Introduction to the Special Issue
The Dance of Structure and Culture
in Organizational Change

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The study of organizational change is one of the great themes in the social sciences. A large number of scholars from different disciplines has devoted time and effort to the study of development, transformation, decline, and re-generation of human systems. Organization studies make no exception, as also documented by several articles published over the years in *Studi Organizzativi* (e.g. Butera, 2011; Di Guardo, 2012; Grandori, 2007). Since the seminal model of Lewin (1951), in fact, organizational change has been one of the most central research theme in the discipline (e.g., Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Porras & Silvers, 1991). Recent economic, technological and political changes have increased the complexity of the environmental conditions in which organizations operate, making the ability to cope with the ever changing contextual conditions a key determinant for organizational survival and success (D'Aveni, 2010; McKinley, Latham & Braun, 2014).

The focus of this special issue is on the interplay between the processual and the structural dimensions of organizational change. In this view, change processes and new system changes should be seen together with their inter-connection with contexts over time. Besides the important role played by the outer context, i.e. the economic, social, political, and sector environment in

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which an organization operates, the focus of the articles included in this special issue relates to the inner context, and specifically the relationship between the structural and the cultural elements of organizational change. Indeed, structures and culture are two elements strictly intertwined in change processes. Whereas there is high consensus around the idea that successful change depends on the ability to manage both the hard (i.e. organizational structures) and the soft (i.e. organizational culture) sides of change, organizational studies have largely investigated them as separate, independent change elements.

Investigating organizational change under this perspective arises questions about the role of history, structure, cultures, power, and politics in enabling and constraining change. A deeper understanding of how change happens and why some change processes are more effective than others demands a (critical) reflection on these elements. Indeed, change explanations are increasingly viewed as an interaction between context and action, where the inner context could be interpreted as a "nested arrangement of structures and processes in which the subjective interpretations of actors' perceiving, learning, and remembering help shape process" (Pettigrew, Woodman & Cameron, 2001: 699).

Five manuscripts constitute this volume, having endured competition and judicious review process. These papers come from the XVII Italian Workshop of Organization Scholars held at the University of Pisa in February 2017 and titled "Organizing between reality and appearance in times of change". Taken together, they depict an original and relevant snapshot of the complexity of change-management processes in contemporary organizations. Though the five papers analyze organizational change in different contexts as well as with different methodological and epistemological approaches, they come together in showing that organizational change is often designed without paying the due attention to cultural, immaterial, and perceptual aspects. In that, they also claim that this represents a huge risk in terms of performance results, since those aspects are highly influent in terms of recipients' reactions to the new structures implemented with a consequent impact on the success of the new system.

This aspect emerges clearly from the first two papers of the special issue. In the first manuscript, *The dance of change in penitentiary care: Window dressing or a new penitentiary care recipe?*, Palumbo, Annarumma and Adinolfi analyze how institutionally pushed organizational change takes shape in the particular context of coercive organizations. They consider the case of a penitentiary organization of Southern Italy, which implemented the

Reform of the penitentiary health services (law 419/1998) by re-designing the organizational structure. The Reform implied a redesign of the responsibilities in the field of penitentiary care service, which shifted from the penal institutions to the Italian National Health Services. Adopting an explorative case study approach, the authors question whether and how the organizational change initiatives that followed the reform were able to meet the goal of improving inmates' access to care. In their narrative of the case study, the authors show the outcomes of redesigning the organizational structure of the penitentiary organization and the reconfiguration of the responsibilities between senior managers of the penitentiary organizations and health care professionals of the Italian National Health Services. In particular, result show that the two actors had conflicting perspectives about their respective roles, which ultimately translated in poor effectiveness of the care services for the inmates. The authors argue that these inadequate results are explained by the fact that the redesign of the structures and roles for inmates' health services was driven mainly by the need to increase the institutional legitimacy of the penal organization, without pay any attention to other important aspects of change, such as the involvement in the process of the interested actors (inmates, managers of the penal organization, professionals of the national health services), the need of coordination between the actors that a kind of reorganization like that requires, and the provision of adequate training and educational programs for the key actors involved in the reorganization.

In the second paper, *Post-acquisition integration: Use a stick or a carrot? A sensemaking perspective on integration process*, Gianecchini offers an analysis of the integration process of the HR departments of two companies involved in an acquisition operation. Consistently with the framework of the special issue, the paper starts from the idea that mergers and acquisitions require both structural and human integration to be successful, since human integration facilitates structural integration. Adopting an explorative approach, Gianecchini points to the need of analyzing the actors' socio-psychological processes activated during the experience of the process of change for a deeper understating of the human dimension of these complex change initiatives. Such socio-psychological processes are influenced by sensemaking and sensegiving processes. More specifically, the former refers to the individual construction and reconstruction of meaning based on experience and information available; the latter to the attempt to influence the sensemaking of others through language, symbols and symbolic actions. This approach allows the author to explore how divergent perspectives between actors arise during the process of integration, leading to situations where the

structural aspect could be successfully accomplished whereas the integration of the human dimension remained highly problematic, with clear implication for the sustainability of this situation over time. The findings of this study highlight three key triggers that precipitated the divergence between the employees of the two companies: poor communication, which represents the inception of divergent sensemaking; (un)willingness to work together, which is strongly affected by poor communication and leads employees to perceive the merger or acquisition process as a zero-sum game; limited slack resources, which refers to the (unsatisfied) need to allow some slack in process to reduce the pressure to meet performance standards by acquired company.

In the third paper, *Exploring the hidden aspects of organizational change: The constellation of controls at a FCA Plant*, Pezzillo Iacono, De Nito, Martinez and Mercurio analyze organizational change adopting a post-structuralist approach based on the idea that change processes often have hidden aspects. which reside in the material and discursive practices adopted by managers. Their qualitative analysis focuses on one of the most debated case of organizational change in Italian companies: Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) plant in Pomigliano d'Arco, Naples. Following a common trend in the automobile industry around the globe, in 2010 FCA started a radical change process moving from traditional, tayloristic work organization to the adoption of the World Class Manufacturing principles. Contrasting the mainstream approach to organizational change, the analysis focuses on the relationships between change and the power of control. In doing so the paper shows that managerial discourses and practices are not always intended at facilitating and supporting change. On the opposite, they can also be interpreted as levers to create the illusion of change and reproduce and enhance existing control systems. By interviewing HR managers, production managers, team leaders and assembly-line workers, the authors conclude that, if in terms of performance standards the case of Pomigliano can be considered as an example of successful organizational change, in terms of control systems the actual change was more apparent than real. Indeed, the implemented change can also be interpreted as a combination of material and discursive controls used by managers to regulate employees' behaviors. For example, the adoption of autonomous teams as the main way to organize work happened together with work intensification, pervasive peer pressure, and close technological surveillance within teams. Thus, organizational practices and managerial discourse on autonomy, flexibility and enhancement of employees related to the adoption of the WCM principles, actually operated to extend self-regulation and standardization.

In the fourth paper, *Real and apparent changes of organizational processes in the era of big data analytics*, Martinez, Di Nauta and Sarno present a conceptual framework for understanding changes in organizational process when Big Data Analytics (BDA) are implemented. BDA are clearly at the center of current debate in the organizational and strategic literatures. The common view is that to gain competitive advantage, organizations can now rely on an immense amount of information that need to be properly stored, processed, analyzed, and used to make strategic decisions. From an organizational perspective, the implication is that companies need appropriate competences, structures and processes to fully exploit the potential of BDA. The authors propose a conceptual model for understanding BDA-related organizational change. They see the organization as a viable system in which it is always possible to detect a structure (made by components with specific roles, activities and objectives) and a system (made by the dynamic interactions that are activated within the structure), and broadly identify two potential paths for BDA implementation. The first path is characterized by the implementation of BDA-related change by only modifying the organizational structures, as for example in the case of a company introducing BDA to analyze suppliers' performances. The second path is characterized by the pervasiveness of the implementation of BDA-related change in terms of both structures and systems, changing the roles, activities and objectives together with the networks of relationships for organizational decision making. The authors conclude by discussing how the first path (defined as apparent change) may have negative impact on the organization, whereas the second path (real change) can sustain the emergence of a new viable system.

In the last paper, *Toward a new museum experience: The importance of customer orientation and human resource courtesy*, Lombardi, Sassetti and Cavaliere analyze organizational change in the tourism industry. Specifically, they focus on a sample of Tuscan museums that experienced a deep process of change related to their need to increase tourist attractiveness. By adopting the lens of the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), the authors analyze how the museums are managing the adoption of a customer orientation and which factors help to explain this change. The analysis takes into consideration three levels of potential factors: institutional (formalization, rules and norms), organizational (organizational support for fruitful customer relationships), and individual (knowledge and skills). Findings emerging from the quantitative analysis show that formalization, organizational support and individual knowledge and skills are all positively related to organizational customer orientation. Organizational support is also positively related to employees' customer orientation.

Counterintuitively, individual knowledge and skills and formalization are not related to employees' customer orientation. The authors speculate on these findings suggesting that organizational culture could play a key role in influencing organizational results during change. Thus, the challenge for museums is to develop an organizational culture that supports the individuals during the process of change toward a new strategic goal.

We think this special issue offers different interesting perspectives on the issue of organizational change, thus stimulating the ongoing academic and practitioner debate. It also aims at pointing to new avenues that researchers are warmly invited to explore joining the intellectual practice offered within these pages. In conclusion, we would like to thank the colleagues who served as reviewers of this special issue for their generosity of time and constructive feedback.

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