematic. The ‘end point’, when it may be possible to claim with conviction that sustainability has indeed been achieved, will often be indeterminate. Soft complexity requires a process-based research perspective sensitive to the manner in which events unfold in context, over time, subject to influence from a range of issues at different levels of analysis.

No simple prescription for managing sustainability emerges from this review. However, it is appropriate to recommend management strategies that are sensitive to complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, competing stakeholders, and to the range of issues that can influence the sustainability process. It is also evident that sustainability depends on a number of ‘externalities’, beyond direct management control and manipulation, but which may need to be addressed in some manner. The appendix to this report provides an assessment tool based on this review. While the style of this approach appears to be consistent with the nature of the sustainability problem as it has been explored here, the detailed content requires further empirical research confirmation. In particular, it is now necessary to consider the relevance of the conclusions from this generic review to organizational change in healthcare, both through the growing sector-specific literature, and in current empirical research.
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A summary of this review has been produced and is available, along with further copies of this full review via:
http://www.modern.nhs.uk/researchintopractice

or

Karen Clay
Research into Practice Team Co-ordinator

tel: 0116 222 5134
email: admin.rp@npat.nhs.uk

For further information about the findings contact:

David A. Buchanan
Professor of Organizational Behaviour
Leicester Business School
De Montfort University

tel: 0116 257 7208
email: d.buchanan@dmu.ac.uk

Research into Practice and De Montfort University

The Research into Practice team works with partners within the Modernisation Agency and the broader NHS to capture learning and generate knowledge about modernising healthcare. We aim to share our findings as widely as possible to help inform NHS staff as they pursue service improvement locally.

The team has an academic partnership with Professor David Buchanan and colleagues at the Leicester Business School at De Montfort University.

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Appendix

Sustainability Assessment

Objectives:

- to give change management leads and teams a structured approach for assessing the sustainability of large-scale strategic organizational changes
- to provide a process for prioritizing and action planning with respect to issues that are potentially jeopardizing change sustainability

Caution:

This assessment tool is based on sources which rely on sectors and organizations not related to healthcare. While the style of this assessment is unlikely to change, and while many of the issues may remain similar, the precise content of this tool is subject to refinement, taking into consideration healthcare-specific empirical research and other literature concerning sustainability, along with feedback from users.

Research Into Practice Team
NHS Modernisation Agency
St John’s House
East Street
Leicester, LE1 6NB

October 2003
Sustainability Assessment

This Sustainability Assessment process has five steps:

1. Arrange half-day workshop with relevant members of the change implementation team and external facilitation
2. TROPICS complexity test
3. Context review
4. Issue analysis
5. Prioritization and action planning

This assessment relies on informed judgement, based on knowledge of the organizational context, including past history as well as current status. While this assessment can be performed by an individual working alone, it is designed for use by the relevant project or implementation team, steering group, task force, or other group responsible for driving and sustaining major change, with external facilitation. The assessment and resultant action planning are strengthened by the structured combination of perceptions and judgements.

The issues at the heart of this assessment have been derived from a review of literature concerned with sustaining large-scale, strategic organizational changes. The issues relevant to a particular organizational context, however, are likely to be unique, and relatively small-scale incremental changes are also likely to raise issues different from those which affect strategic changes. This assessment will be subject to refinement through empirical research focusing on the issue of sustainability in healthcare.

This assessment process offers a structured analytical approach, a template for discussion, and a platform for decision making and action planning. We hope that you find it useful, and we would welcome your feedback in this respect.
1: The TROPICS complexity test

First subject your sustainability question, issue, or problem to the TROPICS complexity test, concerning **Timing**, **Resources**, **Objectives**, **Perceptions**, **Interests**, **Control**, and **Sources**. Which side of this table describes the sustainability issue with which you are concerned?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard complexity</th>
<th>Soft complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time scales for sustainability are well-defined relating to the short to medium term.</td>
<td>Time scales for sustainability are ill-defined relating to the medium to long term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources needed to sustain the change can be clearly identified.</td>
<td>Resources needed to sustain the change are uncertain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of sustaining the change are clearly stated and can be quantified.</td>
<td>Objectives of sustaining the change are subjective and ambiguous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the problem of sustainability and possible solutions are shared by all stakeholders</td>
<td>Perceptions of the problem of sustainability vary, there is no consensus, and there are conflicts of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in the problem of sustainability is limited and well-defined.</td>
<td>Interest in the problem of sustainability is widespread and ill-defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of issues affecting sustainability is maintained by the managing group.</td>
<td>Control of issues affecting sustainability is shared with people outside the managing group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of the problem of sustainability originate from within the organization.</td>
<td>Sources of the problem of sustainability originate from outside the organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems displaying ‘hard complexity’ can be defined clearly, are well-bounded, lend themselves to quantification, and have optimal solutions. Establishing cause and effect, with respect to management actions and their consequences, is not a problem. The effective management of hard complexity, in pursuit of uncontested and mainly quantifiable goals, relies on a systematic combination of evidence, reasoning, and calculation.

Problems displaying ‘soft complexity’ have competing definitions, are not well-bounded, defy quantification, and generate dispute over appropriate solutions. Establishing cause and effect, with respect to management actions and their consequences, is problematic. The effective management of soft complexity, in pursuit of contested and mainly qualitative goals, relies on a subtle combination of emotional, social, and political issues as well as on evidence.

These are extremes on a continuum. Problems can be more or less hard, or more or less soft in the complexity which they display. What is your judgement with regard to your concerns?

This Sustainability Assessment is designed primarily for questions, issues, and problems that display soft complexity. If your problem is characterized by hard complexity, you may find the following Assessment process of limited help.
2: Context review

This review date: _______________

Next review date*: _______________

1: What is the target organization, section, department, unit or network of organizations on which this Sustainability Assessment will be based?

It is important that all organization members involved in this Assessment are focusing on the same definition of the target organization.

2: On what strategic change, or profile of changes, will this Sustainability Assessment focus?

It is important that all those involved in this Assessment are focusing on the same change or profile of organizational changes involving, for example, tasks, work design, structures, culture, systems and procedures, performance measures, and continuing developments.

3: Over what period of time do you need to consider sustaining that change or profile of changes? Short term, medium term, long term? When is your next review date?*

4: How will you know if sustainability has been achieved over that period of time; what qualitative and quantitative indicators are likely to be significant?
3. Issue analysis

- A review of the literature suggests that there are ten sets of issues influencing the sustainability of large-scale organizational changes. (The preceding review actually identifies eleven issues, but the small number of ‘emotional’ factors identified are included, for the purposes of this assessment, in the ‘individual’ category.)

- We would like to invite you to assess the current status of the changes that you wish to sustain, using the following grid.

- This assessment describes the ideal support conditions under each heading, and contrasts these with the risk conditions.

- These descriptions of support and risk conditions are a guide to the kinds of issues that can influence the sustainability of organizational changes. The issues supporting and jeopardizing the sustainability of changes in your context, at this time, are likely to be quite different from the issues affecting other organizations, and other changes.

- You may find that some issues identified here are not relevant to your change or to your organizational context. You may also decide that there are significant issues which are not mentioned here but which are nevertheless influencing sustainability in your context. That is not a problem. On the contrary, we hope that you find this assessment process a useful tool in helping to expose, and consequently to manage, those issues.

Procedure

1. Complete this assessment without discussion with colleagues. Consider each of the ten sets of issues in turn. Decide where the changes that you want to sustain sit on the scale from strong support to high risk. Remember that these are general descriptions of ideal and extreme conditions respectively. Use your specific knowledge of current organizational circumstances to reach an informed judgement on each set of issues.

2. Compare your judgements with those of colleagues. Discuss any disagreements, and aim to reach a consensus on where there is support for sustainability, and where the changes that you are considering may be at risk.

3. Consider the significance of other issues not included in this Sustainability Assessment, but which are relevant to your change, to your organizational context, at this time.
3. Prioritization and action planning

When you have completed the Sustainability Assessment, and agreed your assessment with colleagues:

1. Identify three to five areas where there is broad agreement that the sustainability of the changes you are considering is at risk.

2. Discuss and agree appropriate action plans to convert those ‘high risk’ conditions to ‘strong support’.

3. Allocate responsibilities for ensuring that those action plans are implemented.

4. Agree a timescale for implementing those plans, and agree a review date when this assessment will be repeated.

END OF SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

David Buchanan
Diane Ketley
Rose Gollop
Jane Louise Jones
Sharon Saint Lamont
Annette Sharpe
Elaine Whitby

Research Into Practice Team
NHS Modernisation Agency
St John’s House
East Street
Leicester, LE1 6NB

October 2003

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## Sustainability Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strong support</th>
<th>Support conditions</th>
<th>moderate support</th>
<th>moderate risk</th>
<th>Risk conditions</th>
<th>high risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantial</strong>: the changes ‘fit’ the organization, they contribute to strategy, they are perceived central to effectiveness and survival.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Substantial</strong>: the changes sit uncomfortably with the organization, contribution to strategy is unclear, they are seen as marginal to effectiveness and survival.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual</strong>: change is seen as appropriate response to environment, meets customer/client needs, external stability does not challenge the status quo, no external threats and distractions, new practices remain relevant, trade union support, able to recruit, develop and retain high calibre staff, good public training provision, employment legislation encourages management-employee partnerships, change is consistent with social norms, with the tide of popular opinion, ‘the right thing to do’.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Contextual</strong>: change is seen as inadequate response to environment, unable to meet customer/client needs, external turbulence challenges the status quo, disruptive external threats and distractions, new practices becoming obsolete, trade union resistance, unable to recruit, develop and retain high calibre staff, poor public training provision, employment legislation discourages management-employee partnerships, change is inconsistent with social norms, against the tide of popular opinion, ‘the wrong thing to do’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processual</strong>: clear responsibility for change, strong improvement infrastructure, steering committee and facilitators, change champions with internal support, implementation with high levels of communication and involvement, mechanisms to monitor and solve problems, diffusion beyond initial setting, sustainability seen as stage in an extended process involving further development, a period of relative calm has allowed stabilization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Processual</strong>: ambiguous responsibility for change, weak improvement infrastructure, no steering committee or facilitators, no change champions, implementation with little communication or involvement, no mechanisms to monitor and solve problems, no further diffusion beyond first implementation, sustainability seen as discrete stage amenable to separate analysis, continuing turbulence is inhibiting stabilization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal:</td>
<td>Temporal: no attention to pace and sequence of changes, losing the argument that change is too slow when gains from ‘easy’ changes are complete and development then fades, killing momentum with premature declaration of success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational: decision processes are rapid and flexible, there are procedures to monitor problems, finance policies favour innovation and long term goals, there are no structural barriers inhibiting cross-functional collaboration, operating policies encourage problem prevention and quality and customer satisfaction, human resource policies encourage teamwork, initiative and commitment, reward and appraisal systems are consistent and transparent, there are mechanisms for recognizing achievements, training meets both individual and organizational needs, skilled and flexible staff increase responsiveness to changing pressures.</td>
<td>Organizational: decision processes are slow and bureaucratic, procedures to monitor problems are lacking, finance policies favour traditional initiatives and short term payback, structural barriers inhibit cross-functional collaboration, operating policies encourage cost reduction and the pursuit of measurable performance indicators, human resource policies discourage teamwork, initiative and commitment, reward and appraisal systems are inconsistent and complex, there are no mechanisms for recognizing achievements, training does not meet individual and organizational needs, high dependency on inflexible staff decreases responsiveness to changing pressures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural: a sense of urgency, climate and values receptive to change, link between changed behaviours and performance clearly understood, continuous improvement a priority, change has ‘mainstream’ status and is integrated, new behaviours ‘rooted’ in shared norms, teamwork encouraged, belief that change is effective for several stakeholders, goals are shared by staff, perception that benefits outweigh costs.</td>
<td>Cultural: lack of urgency, climate and values not receptive to change, link between changed behaviours and performance poorly understood, continuous improvement not a priority, change has ‘cult’ status and is isolated from the organization, new behaviours not ‘anchored’, teamwork discouraged, belief that change is ineffective because there are no measures, industrial relations are adversarial, perception that costs outweigh benefits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political: challenges to management plans defeated as lacking credibility, powerful guiding coalition has support of external networks, involves management and staff in decision making, powerful stakeholders see themselves as winners.</td>
<td>Political: credible challenges to management plans remain in circulation, weak guiding coalition lacks support of external networks, excludes management and staff from decision making, resistance from powerful stakeholders see themselves as losers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: vision, purpose, priorities and goals are clear, consistent and challenging, leadership is strong, persistent, successful and stable, is committed to change, and has staff confidence.</td>
<td>Leadership: vision, purpose, priorities and goals are vague, inconsistent and unchallenging, leadership is weak, unstable and unsuccessful, is indifferent or resistant to change, and lacks staff confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managerial: plans and ideas are seen as credible and legitimate, causes are addressed systematically, ‘difficult’ issues are confronted despite a risk of conflict, style is open and facilitative, with high trust, high discretion relationships, focus is long term, assessing change on a range of benefits, managers accept change to their own behaviour, new managers champion predecessors’ ideas.</td>
<td>Managerial: plans and ideas lack credibility and legitimacy, symptoms are tackled unsystematically, with the ‘easy’ changes over, the difficult issues are avoided, style is closed and autocratic, with low trust, low discretion relationships, focus is short term, discouraging change with no instant payback, managers reject change to their own behaviour, new managers champion their own initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual: those affected are committed to success, they have the skills and knowledge, reward expectations can be met, there is confidence about the future, innovation is welcome.</td>
<td>Individual: commitment is low, skills and knowledge are lacking, reward expectations cannot be met, there is fear and uncertainty about the future, survival and self-protection are dominant attitudes.</td>
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