

5 What is sustainable change? Building a theoretical framework for effectiveness

Do not get trapped in too philosophical an account, knowing that a more earthy conceptualisation is of more help (Cherns, 1987)

As stated in Chapter 4, there are plenty of reports of LSI having the potential to bring about sustainable change. But what then is sustainable change in organisations? And what is non-sustainable change? Whether a change process is considered effective and sustainable, depends largely on what is defined as sustainable change, and how the degree of effectiveness is measured. For research on the effectiveness of LSI, a conceptual framework is needed. This framework will have to give insight into the nature of change. It will have to provide a basic logic, a model, to distinguish non-sustainable from sustainable change in evaluations of LSI. In this Chapter I will build a model based on two theories. As foundation for this model, I will use the knowledge theory 'The Logic of Feeling' by the philosopher Arnold Cornelis (Cornelis, 1993). The second theory for the framework is the 'Complex social responsive theory' by Ralph Stacey (Stacey, 2003; Stacey & Griffin, 2005), about dealing with complexity and transformational causality. My model will prove to be of great value when we, in Chapter 6, 7, and 8, try to assess whether and how LSI can contribute to its claim of bringing about 'real sustainable change'.

The framework builds on my pragmatic stance as discussed in Section 3.2 and 3.3. From this stance, theory is viewed as a social process, so the framework will not be a model *of* practice but a model *for* practice. The world is seen as an undivided whole, out of which I carve concepts for the purpose of making a model for different levels of effectiveness, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of LSI interventions, for reasons of improving the practice of LSI. In describing the concepts that form the building blocks of the framework, I will use the principle 'intelligent simplification', meaning that I will try to enlighten the model as profound as necessary to be functional (Vermaak, 2009a). Readers with a background in philosophy may find my choice and discussion of concepts rather eclectic. I realise it will not be possible in this chapter to position every concept in the philosophical traditions.

This chapter has been structured as follows. First, I will describe the concept of 'The Logic of Feeling' as basis for the model. Since this is a rich and elaborate philosophy, but unfortunately not widely-known outside the Dutch language region, I will introduce its terminology and explain the basic assumptions. Second, I will discuss how the 'Complex Social Responsive Theory' supports my view on organisations as patterns of relations and communication. Then, I will construct the central model for assessment of the effectiveness of interventions, as an interdisciplinary and evolutionary model for development of collective capacities in dealing with organisational change. I call my model the 'Logic of Will, Discipline, and Communication'. Next, I will operationalise this model by defining learning blockades in development of organisations. These learning blockades will be

illustrated with examples from practice. This chapter ends with a summary of what sustainable change means for evaluation of the effectiveness of LSI.

5.1 The knowledge theory of the Logic of Feeling as fundamental concept

Why this concept?

Before going into details about the concept of the Logic of Feeling, I want to describe how I made the choice and why I think this concept qualifies as the foundation for a framework for sustainable change.

I am of the opinion that there are indeed fundamental truths about people. These are the values everyone agrees on (exceptions aside). The main value is that everybody, as each living system, wants to develop their capacities, wants to grow, stay alive and live a meaningful life, whatever that may be. This can be used to measure good and evil or to bring them into the realm of discussion.

I studied a wide variety of intervention concepts and management models, comparing their basic assumptions and characteristics. Combined with my experiences in intervention practices I came to the realisation that I need a framework that includes biological aspects, besides structural and process aspects of organisations. As a biologist, I am of the opinion that a large part of our behaviour is determined by our natural inclination. As human beings, we are *bodily* creatures sharing our evolutionary heritage as social mammals with all the needs for our individual body and as a group. (Maturana & Varela, 1992; Waal, 2005). There is growing evidence that we observe and act upon far more signals than we are conscious of (Hall, 1984; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Varela, 1997; Waal, 2005), still most change models leave out biological and unconscious aspects.

From a spatial metaphor to a temporal metaphor for transformation

From my background as biologist, it surprised me how little attention is paid to the biological aspects of collaboration, while a substantial part of our relations and decisions are formed unconsciously, driven by biological motives. Although every salesperson knows that more than 80% of our decisions are taken for non-rational reasons, in most management models and models for organisational change emotions and feeling still play no role. Moreover, change models are often presented as matrices or schemas where time does not play a role. At what time then should success be reached? The time aspect is excluded. Arnold Cornelis gives an explanation for this phenomenon in his book *De vertraagde tijd* (Cornelis, 2000), the title means something like 'temporized time'. He states that we cannot 'see' time, because we think in spatial metaphors. The spatial boundaries caused by splitting up in disciplines and paradigms originate from modernistic thinking in specialisations. In order to take time into account, we have to move from a spatial metaphor of inside and outside to a temporal metaphor of continual reproduction and potential transformation (Cornelis, 2000; Stacey & Griffin, 2005).

As I was reading *The Logic of Feeling "De logica van het gevoel"* (Cornelis, 1993)¹ examples were continuously crossing my mind, causing recognition and clarification. The Logic of Feeling provides me with steppingstones for other logics. It appealed to me for the following reasons:

- It is so fundamental and integral that the theory can be illustrated in and to all disciplines and also has consequences for all disciplines; it offers an overall theory of learning
- It continues to build on the logic of philosophy in history, does not reject other logics, but merely integrates them by placing them in a particular layer of stability in human culture
- It gives an important role to time
- It involves the person as a whole, as an organism, as a social being, and as a communicative being
- It offers a counterweight to purely rational lines of reasoning which do not assign any role to feeling
- Cornelis makes the analogy of bodily development and evolutionary development with the learning development from child to adult and the development of humanity from a primitive society to a communicative society
- I find the manner in which Cornelis links his theory of knowledge to art quite elegant
- It gives a role to emancipation of people, of men and women.

Basics of the Logic of Feeling: thinking in three steering systems

The Logic of Feeling is a knowledge theory, a philosophy meant to explain how learning in living systems takes place, how capacities are developed in social systems. The main work of Arnold Cornelis *The Logic of Feeling* (Cornelis, 1993) is a report of more than twenty years of research at the Gent University, Groningen University, and the University of Amsterdam. Arnold Cornelis was a professor in philosophy and social theory in the Netherlands and in Belgium. He was a student of Jean Piaget, and was inspired by Piaget's theory of cognitive development and the knowledge theory of Gregory Bateson (Cornelis, 1993).

The essence of the Logic of Feeling is learning to think of reality in more than one knowledge system. Cornelis (1993, p. 58) defines reality as layered, because of three steering systems operating at the same time: the steering system of the material world, the steering system of the social reality of human actions, and the steering system of meaning and values. When looking at a problem, it is important to know in what steering system the problem takes place. Looking for a solution in the wrong system leads to catastrophic learning processes (Cornelis, 1993, p. 3) because you are looking for a solution in a system where the solution cannot be found.

¹ The book is first published in 1988, in Dutch language. To present day it has not been translated in English.

Roots of the Logic of Feeling

Arnold Cornelis based his theory on the thinking of Jean Piaget and Gregory Bateson (Cornelis, 1993) This shows for example in:

- Focus on qualitative development of knowledge
- Chronological sequence is inevitable in development of capacities; you first learn to crawl and then how to walk, and not the other way around
- Knowledge is not simply acquired from outside the individual, but is constructed from within, mostly subconsciously tested
- A dual process of internal and external steering.

This way of thinking can be applied to any level of human relations, to any social system, from an individual, a family, an organisation, a society, or the whole of humanity. For organisations, the living systems in focus for this research, it implies that learning develops over time from internal steering (our will, what we need as persons) to external steering (what rules do we agree upon to coordinate work) to communicative self-steering (how does work practice fit what we want to be, our values). In the next Sections, the key notions of the Logic of Feeling will be explained with Figure 5-1 as a guideline. Please keep in mind that this is just a part of the theory of Cornelis, a summary of his book by more than 750 pages. My intention is to provide a model for reality, which according to Gergen (2005, p. 232) gives 'sense and some significance to the world, a viable mode of going on'.

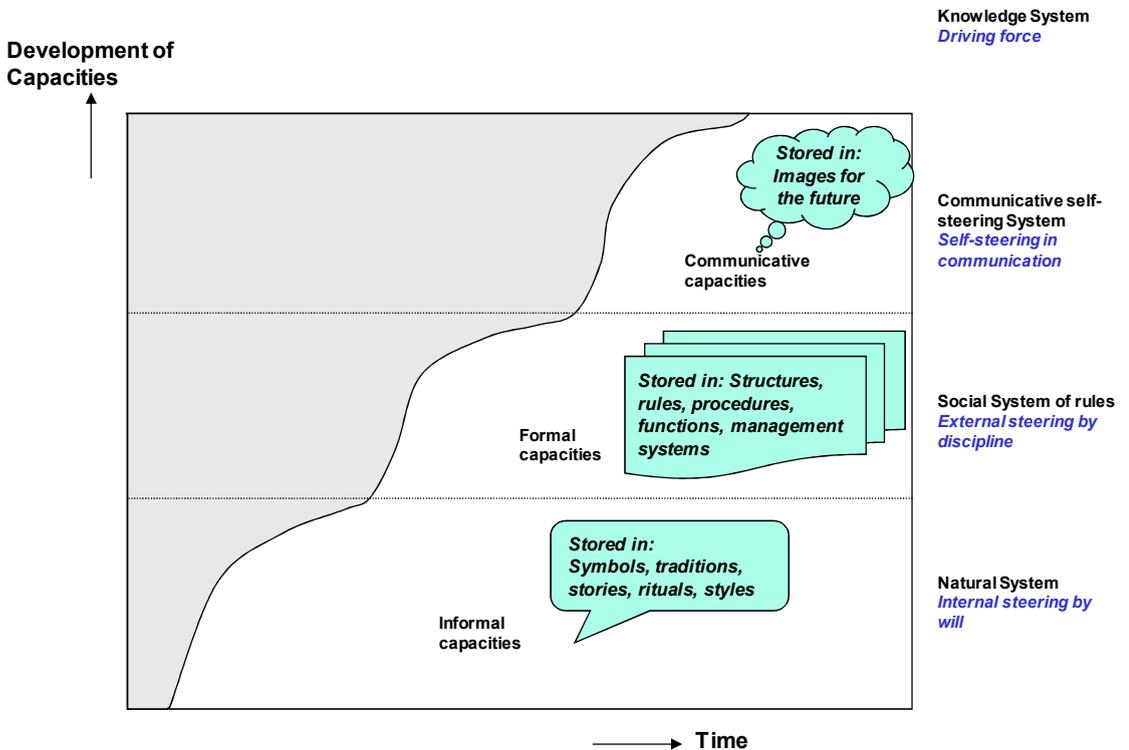


Figure 5-1: The Logic of Feeling, illustrated for an organisation as accumulative development of capacities over time

Figure 5-1 shows the development and accumulation of capacities in an organisation over time. Development of capacities means learning how to become what you want to be. The basic assumption is that every living system wants to grow, wants to mature and to bear fruit. The ideal line of development starts with the 'birth' of the system and ends with a certain state of maturity and fruitfulness, which can be seen as steering possibilities according to what is meaningful in the context of the system. The time scale is defined by the living system/organisation in focus.

The three layers of reality are shown in Figure 5-1 as the Natural System with internal steering by will, the Social System of rules with external steering by discipline, and the Communicative self-steering System, with self-steering in communication as driving force. Applied to organisations, the Natural System consists of the informal capacities. The Social System of rules comprises the formal capacities of the organisation. The Communicative self-steering System is formed by the communicative capacities within the organisation. This model is an evolutionary model, a model for capacity building. It explains 'accumulation' and 'stabilization' of capacities in organisations. In the next Sections, each of the three systems of the Logic of Feeling is described in more detail.

The Natural System, internal steering in bodily creatures

Things are normal. A tree cannot walk, a car cannot dance, and light does not travel with 10 km per hour (Willem Kayzer in De Waarnemer)

The manner in which people order their world, what is found to be logical, how they develop their identities, is steered by their own drive towards development and the capacities attained in the process. Cornelis calls this the Natural System. The Natural System is the domain of observations and of the material world. Main issues in this system are: What do I observe? Do I feel safe? You learn who you are in your extended family or organisation in the Natural System. The memory, and thus the capacities, of the Natural System is unconscious to a significant degree, but expresses itself in symbols, myths, stories, and rituals.

The Social System of rules, external steering

For efficient cooperation in the organisation, some control is needed over the Natural System's drive for growth. For this reason, people in the organisation develop agreements to 'get affairs in order'. These formal arrangements make up the 'Social System of rules'. The memory in the Social System is stored in rules, procedures, organisational structures, job descriptions, management systems, etcetera. For efficient allocation of people and resources, discipline is needed to fulfil agreements made, and to adjust them where necessary. Observations in the Natural System get significance, get a place, in the Social System of rules. This creates the possibility for professional actions (Cornelis, 1993, p. 136). The degree of discipline determines coordinated collaboration, and also whether it is permissible to make mistakes and learn from them. Too much discipline inhibits learning and stifles creativity, which produces feelings of oppression. Too little discipline results in chaos and anger because things are poorly organised.

According to Cornelis, a rule presupposes that the rule is valid, everywhere and every time. That is why a control system cannot adjust to changes in the environment. There is no possibility to honour the specific character of the situation, because that would imply breaking the rule. In the long run, a saturation of the Social System sets in (Cornelis, 1993, p. 17).

The Communicative self-steering System

The development of the Social System reaches its limits at a certain point. Changes in the environment can require new activities, which cannot be conceived of at that time by the organisation because they are experienced as illogical because they do not fit into the existing internal models of reality. The more the environment changes, the greater the need for new actions becomes. This requires the repertoire to be expanded. However, to enable this, we must revise the rules, norms, and social structures from the Social System, tested against the personal development and values of the Natural System. This test can only be conducted in communication with others, through reflection on, and evaluation of, rules and underlying assumptions. Only then new models of reality can arise. It is this communicative test of the Social System against the personal relational elements in the Natural System that I assume the value of LSI to lie. In Section 14.1, this assumption

What does Figure 5-2 show? The central variable is the 'Development of capacities'. Factors in the Natural System, the Social System of rules, and the Communicative self-steering System that influence the development of capacities are connected with arrows. Some factors have a reinforcing influence, indicated with '+', while other factors have a balancing impact, indicated with '-' beside the arrow. Please note that the positive and negative signs have nothing to do with good or bad.

The development of available capacities is paramount. This is from the viewpoint that a person's essential purpose is to develop personal capacity, and guide his/her own learning process in communication with others. The development of capacities is a learning process that is stimulated by the natural urge to develop in the Natural System, forming the reinforcing loop, also called the constructive or positive loop. A reinforcing loop is marked with the snowball symbol. The higher the urge to develop, the more capacities are built, the higher the urge to develop, etcetera. At the same time, the development of capacities is also affected by the rules and norms of the Social System of rules. The Social System of rules forms the negative or balancing causal loop. A balancing loop is marked with the scale symbol. The more rules and norms, the less capacities are built, the higher the influence of rules and norms will be, etcetera.

Applied to organisations, development is initially determined by the available capacities of people and resources. The love for the field also belongs to the Natural System. In order to work together on shared goals, structures (such as building setup, function, rules, norms, procedures) arise along with the Social System of the organisation. In both systems, we have assumptions, visions, and models of reality. The totality of models of reality comprises the logic of the organisation. My hypothesis is: the greater an organisation's capacity to develop itself, the greater the potential influence on the environment as a result of reinforced capability to learn and perform actions.

Models of reality have limitations by their very nature. After all, they determine what belongs and what does not. Furthermore, a conflict can arise between the logic of persons and of the organisation. To enable further development, a new system is needed, that can integrate the Natural System and Social System. This system arises when new visions and models emerge in communication with the environment. In the Communicative System of the organisation, rules, norms, procedures, and structures are tested against the values of individuals and the objectives of the organisation.

Thus, the development of capacities has two steering modes from two systems, which can be integrated by a third system. Every organisation can develop three layers, being three knowledge systems: Natural System, Social System, and System of Communicative self-steering.

A crucial point in this model is that no one layer is more important than the other. For complete and thorough development, you cannot miss any of the three layers. One system builds on another. Specialization for instance added a lot to our knowledge in the Social System of rules, but in the Social System of rules the backbone of the organisation, the Natural System, is not discussed or examined. By investing in communication, the organisation can reach the ability to attune the different systems and discover new possibilities. The System of Communicative self-steering develops knowledge of knowledge. Arnold Cornelis calls this second-order collective learning. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (Maturana & Varela, 1992 p. 248) call it knowledge of how we want to use knowledge.

My conclusion is that the capacity to deal with change can be developed in more than one knowledge system. I have called the drive towards development the *Will* to learn, to experiment. *Discipline* determines how to enable coordinated collaboration, and to learn from mistakes. Excessive discipline, however, inhibits learning and stifles creativity. *Communication* about the models

of reality makes new learning processes possible. As the Communicative System is further developed, not only does one 'learn' more (development of capacities), but learning capability (determining what and how you want to learn) increases as well. It is this learning how to deal with change that makes change sustainable, as will be further discussed in Section 5.3.

The knowledge value of feeling

Why did Cornelis call his knowledge theory The Logic of *Feeling*? Feeling steers our learning. The three systems form stability layers, where the primary human emotions (the strong feelings) fear, anger and grief, can nestle, can be taken away or reduced. Each layer of the Logic of Feeling has its own criteria for right and wrong: right or false observation in the Natural System, right or wrong method or procedure in the Social System of rules, matching our goal or not in the Communicative System. Our feeling indicates whether the criteria are met or not. The emotions fear, anger and grief, indicate in what system a problem or issue is playing.

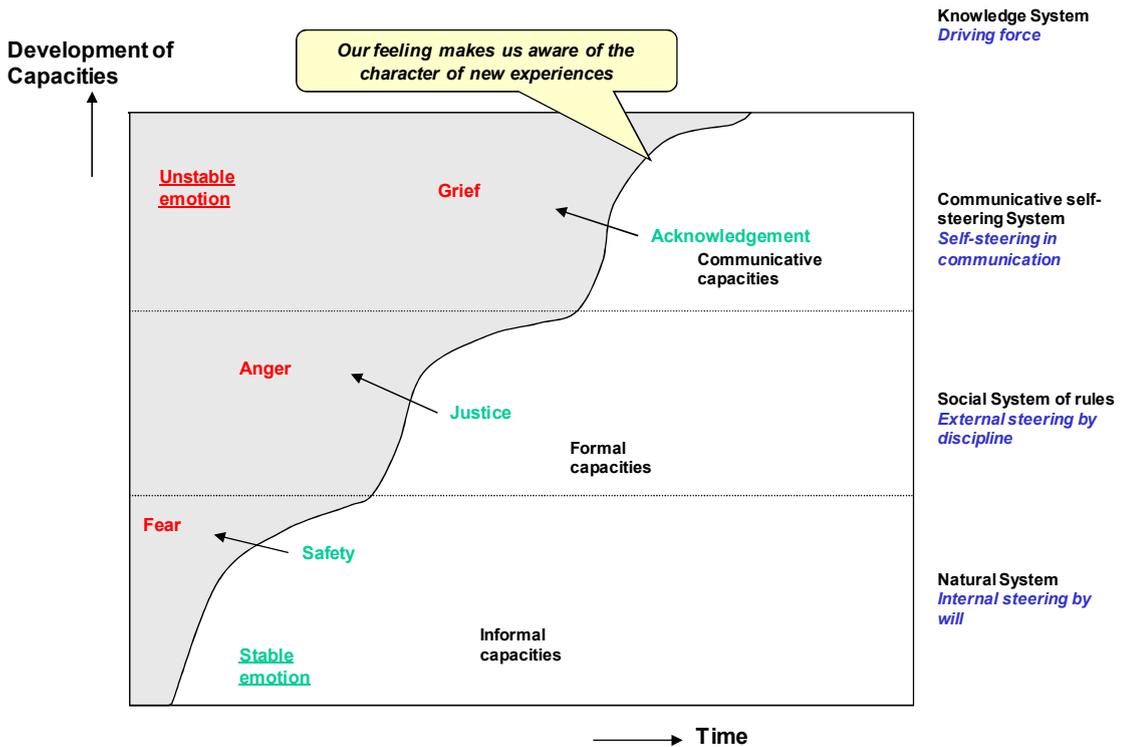


Figure 5-3: The role of feeling in the development of capacities over time.

Figure 5-3 illustrates the role of feeling in the development of capacities. In the Natural System, you feel at home, safe, if the situation is right. If not, you experience fear. Some organisations are known for their culture of fear. People do not feel safe, there is not enough trust because of pow-

er play or dictatorial leadership, or the physical conditions are not safe. For the Social System of rules, you feel fairly treated, if the situation is right. If not so, you are angry. In the system of communicative self-steering, you feel acknowledged if the situation is right, or grief emerges.

Catharsis and maturation

A child absorbs as much as it can take in, given its phase of development. Very much alike, the learning process for change in organisations goes only as far as the current logic is ready for (Cornelis, 1993, p. 561). In several workshops I conducted on the concept of the Logic of Feeling, the critique was expressed that it is a deterministic model, discriminating against people or organisations who did not reach the stage of communicative self-steering as inferior to those who have. However, this is not about value but about maturity. I do not think a child is less important than an adult is. We cannot say that a young developing system is worth less than an older or more mature one; at the most, that it has not developed to its full potential (yet). Nevertheless, there is a notion here of 'you have to be ready for it'; you cannot skip a stage. The basic assumption is that when you grow up you can lead a more meaningful life if you see more possibility of dealing with changes. Seeing no possibilities for the future leads to depression, burn out or even self-destruction.

Critique on purposefulness

Personal log, 5 March 2010: A reflection while reading an article of John Gray (2009, pp. 85-86) on Oakeshott's critique of purposefulness. I want to emphasise that even though the Logic of Feeling is a model for development, it has no fixed purpose, other than to grow up and flourish as all living creatures strive for. It does not promote one final destination to be reached, other than 'to play earnestly and to be earnest playfully' (Michael Oakeshott) and lead a meaningful life, whatever that may be. Arnold Cornelis states that a purpose is a threefold hypothesis, because we assume that:

1. We know what we want
2. We know how to reach our goal
3. When we have reached it, it will still be what we want.

The conditions for the next system have to be present as potentials, to be able to unfold. Cornelis speaks of the 'un-doubling' of the system. The process of un-doubling involves a catharsis, which he defines as an emotional liberation out of an out-dated knowledge system. Catharsis enables the nestling of emotions in a new knowledge system, a layer of stability, bringing new thoughts and seeing new possibilities. Catharsis is shown in Figures 5-1 to 5-5 as blunt transitions between the systems. For an individual, catharsis is called adolescence and midlife crises. If the conditions are not right, the next system is not created. Apes and humans are distinguished from other animals in our evolution by increased self-awareness. This affects how we deal with others, because we make a distinction between self and other, leading to higher forms of empathy such as sympathy and targeted helping (Waal, 2005, p. 185). Development of children, and development of organisations, parallels the transformation during our evolution by increased self-awareness.

Operationalisation of the Logic of Feeling

Over the years, I used the Logic of Feeling as a stepping-stone for a lot of change concepts and management models (see my online handbook on organisational change (Zouwen, 2010a)). Table 5-1 gives a summary of operational, observable aspects of the three knowledge systems, in relation to a broad range of concepts. In this summary, I choose the aspects I think most relevant in building a framework for sustainable change.

My conclusion is that for an intervention to be effective, the approach should fit the knowledge system that the main issue is playing in, and fit the stage of maturity of the organisation. My assumption is that LSI, or other participative interventions, are the right approach at moments of catharsis, to help unfold the Social System of rules into the Communicative self-steering System. This implies that an organisation has to be mature enough, providing a safe enough environment in the Natural System and a mature enough Social System of rules. This seems quite logical. If people do not feel safe because they cannot trust each other, or if the physical conditions are not safe, it seems unlikely that open communication and reflection will occur. In Chapter 14, this assumption will be assessed against the evaluation of past LSIs.

Cornelis elaborates his logic on how he sees development for almost every level of human culture. The Logic of Feeling tries to integrate all aspects of life. Appendix 8 provides a summary of the development of stability layers in views on reality, knowledge and science.

Table 5-1: Operationalisation of aspects of the three knowledge systems in the theory of *The Logic of Feeling*

Aspects	Natural System	Social System	Communication system
Steering type	Internal	External	Communicative self-steering
Driving forces	Will, desire, libido	Economics	Language, creativity
Truth is	What you can observe	What meets the norms	Multiple and variable, relational determined
The world is constructed of	Facts, what you observe	Possibilities, explanations of where you are compared to a model	Meanings, why you are there
Reality is reproduced by (Chia, 1996)	Representation	Construction	Deconstruction
Type of thinking (Zohar, 1997)	Associative, trial and error, largely unconscious	Rational, following rules	Chaos thinking, creative
Influence is gained through:	Power, authority, adaptation	Agreements, rules and laws	Evaluation and communication
Mainly expressed in:	Mother tongue	Science and technology	Policies
Uncertainty is reduced by:	Removal of fear by motherly love and religion or myths	Removal of anger, by standardization, jurisdiction, assurance	Removal of grief, of depression, by testing validity of rules against values
Feelings expressed in communication:	Fear, love, care, trust, distrust, belonging	Anger, justice	Grief, sadness, recognition, fulfilment
Conflict resolution	Violence (verbal or physical)	Legal justice	Communication
Type of conversation (Stacey & Griffin, 2005)	Shadow themes, conscious and unconscious	Formal – legitimate, conscious themes	Free flowing shadow conversations
Community is focused on:	Diversity	Unity	Diversity in unity
Role of consultant/facilitator in development:	Educator, teacher	Expert, accountant, jurist, manager	Facilitator, co-producer, coach
Role of the participant (Miller & Rice 1967)	Receiver, assumption mode	Professional, work mode	Emancipation, reflection mode
Learning is focused on: (Jaworski 1996)	What you learn	How you learn	Why you learn

5.2 The Complex Social Responsive Theory

The fundamental motivation of human behaviour is the urge to relate (Ralph Stacey)

Organisations as patterns of relations and communication

The second theory providing building blocks for the framework is the 'Complex Responsive Social Theory' of Ralph Stacey (2003). Stacey takes a critical stance towards rules for conversations. He has a specific view on relations and communication. His theory is about dealing with complexity, exactly one of the conditions LSI is suitable for, and about relating in conversations, the main activity in the large group meetings of LSI. This theory adds to the Logic of Feeling with an explanation of how transformation of capacities in an organisation takes place through communication with a paradoxical transformational causality. His basic work, *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics; the challenge of complexity* (2003) presents, just as the Logic of Feeling, a conceptually rich and elaborate theory, taking 486 pages to explain the theory. It is a risky enterprise to borrow some of his concepts, even more since I have a different view on some of his concepts and there are some conflicts with the Logic of Feeling. Nevertheless, I will try to describe the most essential concepts for the framework for sustainable change. Key notions of this theory are:

- Organisations are patterns of interaction between people, between human bodies
- Interaction is always communication which takes place in the medium of symbols
- Interaction is always power related, because in interaction, in relating, one is always simultaneously constraining and enabling each other's actions; relating is a complex responsive process
- Joint action is possible because complex responsive processes of relating are patterned in coherent, that is meaningful, ways
- Transformational change means changing conversation in a process of paradoxical transforming causality

Conversations, stories and narratives are complex responsive processes of symbols interacting with each other, to produce emergent themes of meaning that organise experience of those engaged in the conversation (Stacey, 2003, p. 350). Conversation comprises also the thoughts of individuals. Stacey calls thoughts 'silent conversations'. All our thoughts get their meaning in social interaction. There is no distinction between individual and group, they emerge simultaneously. Individuals form groups while being formed by them at the same time, as two aspects of the same process of human relating. The symbols are self-organising, in emerging themes. There are *legitimate*, acceptable themes, and *shadow*, not/less acceptable themes, related to the official stated ideology of the group. The official stated ideology emerged from shadow conversations some time ago. Another distinction between symbols is related to the formality of the themes. *Formal* themes are identified in terms of an organisation's purpose, the role it promises to fulfil in its larger community, in terms of membership, roles, tasks and purposes. *Informal* themes take a narra-

tive form, they concern all personal and social relationships not formally defined by roles or tasks (Stacey, 2003, p. 368).

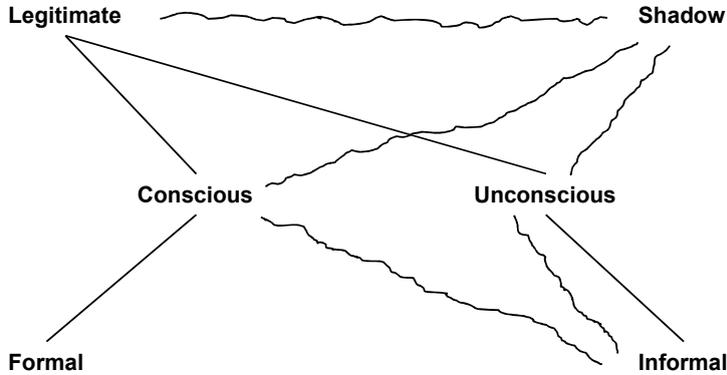


Figure 5-4: Legitimate and Shadow interactions between themes in conversations (Stacey, 2003, p. 370)

Figure 5-4 shows how the different types of themes and interactions are related. Formal themes, organising experience, are also conscious and legitimate. Formal-legitimate-conscious themes are i.e. plans, budgets and management systems. This is depicted in the figure as the straight-line connections between these categories. These are the organising themes that strategic choice theory focuses attentions on (Stacey, 2003, p. 370). Personal ambition and interpersonal rivalries are all part of every conversation. This brings in organising themes of an informal and a shadow nature. The wavy lines represent the shadow interactions. Informal-shadow-unconscious themes preserve ongoing power differences (Stacey, 2003, p. 373).

What is the connection between the Complex Social Responsive Theory and the Logic of Feeling? The Logic of Feeling is based on the assumption that everything that lives wants to grow. This puts relationships between living things under immediate pressure of competition and collaboration, making them a power-loaded relation. Stacey states that relations are always enabling and constraining at the same time. In nature, many organisms die before they mature and reproduce; this is compensated for by abundance of specimen. In a similar way, many organisations die prematurely. In the Natural System, the themes of conversations are shadow and for the large part unconscious themes. The Social System is built through legitimate, formal and conscious themes. To build the Communicative self-steering System, new themes need to emerge in a transforming process of changing conversations. The fundamental requirement for transformation is non-average, deviant, maverick or eccentric behaviour (Stacey, 2003, p. 375). My assumption is that the principles an LSI process, such as working with an unusually large and diverse group of stakeholders, provide the conditions for 'cross fertilisation in meetings of different disciplines', and 'lack of perfection in communication', required for transformation as shown in Figure 5-5.

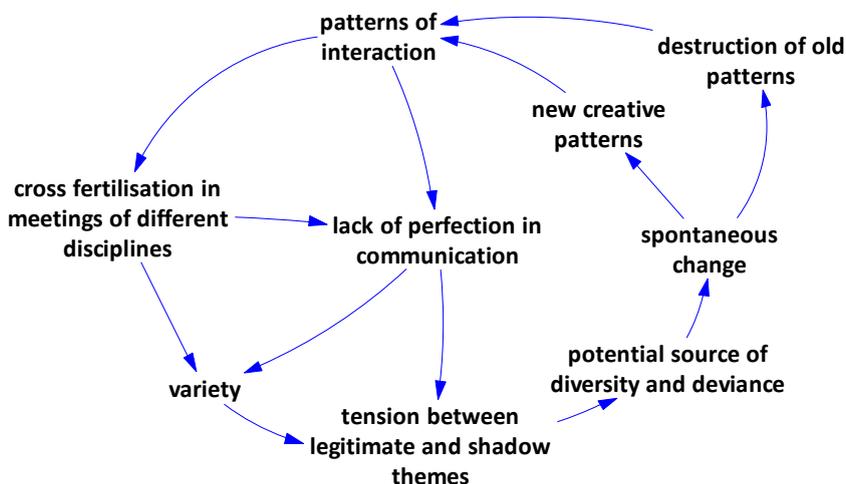


Figure 5-5: Transformation of conversations, according to the theory of Complex Responsive Processes (Stacey, 2003)

Communication as non-verbal process

According to Stacey, communication is essentially non-verbal, because we are working with images, with symbols, that people give and take (Stacey, 2003). A symbol is arbitrary: there is no inherent connection between the symbol and the meaning given to it. Whether or not someone agrees with a meaning is determined by feeling and is expressed in motivation: acceptance of the meaning as a meaning of steering. Both language and body produce symbols. The two systems of language and body are linked in unconscious logic: the models of reality we have. Giving meaning to experiences in organisations is a process Karl Weick calls *sensemaking* (Weick, 1995). It is a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding out of different individuals' perspectives. I will use this perspective to interpret LSI in Section 14.5.

Transforming, paradoxical causality

Transforming causality (Stacey, 2003, p. 390) means that interaction is iterated in each present as repetition or habit and at the same time as potential transformation. Transformation encompasses both gradual and dramatic change. This is a paradoxical causality; it is predictable and non-predictable at the same time, it aids continuity and transformation at the same time, it leads to creation and destruction. Paradoxical causality implies that opposites can be true at the same time, in different knowledge systems. In order to be able to evaluate sustainable change through a highly complex approach as LSI, a paradoxical causality brings a good perspective.

Sustainable change is an oxymoron

Marvin Weisbord (personal conversation 2008) states: “Sustainable change is an oxymoron. You try to create the system that you believe in every moment of the day. Every meeting should be a microcosm of the way you believe the system to be as much as you can. You try to create a transformation, to create a system you believe in, at the same time you have to iterate that interaction in each present as repetition or habit. We have to live and work with a paradoxical causality. In LSI, working participatively is both a condition and a result. Leaders play a central role in sustaining change. New leaders can ruin everything accomplished in the LSI”.

5.3 Towards a model for evaluation of intervention effectiveness for sustainable change

Change as collective learning in organising systems

Cornelis’ model The Logic of Feeling, combined with the paradoxical view by Stacey of sustainable change as a complex responsive social process, offers a framework for evaluation of intervention effectiveness for sustainable change. I have called this framework the ‘Logic of Will, Discipline and Communication’. Sustainable change is defined as developing the communicative self-steering capacities within the organisation, which expresses in changing conversations. Conversations are complex responsive processes of symbols interacting with each other, to produce emergent themes of meaning that organise the experience of those engaged in the conversation. Symbols are also embedded in the setting, i.e. the conditions created for gatherings of people. This is relevant for this research on sustainable change with LSI, since LSI is a socio-technical approach, rather than a behavioural approach, as described in Section 4.3. The intention is to invite new communication and action to emerge, and not trying to bring about change by ‘working on the behaviour’ of people (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010a). By organisation, I mean a work system with a common task. This may correspond to a business or institution, but it can also refer to a department, a project organisation or network.

Although I borrow concepts from both theories, there are important differences. I do not share the opinion of Stacey concerning systems thinking. He sees systems and systems thinking as a mistake, as focusing on non-existing wholes. Nevertheless, he speaks of processes in the group and in the wider group. I see systems as temporally defined ‘wholes’ for practical reasons, not as a static, closed or ‘really existing group’. With the quote of Yogi Berra in mind “In theory there is no difference between theory and practice, in practice there is”, I think my interpretation of systems thinking fits the paradoxical nature of change processes discussed before.

The Logic of Will, Discipline, and Communication: a model for development of collective learning

Figure 5-6 represents my model the Logic of Will, Discipline, and Communication as the development of capacities to deal with change, defined as collective learning, the ability to see more possibilities and use them to achieve the organisation’s goals (Cornelis, 1993). Collective learning enables the organisation to grow and blossom, to grow up, as it were. Therefore, I do not speak of

‘the learning organisation’, because this term suggests that learning itself is the goal. Not all collaborations blossom, because obstacles can inhibit collective learning.

Each individual in his/her existence, goes through the entire history of the culture, just as each individual goes through the entire history of biological evolution. Organisations also progress from *unconscious* in the Natural System, through *normative* in the Social System, and finally to *communicative* in the Communicative self-steering System. Learning takes place at the level of the individual and the organisation. Collective learning pertains to all aspects of the organisation, aspects in the Natural System, as well as in the Social System of rules and in the System of Communicative self-steering. Cornelis talks respectively about zero, first, and second-order learning for the collective. I adopted this terminology for the model (see Figure 5-6).

Classification of learning levels

Although this classification in zero, first, and second-order collective learning resembles the categories single, double and triple loop learning of Chris Argyris (1991) and André Wierdsma (1999), the interpretation is different. Single-loop learning for the collective is situated in the Social System of rules, and not in the most basic system, the Natural System of Cornelis (1993)

The three phases/layers in the development process have three fundamental, but different driving forces. In Phase 1, individuals collaborate because of individual gains. The driving force is each person’s will power to grow.

In Figure 5-6, the arrows pointing to the left indicate the learning obstacles which may occur in a particular phase of development. I call these obstacles ‘blockades’ since they are based on the ‘fixations’ as defined by André Wierdsma (1999). The ascending line in the figure traces the construction of the ideal situation. Following the causal loops of Figure 5-2, the blockades presented in Figure 5-5 can be logically derived for each knowledge system. The first blockade occurs when the driving force of the system is too weak, while the second blockade occurs when the driving force is too strong. I will hereafter provide for each phase a description of the ideal situation and of the learning blockades which may occur in that phase (Zouwen, 2007, 2010c)

Development of collective learning in an organisation

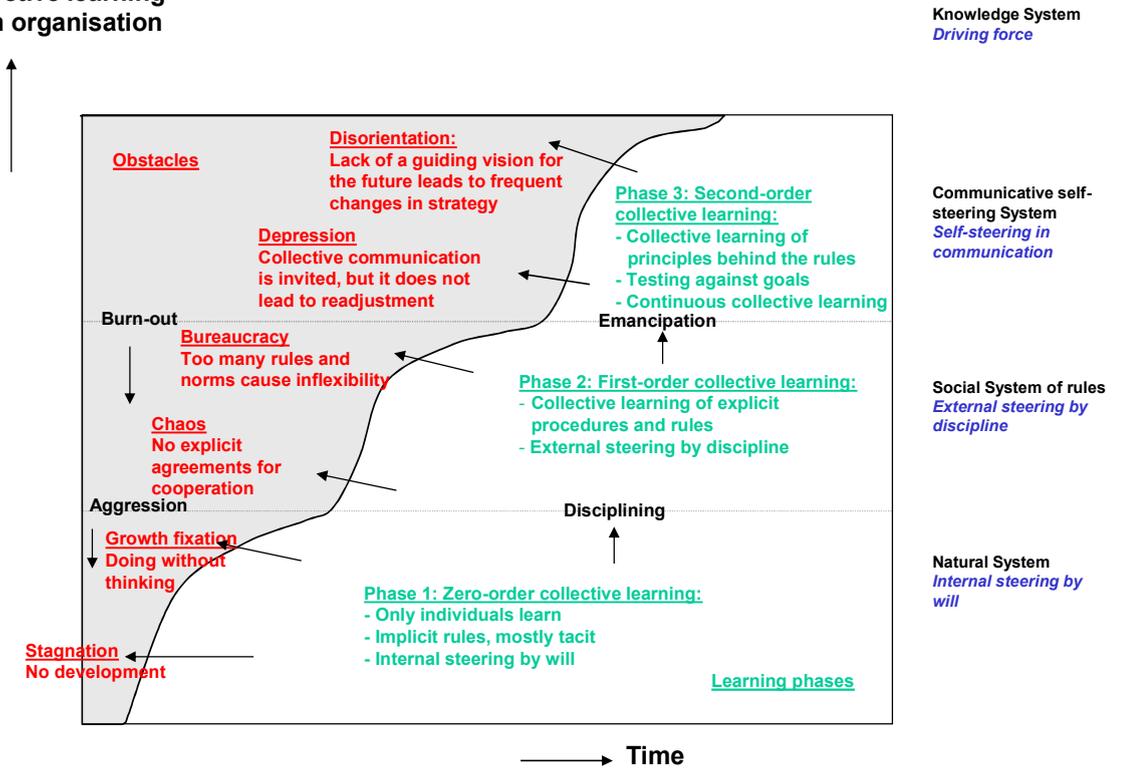


Figure 5-6: The logic of Will, Discipline and Communication; a model for development of collective learning in an organisation

Phase 1: Development of the Natural System: growth through will

The organisation is geared to growth by doing, that is the capacities and internal will power of the relevant persons are decisive. Unconscious experiences in relationships, such as power relations and character attributes play a major role. There are often still only a few explicit rules of play. In the ideal situation, management pays attention to the staff. People feel at home, as if they belong there. The working conditions are such that people feel safe in the organisation.

Learning obstacles in the Natural System are:

1. **Stagnation:** If there is too little will, then growth will stagnate. This can occur because people are afraid to make mistakes, are unsure, or do not feel at ease. The prevalent feeling is fear of new steps.
2. **Growth fixation:** If there is too much will, then people run the risk of being crushed under the weight of their own drive for growth because things are not well organised. On the

other hand, work may get bogged down in a power struggle due to political games that do not contribute to collective development. The prevalent feeling is aggression, which manifests itself in a strong drive.

In this phase, the collective does not learn. Cornelis calls this 'zero-order' learning because, for the collective, the degree of freedom to choose is zero. Those with power determine what must be done. Individuals can indeed choose. They can start a power struggle or leave the organisation. Learning obstacles in Natural Systems have everything to do with status and losing face. Deviant behaviour can be very threatening to others and can result in counteraction, which precludes lasting application of what has been learned. The story you tell must fit in with "that's how we do things here". Stagnation and growth fixation can cause the premature death of the organisation.

Phase 2: Development of the Social System of rules: professionalisation via discipline

As an organisation is further developed, good agreements are needed to enable collaboration for efficient operational management. These can range from simple working agreements and administrations to complex management and information systems, depending on the nature and size of the organisation. People make explicit rules and structures for operational management and for the required professional skills. If everything is in place, rules and structures are also regularly checked for proper functioning. The cycle of planning and control is born. The collective learns to deal with the explicit rules. The drive for development from the Natural System is controlled by the discipline of the Social System of rules. If everything is in place, then people will have the feeling that they are working in a just and well-organised organisation.

Learning obstacles in the Social System are:

3. Chaos: If there is too little discipline for making good agreements or fulfilling them, then people do not learn to work together efficiently. A great deal of time and energy is spent looking for information and reinventing the wheel. Things are not organised correctly, and people are treated unfairly. This causes anger.
4. Bureaucracy: There is too much discipline. People cannot break away from the existing procedures and rule systems. New ideas do not get a chance because they do not fit in with the existing norms. If there are problems, then people grasp for still more planning and control, more procedures and more analyses of the structures. They do not get any further than learning the existing norms. The prevalent feeling is oppression due to the restrictions from an excess of rules.

This phase features 'first-order learning' for the collective. This concerns avoiding mistakes made in the past by making and adjusting rules and systems to complete the cycle of plan-do-check-act.

Learning obstacles in the Social System of rules have everything to do with justice, namely just design and application of rules for allocation of staff and resources. If a large group of people feel they are being treated unfairly, then there will be a great deal of anger. Over time, the entire col-

lective could regress back to phase 1. In this case, the conflict is no longer being fought via the agreed rules in the social rule system, but rather via interpersonal violence (physical or verbal) in the Natural System.

Phase 3: Development of self-steering: come to fruition via communication

To become and maintain the desired organisation in the face of changing circumstances requires innovation. The more possibilities people can see and avail themselves of as a collective, the better they can follow a meaningful course as an organisation. However, innovation requires the willingness to revise the existing situation and the existing rules of play. This calls for collective development of reflection and communication capabilities. This applies even more so because the rules of play from the Natural System, i.e. the internal logic of 'that's how we do things here', is largely unconscious. In an organisation with a system for communicative self-steering, people feel recognised in their contribution to the organisation and people feel like they are doing meaningful work. Now we have 'second-order collective learning': people collectively learn not only rules, but also steering of (and contribution to) the learning process.

Learning obstacles in the Communicative System are:

5. Depression: There is in fact communication regarding the state of affairs, but this does not result in readjustment. People say one thing and do another. People do not feel like they are being taken seriously. Rules are in fact being evaluated, but no insight is gained into the principles behind the rules. People do feel at home, operational management is well organised, but people feel like they are busy with the wrong things. New ideas do not get the recognition they deserve. This depresses people. In severe cases, this results in burnout or even self-destruction.
6. Disorientation: A great deal of reflection and communication takes place and the course is drastically changed on a regular basis. Reorganisations, change projects and system implementations come one after another. Consultants are in and out and a new development project starts as the last one is ending. Due to all the course changes, substantial goals are not attained. People get frustrated and distressed because they are always taking on something new and because there is no shared vision for a meaningful future.

If an organisation gets bogged down in communication and reflection and the direction does not mesh with what people as a whole think is vital, then lasting frustrations can cause the entire organisation to acquire destructive tendencies and regress to phase 2.

To conclude: this model describes three consecutive stages in organisational maturing. Each stage has a different fundamental driver. The model explains how, at each stage, different obstacles to learning and growth can emerge. These obstacles can cause frictions and regression in organisations. The model helps us to understand why emotions such as fear, anger and grief are indicators of different obstacles at different layers of the model, i.e. of different maturation stages.

5.4 The framework and sustainable change

Sustained effectiveness requires continuous change (Lawler III & Worley, 2006, p. 23)

The Logic of Feeling brings understanding of the chronological order of passing through the knowledge systems (Cornelis, 1993, p. 210), which is useful for understanding when interventions for organisational change are effective. The logic brings different questions, such as “Are we ready for it? Is there enough trust? Am I acknowledged as human being?” Communicative learning, second-order learning, is not a phase you start with, not as a person and not as an organisation (Cornelis, 1993, p. 621). There is a chronological order for going through the three knowledge systems: first we learn how to observe the material world and develop factual knowledge. Then we project our observations onto possibilities and impossibilities, creating a model of the Social System of rules. Finally, we develop steering knowledge, namely is it meaningful or not? The order is observation, action, evaluation and communication.

I define non-sustainable change as first-order collective learning, and sustainable change as second-order collective learning, as conceptualised in Section 5.3. This distinction of two levels of effectiveness can be recognised in concepts from other disciplines, for instance organisation theory, collaboration, business economy, social psychology. Appendix 7 provides a selection of perspectives on first-order and second-order effects from different concepts.

Communicative self-steering is not about looking for alternatives for informal or formal aspects, or about revealing the unwritten rules of the game in the Natural System. The organising themes, legitimate and shadow, formal and informal (Stacey & Griffin, 2005), all keep playing their roles.

According to the concept of transforming causality by Stacey this means the principles of LSI have to be continuously sustained.

5.5 Summary: Sustainable and non-sustainable change

Over-emphasis of rationality and language in organisational change literature and models calls for another model, honouring time, feelings and creativity as well as skills and ratio. In this chapter I have developed a framework for evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions, The Logic of Will, Discipline and Communication. The framework is based on the Logic of Feeling by Arnold Cornelis (1993) and the Complex Social Responsive Theory by Ralph Stacey (2003).

Sustainable change does not mean 'sustaining the status quo', but building of capacity to deal with changing situations in a desirable way. Sustainable change means that the change 'ripples off'. The rippling off shows as (Jac Geurts, personal conversation 2008):

- Not only here, but also there
- Not only now but also then
- Not only on us but also on them.

As described in Chapter 4, practitioners of Large Scale Interventions claim to establish sustainable change. This means the interventions facilitate the 'unfolding' of first-order collective learning in the Social System of rules in an organisation into second-order collective learning in the new knowledge System of Communicative self-steering. According to the framework, this will only be possible under the right conditions, if the organisation is mature enough, if it has outreached the possibilities of the Social System of rules (catharsis).

The effectiveness of LSI can be evaluated on two levels:

1. Non-sustainable change, showing in first-order or incremental effects. These are effects to get more work done, they do not challenge the status quo, are not transformational but transactional. They do not 'ripple off'.
2. Sustainable effects, showing in second-order or transformational effects. They shift the norms in relationships and communication. They cause the change to 'ripple off'.

The next step is to build an instrument to evaluate concrete LSIs, using the categories of the research model for evaluation of interventions as described in Section 3.7, in combination with the framework for sustainable change contained in this Chapter. This will be done in the next Chapter.