

Managing Organizational Change

Process, Social Construction and
Dialogue

Second Edition

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DEFINING CHANGE

Learning objectives

By the time you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss how change can be triggered by a variety of forces from within the organization itself and/or from its external environment.
- Discuss the notion of change in terms of two broad types (episodic change and continuous change) and how continuous change can be utilized to clarify the notion of change as 'becoming'.
- Appreciate the importance of a realistic vision in driving the change effort.

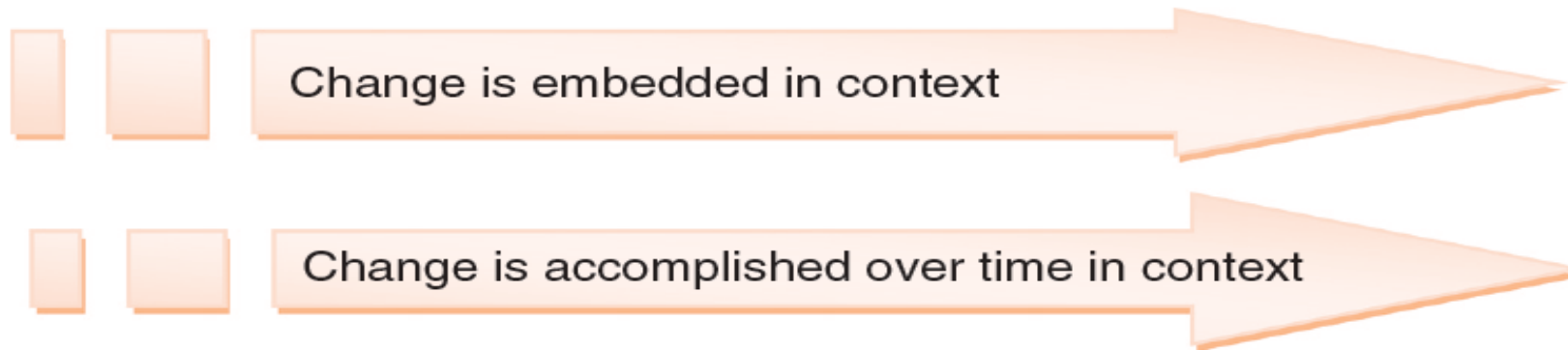
We begin by describing how change is often forced on an organization by a variety of external and internal forces affecting the organization itself. The nature of change is then explored, with an emphasis on change being understood as an ongoing 'condition', rather than an isolated event. The notion of change as rhizomic is then introduced. This chapter introduces the work of Kurt Lewin. It also reviews the work of issues of the *type* and *pace* of change. These aspects of change are essential to planning and evaluating the change initiative to be pursued

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is reported to have said: 'You cannot step into the same river twice.' To which his student is reported to have responded: 'Not even once, since there is no same river.' In making his observation, the ancient (pre-Socratic) philosopher was emphasizing that change is an *ongoing* process, and his student's response underlined this notion by emphasizing 'changing', rather than mere 'change'.

Triggers for Change and Changing

- Begin with forces - both external and internal.
- Next, relate forces to context at hand.
- What are the issues at play?
- Next, describe these issues?
- Next, ask the question: how do the issues relate to each other?
- Next start thinking issues in terms of processes

Change processes can be defined as *ongoing* activities needed for change to take place and so all such activities need to be embedded in context.



Context is always subject to change as the external and internal forces affecting the organization change starts shifting. In terms of the metaphor of the river noted above, it might be said that every river has its own ‘context’, which is constituted by its embankment, topography and terrain.

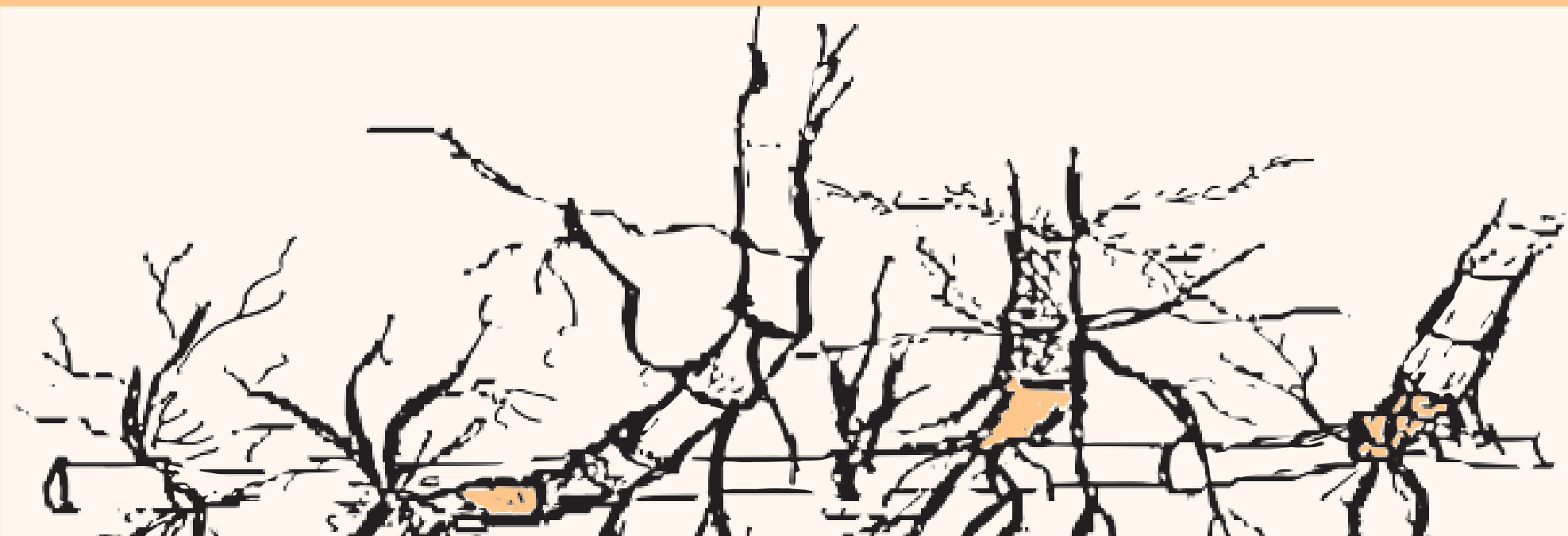
In *Tamara* a dozen characters unfold their stories before a moving (walking, sometimes running) audience. *Tamara* enacts a true story taken from the diary of Aelis Mazoyer, set in Italy in January 1927, in the era of Mussolini. Gabriele d'Annunzio, a poet, patriot, womanizer and revolutionary, who is exceedingly popular with the people, is under virtual house arrest. Tamara, an expatriate Polish beauty, aristocrat and aspiring artist, is summoned from Paris to paint

d'Annunzio's portrait. The audience does not remain stationary, viewing a single stage; rather, the audience fragments into small groups who chase characters from one room to the next, and from one floor to the next, co-creating the stories that interest them the most. With a dozen stages and a dozen storytellers, the number of potential storylines that could be traced by an audience member is 12 factorial (479,001,600).

Sources: Barge (2004); Boje (1995).

To emphasize continuity let's use the notion of a rhizome.

- A rhizome provides us with an image of how change is about continuity and multiplicity.
- A rhizome is also about networks. The social media is a fine example denoting a typical rhizome structure.



A rhizomic change has no beginning or end

There are numerous models useful for guiding the change effort. Basically they are all about movement. Here we will briefly talk about Kurt Lewin's model in order to obtain a feel of how such models are basically used.

Whether change is described as episodic or continuous, the fact remains that building the case for change and sustaining the capability for system readiness remain crucial. Creating readiness involves having to use one's own capacity and that of others (peers, associates, clients, customers, etc.) to generate desired and more creative images of the future.

Lewin's (1951) three-step model	Weick and Quinn's (1999) three-step model
Unfreeze	Freeze
Movement	Rebalance and then reinterpret as opportunities
Refreezing (<i>ice-topping</i>)	Unfreeze
<i>Sources: Adapted from Lewin (1951) and Weick and Quinn (1999).</i>	
Ulrich's (1988) seven-step model	Kotter's (1996) eight-step model
Lead change	Establish a sense of urgency
Create a shared need	Form a guiding coalition
Shape a vision	Create a vision
Mobilize commitment	Communicate the vision
Change systems and structures	Empower others to act
Monitor progress	Plan to create short-term wins
Make change last	Consolidate
	Ratify and legitimate

Sources: Adapted from Ulrich (1998) and Kotter (1996).

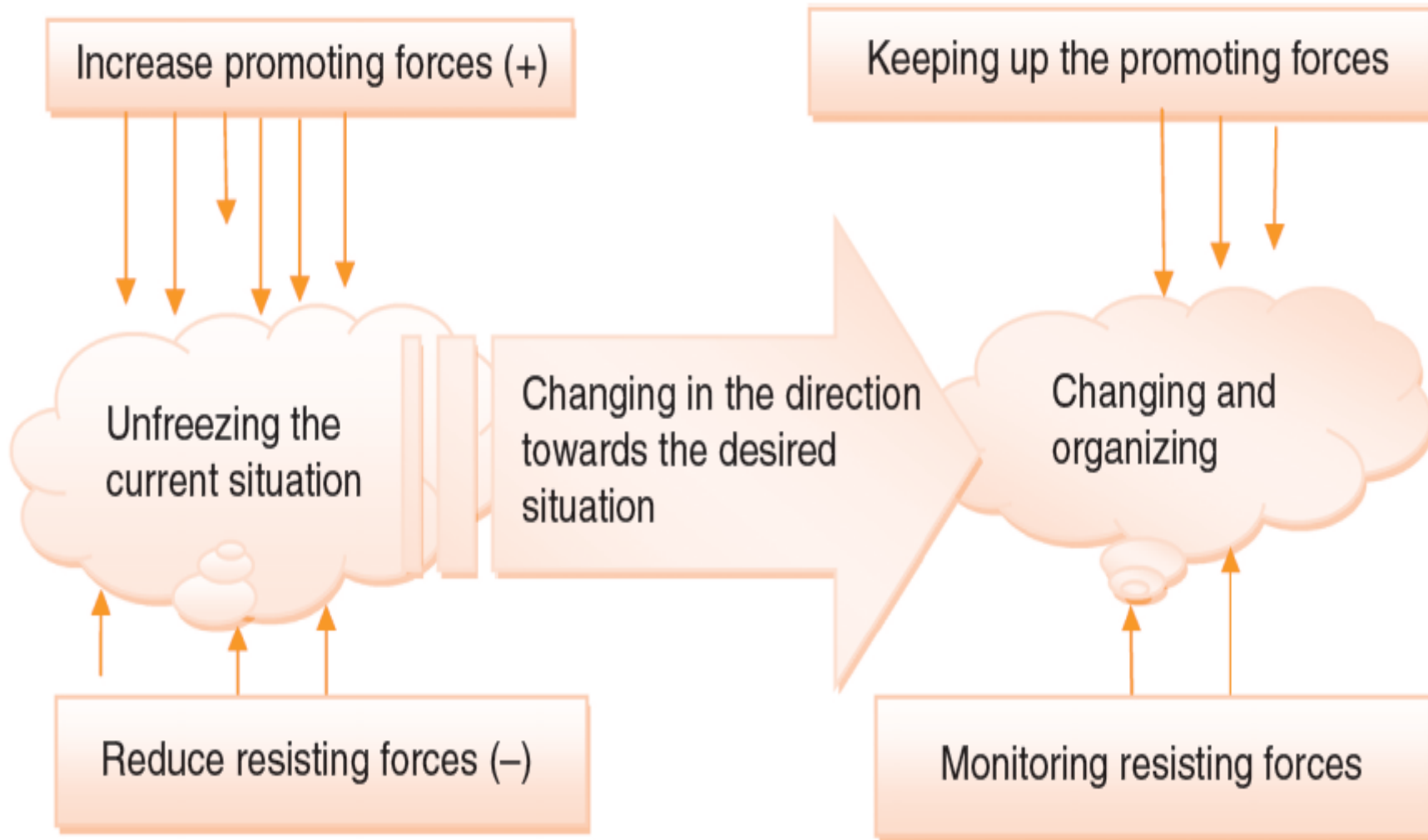
Let us take Lewin's Model as an example of how movement is conceptualized. Here we have *unfreezing*, *change* and *refreezing*. If we consider the 'refreezing' element to mean, rather, 'ice-topping' – a fleeting (short-lived) act – then the concept still fits with the notion of organizational life as an ever-changing process phenomenon, based on a continual sense of movement.

Through ice-topping we could carefully retain (improvise) the best and most relevant aspects of Lewin's force-field while providing an essential backbone for change. The notion of 'ice-topping' ensures an optimization of effort and continuous learning, hence providing further opportunities for the testing of ideas in practice.

Who is Kurt Lewin?

Lewin was one of those researchers whose work has contributed to our knowledge of change management.

According to Argyris (1993: 8) “Kurt Lewin was a pioneer researcher in producing actionable knowledge, and his work is an exemplar of research activity that is both basic and actionable and that often has a consulting relationship.”



Kurt Lewin's model is similar to that of a story. As with storytelling, every phase, whether it is about unfreezing or refreezing, is likely to involve conversations, complications, events and the sharing of experiences.

Every phase, is likely to fire the responses of those members close to the change effort.

Virtually any change effort, large or small, can generate a story. That is when events are told through a vast array of communication forms: meetings, mobile phones, iPads, email, Twitter and other social media outlets.

What is the difference between vision and mission?

- To some extent, vision and mission partly overlap in terms of meaning.
- Useful to note that mission statements describe *who the organization is* and what it does.
- Vision should describe a future world where the mission is advanced and where goals and strategy are articulated.

How can we ensure that vision does not backfire?

- By ensuring that vision is translated into realistic and realizable mission statements that are shared by people from more than one level.
- By ensuring that vision gains its meaning through the imagination and foresight of the organization members themselves, rather than portraying it as an objective determined by 'the organization' – a somewhat impersonal, abstract concept.
- By co-constructing vision through the involvement of people from more than one level. Conversations and ongoing talk that monitor the development and renewal of the vision itself remain necessary.