

Transforming change

How change really happens
and what we can do about it

Paul Knox Clarke



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all of the speakers and participants at the 31st Annual Meeting, many of whom travelled significant distances and invested much thought and energy in order to share their experiences of change. He would also like to thank our colleagues in SIDA, who provided energy and enthusiasm around the topic of the meeting, and who hosted and financially supported it as a way of commemorating ALNAP's 20th anniversary. Thanks are also due to the ALNAP Secretariat team, whose combined work once again ensured that that content of the meeting, and the logistics and communications, were of such high quality.

In addition, Chanel Currow conducted the initial stages of the literature review for the background paper, and Alexandra Warner conducted and coded the interviews.

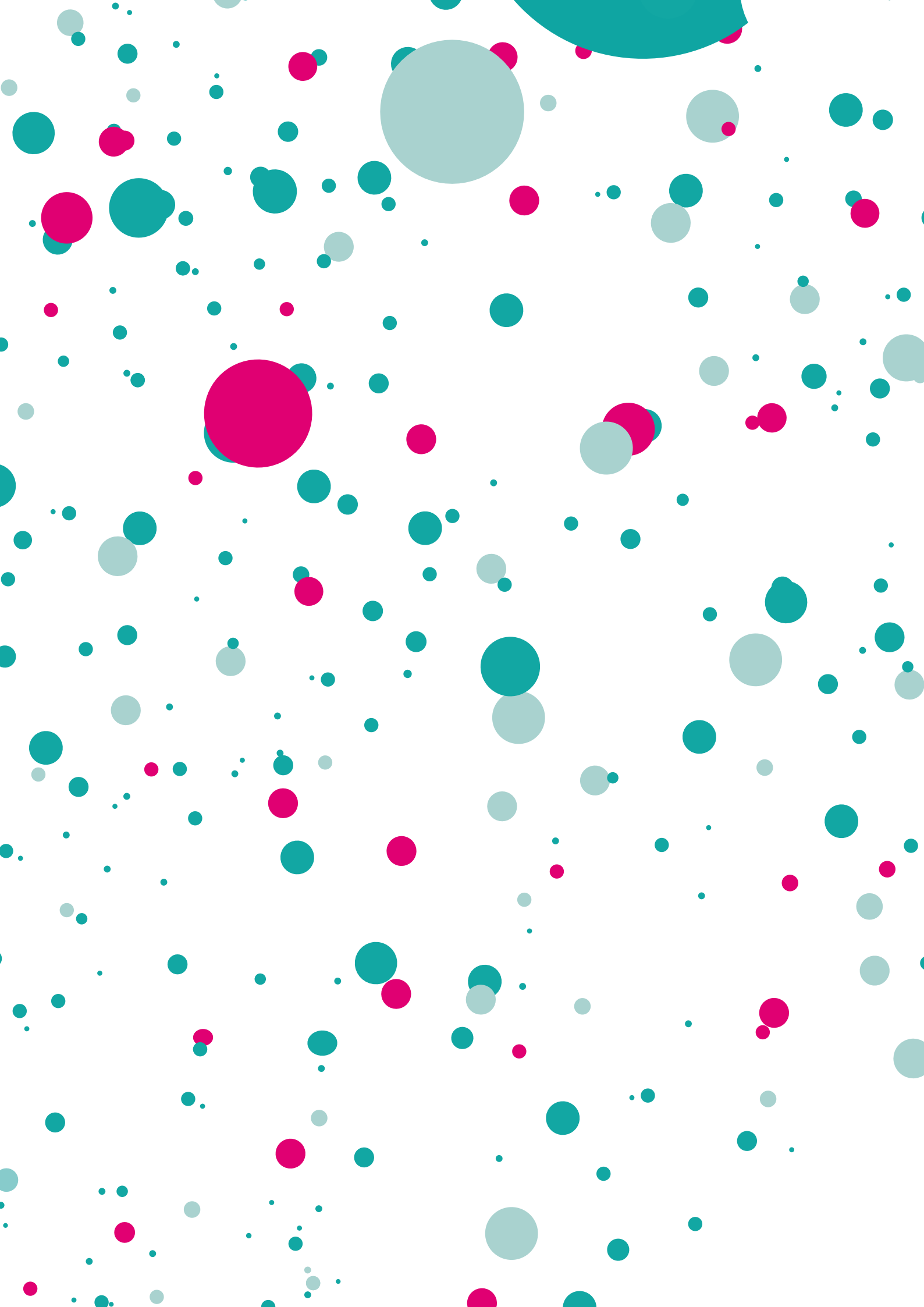
Finally, thanks are due to the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) at Oxford Brookes University, which kindly provided office space and access to online databases.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Knox Clarke, P. (2017) *Transforming change*. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI.

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Publication and communications management by Maria Gili
Design and typesetting by Soapbox
Edited by Deborah Eade and Renée Goulet
ISBN 978-1-910454-61-9



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDD	Doing Development Differently
H2H	Humanitarian to Humanitarian
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Project
HRUF	Humanitarian Rights Up Front
IT	Information technology
NGO	Non-government organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
RBM	Results Based Management
SAVI	State Accountability and Voice Initiative
TA	Transformative Agenda
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

INTRODUCTION



This paper considers how change happens in the humanitarian sector, and brings together ideas on ‘what works’ in supporting change. It is based on a background paper produced for the 31st ALNAP meeting in Stockholm, Sweden. The background paper was the result of a literature review and a series of interviews. It was discussed at the meeting, and the ideas in the paper were expanded, challenged and changed in ten expert panels, ten ‘story in five’ presentations on change, and 18 ‘agora’ presentations of ongoing change programmes. These two days of discussion were recorded and coded, and the paper was then rewritten. This paper, then, is based not only on interviews and a literature review, but also on the combined experiences of the ALNAP Membership, as recorded at the meeting.

The topic of change seems particularly relevant to humanitarians in 2017, as discussions on the Grand Bargain continue, one year after the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process. The Grand Bargain and WHS are the latest in a line of initiatives that have aimed to change and improve humanitarian action, going back to the Humanitarian Reforms of 2005, and beyond.

Much of the discussion around these initiatives has focussed on what should change, and why. There has, historically, been much less attention paid to the processes by which change actually happens in the humanitarian ‘system’ (a term that has implications for how we think about change, which we will consider later). And yet if we fail to understand how change happens, and how it can best be supported, we are unlikely to be successful in achieving our objectives – however important they may be. This paper aims to redress this balance, by focusing on the processes by which change happens in humanitarian organisations, challenging some of our (often implicit) assumptions around change, and providing guidance and suggestions on how to support change, based on the experience of the ALNAP Membership.

WHAT WAS THE MEETING ABOUT?

‘An idea such as change is actually very hard to grasp, although we deal with change every day’ (Opening panel). The term ‘change’ (and its close cousins, improvement, transformation, reform, innovation, reinvention and so on) has been applied to a huge array of activities, aspirations and processes affecting humanitarian action. While the meeting aimed to cover a broad spread of experiences in relation to change, it focused specifically on those changes which are consciously supported by humanitarians, rather than the many changes that are entirely beyond our control. It would be tempting, here, to go further and say that the focus was on changes that are planned and managed by humanitarians, were it not that the meeting made clear how little control we often have over change, even when we have ‘planned’ it, and so cast doubt on the idea of ‘managing’ change.

Within this area of ‘conscious’ change, the meeting looked specifically at changes to humanitarian organisations, or to the broader humanitarian ‘system’, rather than changes to the emergency context. All humanitarian work involves change: it aims, at the very least, to change the situation of people who are facing acute threat to their lives or livelihoods. Some humanitarian activities – particularly those in the field of campaigns and advocacy – go further, and aim to change the political or economic circumstances which lead to people being in these life-threatening situations in the first place. Both operational and advocacy work point ‘outwards’, and aim to make changes in the world. The meeting, however, focused on those changes which point ‘inwards’, where humanitarian organisations aim to change themselves. At the same time, the meeting organisers were mindful of the fact that humanitarians ‘have quite sophisticated ways of understanding how to do advocacy ... but when we’re confronted with things we want to

change in our own organisations, we think shouting an exaltation should be enough' (Opening panel), and included discussions on advocacy and other areas which might provide useful pointers to how we can support conscious change.

Different types of change

Even within these boundaries, however, the meeting considered a wide variety of activities. Topics included the introduction of specific systems in single agencies; the emergence of new types of organisation with new ways of working; programmes to create multiple, transformative changes across the whole humanitarian system; and ways in which agencies could harness new technologies to work more effectively. And while the aim of this paper is – to the degree possible – to identify generalisable lessons from these diverse experiences, it is also worth trying to tease them apart, and to suggest some ways to distinguish between these very different change activities.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the various experiences related to the **degree** of change they expected to achieve. In some cases, activities were expected to improve certain elements of the current way of doing things. At the other end of the scale, activities were expected to radically change the current model of humanitarian action, or even replace it with a new one. One interesting reflection here is that people working on the same change process might have different expectations about the degree of change that the process is meant to achieve. Differences in expectation have been very visible, for example, around the World Humanitarian Summit process, surfacing in discussions on whether the system is broke (implying that the model needs more money, but does not need to make radical changes) or broken (implying that a high degree of change is necessary); and on whether change should be 'incremental' or 'transformational',¹ based on 'reform' or on 'reinvention'. Another reflection, which surfaced in several panels, was that the degree of change is not necessarily related to the size or complexity of the change process: many 'little ripples' might create more change than a 'big wave'.

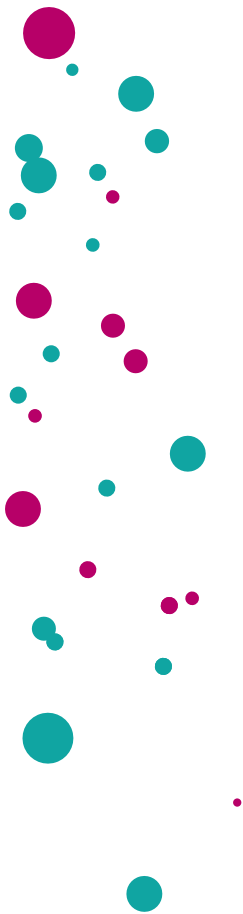
A second way to distinguish changes was by **scale**. This criterion had two elements. The first was breadth, in terms of how many people would be involved, and how far the change was expected to reach across, or beyond, a single organisation. Did the change affect part of an organisation, the whole organisation or the whole humanitarian 'system'? The second element was depth: whether the change affected only surface behaviours, or went 'deeper', to change individual assumptions or organisational culture. An interesting theme here was that, in order to be successful, changes often needed to be broader (Information technology and social media panel), or deeper (Localisation panel, Accountability and participation panel) than originally planned.

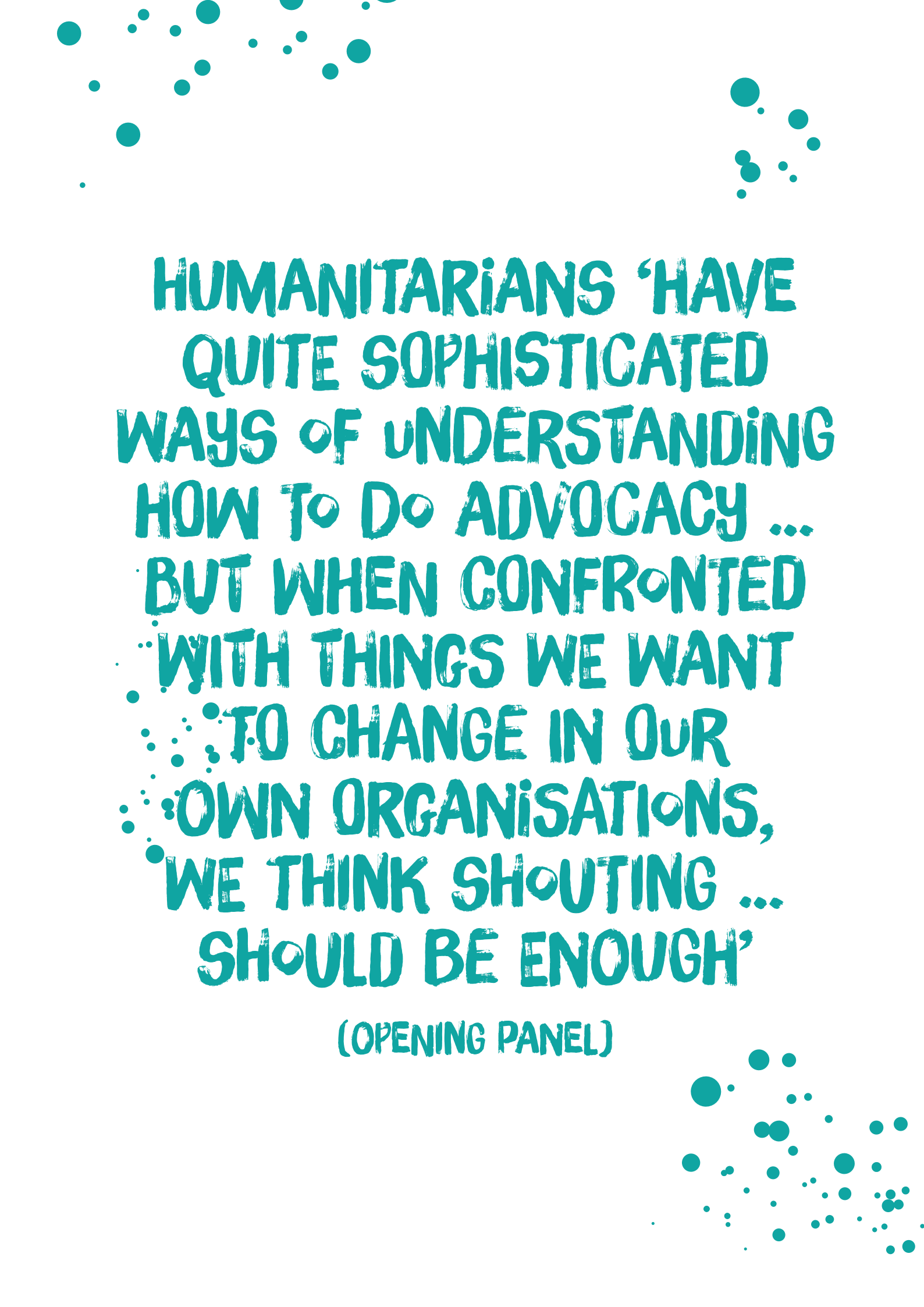


A third way to differentiate between the various (hoped for) changes related to **dimension** – the aspect of the system on which change efforts were focused. Dimensions of the humanitarian system include: the actors involved (*who* conducts humanitarian activities?); the nature and objectives of humanitarian work (*what* are they doing?); the methods and approaches used in humanitarian work (*how* are they doing it?); the location and context of work (*where* is international aid being provided?); and the timing of humanitarian activities (*when* do activities take place? What is the balance between activities before and after a crisis?). Much of the recent discussion on ‘localisation’, for example, has centred on the first of these dimensions – who should provide aid – while discussions regarding cash transfers have tended to concentrate on how aid is provided; efforts around protection on what should be done; and the attempt to improve urban humanitarian response on where humanitarians are involved. As with the issue of scale, these distinctions are not absolute: the presentations showed that changes in one dimension will often require – or catalyse – some degree of change in others. Moving to cash-based modalities, for example, will tend to change who is involved in providing assistance, while changing to local actors might require changes to how donors work (Localisation panel). Nevertheless, it is interesting, and perhaps important, to consider how different dimensions of change might present different challenges, and require different approaches.²

These different **approaches** to change can also be used to differentiate between change programmes. Here the difference relates to the process that is used to create change, rather than to the change itself – to the journey rather than the destination. Approaches highlighted at the meeting included those based on formal intergovernmental resolutions, on organisational restructuring, on training and capacity building, the introduction of new tools, or hiring new staff. The selection of approach seemed, very often, to be based on implicit assumptions about how organisations work, and why people behave in the way that they do: we will consider these assumptions later in the paper.

These categories are by no means perfect. In particular, they tend to describe theoretical distinctions that are not always borne out in practice. Real change programmes might use several approaches at once, for example, and address more than one dimension of change. But they do, hopefully, illustrate that not all changes are the same, and suggest that, as a result, not all change processes will be the same. There is unlikely to be a ‘magic bullet’ plan that can guide us in responding to major changes to the financing of humanitarian aid, and in introducing a new IT process, and in changing the culture of the system. They might also serve as tools to help us better understand and discuss what we hope to achieve and how we hope to achieve it – currently, it is easy for people to talk about a change and yet have a very different understanding of what they are discussing, and very different expectations of what should happen.

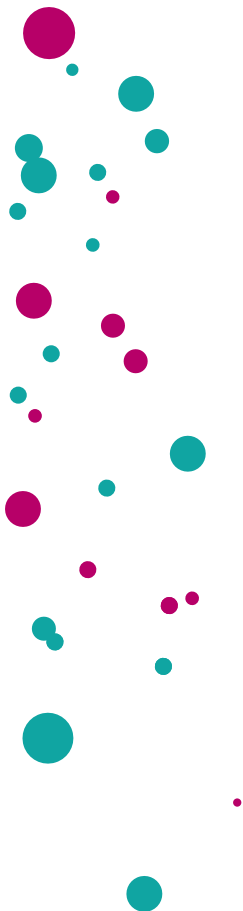




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(OPENING PANEL)

Broadly speaking, the smaller the change – in terms of degree and scale – the easier it is to achieve (Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014). The challenge comes when we intentionally try to create big shifts in the status quo, across a number of different organisations or organisational structures, in a number of related dimensions of activity. This paper focuses on how these more profound and substantial changes come about.



THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE – HUMANITARIANS, THE SYSTEM, AND THE WORLD BEYOND



Humanitarian action is a specific area of human endeavour, and so – while humanitarian organisations are very similar in many ways to other types of organisation – they also demonstrate a combination of structural and cultural peculiarities that might affect their ability to change. In this section, we outline some of the main aspects of humanitarian organisations and of the humanitarian system that affect the way in which it changes, or can be changed. Many of the ideas discussed here build on earlier research undertaken by ALNAP (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008), and were fleshed out at the meeting.

Structure and organisation

The first point to note is that humanitarian organisations tend to be geographically dispersed, and – compared to other emergency-management systems, at least – to have fairly weak systems of command and control. In fact, different parts of the organisation can have very different opinions on key issues, and most organisations are prone to ‘competing tensions and priorities’ (Localisation panel; similar points were made in the panels on evaluation and evidence, and on accountability and participation). This can make it extremely difficult to ‘drive change’ from the centre of the organisation: ‘decisions ... made by management [can be] avoided in the field’ (Scott-Villiers, 2002: 429).

This lack of central control is even more pronounced in relation to the humanitarian system as a whole. The system comprises a large number of autonomous actors with differing accountabilities and no central governing body: any form of sustained centralised control is next to impossible (Collinson, 2016; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). This has a number of implications for change processes. In the first place, it can make it very hard to obtain an overview of any change process, and to see whether, and to



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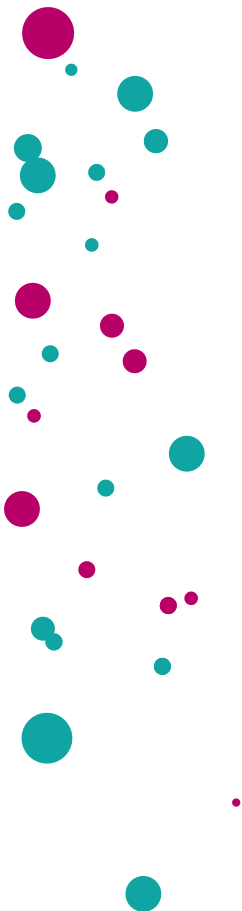


what degree, change is taking place. Just as importantly, it means that 'no single entity can decree change' (Kreuger et al., 2016: 13), so that any change process needs to be essentially voluntary and collaborative.

Collaborative work is, however, complicated by the high levels of competition in the system. Observers differ on why this competition exists: for some it is an inevitable result of structural aspects of the system (Taylor, 2009), while for others it is more the result of 'enduring, but outdated, assumptions' (Bennet, 2016: 69). Whatever the reasons (which become quite important in efforts to address the problem), there is general agreement that competition exists, and is a bar to improved collaboration (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015, 2016; Kreuger et al., 2016; Taylor, 2009). One element of this competition that becomes immediately visible in many change programmes is organisations' reluctance to support changes that have been suggested elsewhere – a phenomenon often called the 'not invented here problem'. So, for example, the Transformative Agenda is seen as an 'OCHA thing' (Kreuger et al., 2016: 40), and the Humanitarian Rights Up Front Initiative a 'UN thing' (Niland et al., 2015). Participants at the meeting suggested that change initiatives can not only fall foul of this competition, but even add to it, as different agencies compete to advance 'their' proprietary solution to common humanitarian challenges (panels on protection and resilience, innovation, and information technology and social media).

Any coordinated, system-wide approach to change is made even more difficult by the fact that 'there is no shared definition of the humanitarian agenda' (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003: 5) and great diversity between organisations concerning the 'end point' of humanitarianism (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). As a result, humanitarian action can be seen as an 'umbrella under which an array of differing interpretations and agendas shelter' (Kent, n.d.: 5). It is hard to collaborate on major changes if there is no agreement on the destination. Moreover, if the objectives of humanitarianism (and so of any changes) are unclear, so are key concepts. 'Protection' – an area central to humanitarian action – has 'multiple interpretations' (Niland et al., 2015: 10), while 'accountability' 'has become a much-abused word which may mask poor understanding or misunderstanding amongst staff' (Gostelow et al., 2010: 6). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that, in change processes such as the Transformative Agenda, 'key reform concepts are unclear' (Steets et al., 2016: 62). This lack of shared definitions was noted at the meeting, and participants suggested that it is likely to become more, rather than less, of an issue as a more diverse group of actors come to play a central role in international humanitarian action (Localisation panel, Funding panel).

Humanitarian action is also unusual – to say the least – in that 'the system is a supply-driven industry in which those who are meant to benefit from its products and services are not the same actors who decide what is delivered or how' (Obrecht and Warner, 2016: 43). People affected by crises are not operating in a humanitarian 'market'; they cannot choose the type of aid



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(INNOVATION PANEL, LOCALISATION PANEL)

they receive, or from whom (although the increased use of cash transfers in emergency responses may address this). Nor are they, generally, working in a system of public welfare with democratic oversight. They cannot vote out poor providers, or make use of systemic procedures of accountability. It is the 'agencies [which] are assessing, implementing, and then monitoring their own performance' (WHS, TA and Cash panel). This dampens the demand for change and improvement, and has in the past reduced the number of ideas about what could change, and how change could be achieved. In ALNAP's recent work on innovation, it was notable how few of the projects studied had been initiated by crisis-affected people themselves, despite their undoubted expertise and understanding of the crisis. However, as participants noted, this situation may itself be changing, as affected people increasingly use IT to become aware of their rights, and to communicate their needs directly to the public in donor countries (Protection and resilience panel, Accountability and participation panel). This is just one example of how the humanitarian world is being changed by external forces – a point we consider below.

Attitudes and culture

Humanitarian activity is based on values: most people engaged in the humanitarian system expect their work to express their personal value systems. These value systems may differ from one person to another, and there is lively debate on whether humanitarianism is a reflection of shared human values or rather a creation based on European cultural values (Donini, 2007; Niland et al., 2015) The fact remains, though, that many humanitarians have a strong emotional, values-based investment in their work, and in their organisations. This can make people ambivalent, or even openly resistant, to change. As one agency staff member recently told an ALNAP colleague: 'people are not allowed to use the word change very much, because it implies that the previous was bad'. Humanitarians have explained their overt resistance to change processes as one of pushing back against 'a different philosophy of what the organisation is all about' (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008: 2) and have even felt 'a duty ... to resist' (Finger and Ruchat, 2000: 14).³

Moving from individual to group values, another area that arguably affects the ability of humanitarian organisations to change is 'humanitarian culture'. We will consider the relationship between culture and change a little further on. For now it will suffice to make a couple of tentative observations. Culture involves internalised assumptions about basic human experiences and conditions: the nature of time, say, or the nature of work. In the humanitarian world, time is often seen as a series of short, repeated, discrete cycles, existing almost in opposition to 'long-term' developmental time. This is partly a consequence of short-term funding and planning, and it makes it hard to transfer learning from one cycle to the next, or to think in the longer timeframe that is often required for change activities (Protection and resilience panel, Innovation panel).



In terms of work, humanitarian action tends to see ‘real’ work as involving the concrete and the practical – for good reason, as much life-saving activity is concrete and practical. When applied to change programmes, however, this can lead to an approach which is based on ‘creating and deploying things ... a focus on products, rather than on people’ (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008: 52). The problem here is that these things may not lead to change, which is often intangible, and not a result of the ‘incredibly tangible things’ that people want to work on and fund (Localisation panel). Worse, the focus on products may actually divert attention away from change: ‘Now you have your toolbox, or now you have your report that tells you how to do this, so it feels safer. You don’t actually have to change fundamentally what you’re doing, or how you’re operating’ (Innovation panel, see also Localisation panel).

A further much-discussed element of humanitarian culture is the attitude to risk (Ali, n.d.; Buchanan-Smith and Scriven, 2011; Maxwell et al., 2013; Walkup, 1997). Many observers see the sector as risk averse, or at least as preferring to default to tried and tested solutions. Participants at the meeting concurred, suggesting that while this attitude to risk might be understandable (‘Is there a challenge in convincing a donor to spend millions of dollars in infrastructure that’s just going to be wrecked next year by a bomb?’ – Urban response and refugees panel) it was also a real constraint to change (Urban response and refugees panel, Localisation panel, Protection and resilience panel).

Relationship to the ‘external’ world

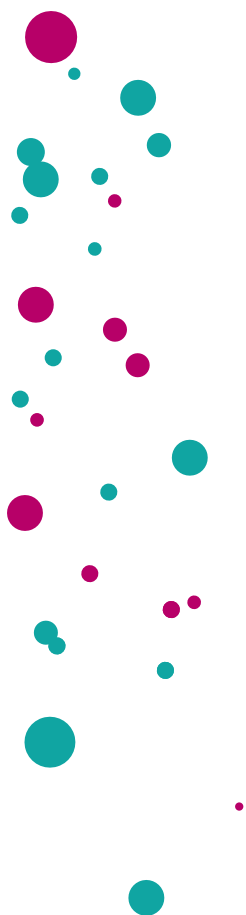
A final factor which influences change in the humanitarian sector is the very high degree of connection between the system and other, external systems, and in particular national and global political systems. An international humanitarian organisation will be working in a large number of countries, many of which will have highly contested and conflictual political environments. It is these environments – which lie outside the control of humanitarians – which cause many of the most intractable humanitarian problems (Niland et al., 2015: 46; Ferris, 2014; Kent, n.d.). At the same time, changes in these environments will often force agencies into changing structures, policies and procedures (Ressler et al., 2012). An agency may simultaneously be working (on fundraising, campaigns, advocacy and related activities) in the political context of its home country, and will be affected by domestic politics and public attitudes towards foreign aid, and by the country’s broader foreign engagement (Urban and refugee panel, Funding panel). Humanitarian agencies will also be strongly influenced by the views and priorities of government donor agencies, which in turn are affected by broader political concerns. Donors affect whether, and how, agencies work (Funding panel, Protection and resilience panel (see also Cosgrave et al., 2012; David and Mancini, 2003), and donors can push for, and incentivise, profound changes to humanitarian organisations. In sum, despite attempts to remain neutral and independent, the essentially political context of humanitarian action means that humanitarian actors are not ‘free agents’;



rather, they are enmeshed in a broad web of political relationships which might either accelerate or impede change, and which means that the system is as likely to have to respond to changes occurring elsewhere as it is to instigate changes itself (Collinson, 2016; Walkup, 1997).

Of course, it is not only politics that influences the humanitarian system. As a number of writers have pointed out (Barnett and Walker, 2015; Bennet, 2016; Bourns and Alexander, 2015; Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008; Kent et al., 2013) there are huge social, economic, demographic and technological changes that have a major impact. One panel at the meeting considered the implications of the global trend to urbanisation, another looked at technology, and the structural, attitudinal and process changes that have been driven by technology over the past decade. Speakers described how email has ‘changed the whole structure of the organisation’ (Information technology and social media panel); how 3D printing was beginning to fundamentally restructure business processes, by moving the location of production of relief items to the field (Story in 5: Going local with digital manufacturing) and how communication technology was changing the relationship between affected people, humanitarians and donors (Urban and refugee panel).

None of these areas – political, technological, demographic – is discrete. They all work on one another, with varying implications for humanitarian action – and, to a degree, humanitarian action works on them. We can perhaps best understand this through an example, by looking at the relationship between the phenomenon of global migration and humanitarianism. Global migration affects humanitarianism in numerous ways. It creates populations in need (in southeast Europe, for example), and greatly increases the vulnerability of other areas to humanitarian crisis, as the population density of low-lying and coastal cities increases. At the same time, migration has influenced political discourse in many countries, from Myanmar to the UK, in ways that challenge humanitarian principles, but which also open avenues for debate and advocacy. The growth of diaspora communities opens alternative communication channels and financial flows between crisis-affected states and more affluent communities and may – if one takes an optimistic view – prompt many people to reassess ‘otherness’ and recognise the common humanity that underlies the humanitarian endeavour. So just one global trend – migration – has direct influence on the location, size and nature of humanitarian need, but also on how that need is addressed, and the financial and political context within which it is addressed. It is also related to many other global changes (wars; improved communications; cheaper and more accessible transport; climate change; land tenure etc.) which in turn act directly and indirectly on the small world of humanitarian action.



GOOD OR BAD AT CHANGE?



The humanitarian system has repeatedly been criticised for failing to change in response to these many and varied currents in the world around it. Many, both inside and outside the system, say that it is ‘bad at change’. How accurate is this assessment?

In 2004 the humanitarian response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami showed that many of the problems and failures identified in the wake of the response to the Great Lakes regional emergency in 1994 had not been addressed (Cosgrave, 2007). Twelve years later, many of those same systemic problems have been identified in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process. Where the same problems remain unaddressed over a 22-year period, it might be safe to assume that, at the very least, there are severe limits to the ability of the humanitarian system to change and improve.

A number of observers would dispute this, however. In an article in *International Studies Quarterly*, the author concludes: ‘The central finding of this brief review is that the system is changing, although not in a smooth or consistent manner’ (Taylor, 2009: 1044). Reviewing the specific issue of response to the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), a recent review suggested that the Transformative Agenda had led to ‘significant accomplishments’ in that area (Ferris, 2014: 12). Even those who are generally critical of key aspects of the present system concede that there have been ‘many significant reforms’ (Barnett and Walker, 2015: 131) and that ‘developments in humanitarian response over the past five decades or so have been substantial’ (Bennet, 2016: 42). So it is not enough to say that the system doesn’t change – it does. The question is more about the nature of these changes – what are they, how deep are they, and with what results.

Before the Annual Meeting, we interviewed experts about change in the humanitarian system over the past two decades. One of the things that stood out was that the most important changes had not been the results

of intentional change programmes, but of responses by humanitarian organisations to changes in the world ‘outside’. The most commonly discussed change, and the one that many interviewees saw as most fundamental, was growth: growth in the number and scale of emergencies,⁴ growth in funding, and – most often noted – growth (and increased diversity) in the number of humanitarian actors. The latter was seen as a result of the greater availability of funds, and also because of broader, economic changes in the world: ‘countries have become more prosperous and they want to get involved more in [this] kind of overseas aid’.



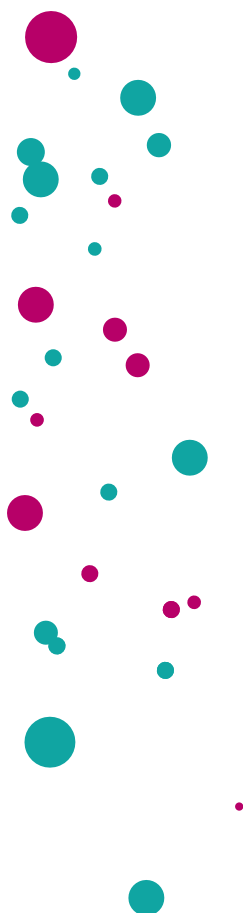
An interesting feature of responses to external conditions was the fact that they often had unintended outcomes: ‘change has happened, but not the one that was sought’.



The other change that interviewees mentioned most frequently included ‘professionalisation’ – a term which covered increased skills and improved selection processes for humanitarian workers, and also a range of bureaucratic activities, particularly in relation to financial processes and reporting. A related area was that of security and security management. While this might appear to be an ‘internal’ change, interviewees were clear that it was largely a response to changes in the way donor governments worked – in particular, to the introduction of new public management (NPM). Several interviewees also talked about changes in respect to the perceived neutrality of humanitarian agencies (again, as a result of the actions of donor governments) and changes that had come about as a result of the increased availability of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

An interesting feature of these responses to external conditions was the fact that they often had unintended outcomes: ‘change has happened, but not the one that was sought’. Better communications allowed affected people to engage with each other in new ways, but they also ‘moved decision making away from the field ... away from populations in crisis and people in need’. New public management approaches (such as results-based management – RBM), which were ‘designed to ... provide a basis for increased productivity and improved efficiency in the delivery of public services’ (Parker et al., 2000: 131), actually led to ‘a lot more paper and explanations and rationalisations’ so that ‘most humanitarian actors have to dedicate between 15 and 40% of their time to fill all the different forms, reports, and other paperwork’.⁵

The changes discussed at the meeting had – generally – been consciously planned to achieve improvement or to fix visible flaws in humanitarian response. Here, participants were able to identify a number of specific and intentional changes that had ‘worked’, such as the Sphere standards, the extension of country-based pooled funds to national NGOs and changes to donor funding allowing national NGOs to apply for funds directly. Participants also identified a number of areas – such as the relationship between humanitarian and development action – where hope for change was increasingly replaced by ‘frustration and eyeball rolling’ (Opening panel).



However, many – perhaps most – of the planned change processes fell into the category of ‘glass half full, glass half empty’. They had been partially successful, and had, in the best cases, made things ‘a lot better’ (Protection and resilience panel) while ‘falling short of their original promise’ (Funding panel). Returning to the Joint Evaluation of the Rwanda response, although in many areas change had been limited, ‘there were a number of areas where the Joint Evaluation had had a positive influence and impact’ (Story in 5: Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda). The same theme, of some change being achieved, but less than was hoped, is fairly common in evaluations of change processes (Featherstone, 2016; Krueger et al., 2016; Lipson and Britton, 2016; Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013).

Across the interviews and the panels at the meeting, a number of other factors stood out. First, the changes which had taken place had generally been to procedures and structures. Possibly as a result of this, the changes – taken together – had been quite significant in what humanitarian action, and the humanitarian system, looks like, but it was unclear how much positive impact they had actually had on people in need. As one interviewee said: ‘we’re where we’ve always been’. This perception may be a result of very limited information on the impact of humanitarian assistance, or of the difficulty of tracing ‘lives saved’ back to structural or procedural fixes. It may also be a reflection of a system running to keep up in a rapidly changing world: ‘the needs are the same, [but] the world has become much more complex and in a way much more dangerous’.

One prominent – and perhaps fairly typical – example of a planned change process discussed at the meeting was the Transformative Agenda (TA). Opinions differ on the degree of change the TA has achieved, and on the effects of this change, although there appears to be a general consensus that it has not been completely transformative. One review suggests that ‘the international institutional architecture has definitely gotten better. Humanitarian “reform efforts” have contributed to more effective international response which has alleviated suffering and saved lives’ (Ferris, 2014: 12). Other research found, however, that ‘[there is] no hard evidence that UN-centred humanitarian reforms have improved the provision of humanitarian response thus far’ (Street, 2009: 4).⁶ A recent ‘Review of Reviews’ is equivocal: ‘the Transformative Agenda made significant progress in encouraging change in a difficult context’ (Krueger et al., 2016: 9) but also demonstrates a large number of ‘restrictions and drawbacks’ (ibid.). The authors suggest that this is partly a result of the process following ‘a top-down, bureaucratic approach to change’ (ibid.), and the report raises the question of whether the TA tried to do too many things at once, and perhaps concentrated more on changes to processes and structures than on changing results. Interviews before the Annual Meeting, and discussions at the meeting, took up these themes. They also made clear that, in thinking



about a change process, it is a mistake to think of it as a discrete project, working according to a schedule towards the achievement of clear-cut goals. The TA laid the ground for some significant changes (such as multi-year planning) which were not part of the original design – but it also led to reforms that made the system ‘complex and heavy’ – an unintended consequence completely at odds with the original objectives. At the same time, even if the TA now seems less like a change process, and more a part of the institutional environment, this does not mean the process of change is complete: as one speaker at the meeting put it: ‘It hasn’t worked fully, let’s put it like that, it’s also not finalised’ (Opening panel).



Lack of change in the area of accountability may be a result of different understandings of the nature of humanitarian work – whether humanitarians should aim to transform society, or simply to save lives.



Whatever the overall success of the TA, there is general agreement that in one area – that of enhancing the accountability of humanitarian actors to people affected by crisis – there has been little concrete improvement. It is not only the TA that has failed to improve humanitarian practice in this area. Calls for increased accountability have become almost a staple of humanitarian policy reviews and evaluations; there have been numerous agency-specific and system-wide initiatives aimed at improving accountability; agencies have come together in alliances and networks to ‘push the accountability agenda’, and there is now no shortage of guidance on how to design and conduct specific accountability initiatives. And yet all of this appears to have achieved ‘rhetorical rather than real results’ (ALNAP, 2010: 29): in all three editions of the State of the Humanitarian System to date, accountability has been one of the areas showing the least change and improvement (ALNAP, 2010, 2012, 2015).

The literature, expert interviewees and meeting participants point to a number of potential reasons for the lack of change in the area of accountability. Paradoxically, the lack of change may have occurred because of, and not despite of, all the work on guidance and tools: participants suggested that this may have diverted attention from making concrete changes on the ground (Accountability and participation panel). Or it could have more fundamental causes, embedded in the very nature of humanitarian work (Barnett and Walker, 2015) that often takes place in contexts where the state is weak and civil society is disrupted, and there are very few existing mechanisms to support accountability. Accountability challenges could also be a result of different understandings of the nature of humanitarian work – whether humanitarians should aim to transform society, or simply to save lives – and resulting divergent opinions and views on what accountability is, and what attempts to improve it are meant to achieve (Donini and Brown, 2014).

Lack of change in relation to accountability may also be a result of inertia – of actors’ failure to devote time and energy to the very significant changes to funding and design processes that would be required. For example, donors would have to make funding more flexible (Steets et al., 2016) and agencies would need to be more adaptable in their programming – changing programme models and potentially providing goods and services that they

may not be geared or skilled to provide. They would also have to be open to designing different approaches to accountability in different situations, to take account of local social contexts. 'The obstacles ... are real and significant, and in some ways growing with the corporatisation of many humanitarian organisations' (Donini and Brown, 2014: 52). Humanitarians are unlikely to address these real and significant challenges if, as participants at the meeting suggested, accountability is generally seen as an 'add on' or an additional activity, on top of a full workload.

These practical, operational obstacles make change difficult. However, observers have also suggested that, for many humanitarians, and despite the rhetoric, the problem might be that accountability is not, in fact, desirable. 'From a perspective of self-interest, [humanitarian actors] ... stand to lose' from increased accountability (Steets et al., 2016: viii). As a meeting participant noted: 'the reason we're not making sufficient progress and listening to communities is because we are not going to like what we will hear' (Accountability and participation panel). This provides a motivation, at the very least, not to engage fully with change activities, or even deliberately to block changes that are underway.

Resistance to change may also be less a matter of cool calculation, and more a question of attitudes: 'the personal behaviour, cultural baggage, [and] management style' of humanitarian workers (Donini and Brown, 2014: 55); unconscious assumptions of superiority inherited from a colonial past, and bolstered by a sense of professional expertise.

On the other hand, some people – including some at the meeting – would point out that there has been change in the area of accountability over the years: that there are 'bright spots and promising practices', and 'some real, significant changes'. From this perspective, the story of accountability, (like so many humanitarian changes) is mixed, but humanitarians are 'so conscious of the enormity of unmet needs that they fail to see the significant accomplishments which have taken place' (Ferris, 2014: 12), while making these accomplishments even smaller by holding on to unrealistic and 'lofty' goals (Walkup, 1997). Resistance to change undoubtedly exists, but do we also resist acknowledging change?

What, then, have we learnt from the very significant investments that have been made in the TA and in attempts to improve accountability to people affected by crisis? First, perhaps, that investment and political support is no guarantee of success in a change programme. Second, that change initiatives tend to have some successes, particularly in the 'hard' areas: changes to structures and procedures, the creation of mechanisms and guidance. Third, that these successes are often not enough to create the degree of change that was envisaged across the system – although change is uneven, and there may well be very significant changes in some places. Fourth, that change does not exactly follow a 'plan', it has unexpected consequences,



both positive and negative, and these might continue beyond the life of the change project. All of these conclusions suggest that our current approaches are not fully effective, and may be missing some important elements of how change actually happens. It may be time to rethink our approach to change.

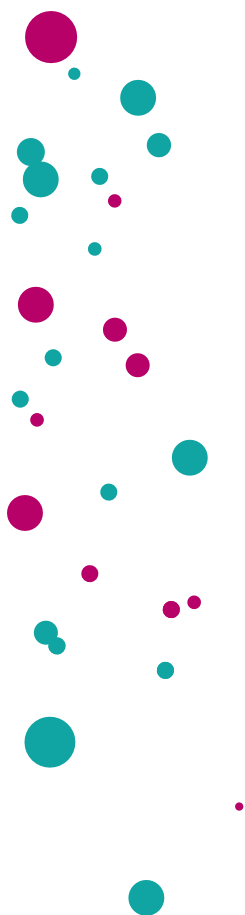
BOX 1: EVIDENCE AND CHANGE

No ALNAP Meeting would be complete without a discussion on evidence, and the 31st Annual Meeting did not disappoint. In a number of panels, participants discussed how, and how much, evidence contributes to change.

Opinion was divided, both on whether we have enough evidence to support change in critical areas, and on the importance of this evidence in processes of change. While some participants felt strongly that the lack of evidence prevents change, others were clear that ‘we have mountains of evidence’ (Evaluation and evidence panel); or that (with specific relation to cash) ‘we had 15 years of evidence collected. It wasn’t an evidence problem why it wasn’t being taken forward’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel).

When it came to the power of evidence to drive change, participants were able to give numerous examples where change had not occurred despite strong evidence. Although there were several credible investigations into protection failures in Sri Lanka, there seemed to be no change ‘in our consciousness or decision-making’ (Protection and Resilience panel). Similarly, while there is ‘very strong evidence of the value of core funding’ to local and national NGOs, many donors seem to have decided to go the other way, to more project-based funding (Localisation panel).

In some cases, evidence is not being used because it is not easily accessible to those who most need it – particularly those making decisions on the ground (Evaluation and evidence panel). But a more common – and probably more intractable – problem lies with the way decisions are made. ‘Often [evidence] is only a small part of the decision-making calculus for policy makers’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel), or, as one participant suggested candidly: ‘as the Chief of Policy Analysis [for a large agency] I never read a journal, I never looked at a lit review’ (Evaluation and evidence panel). The panels supported research by ALNAP and others (Obrecht, forthcoming; De Geoffroy, Léon, and Beuret, 2015; Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014; Darcy, Stobaugh, Walker, and Maxwell, 2013; Sandison, 2006) which has strongly suggested that the use of evidence in humanitarian decision-making is limited, either because consideration of evidence is not an explicit part of the decision-making process, or because decisions are affected by




a number of other considerations: politics, resource availability, or security. And, if we think back to the models of change presented in this paper, we should not be surprised if decision-makers are not entirely rational, or if decisions are strongly influenced by politics.

This is not to say that evidence is never used to support change. The meeting also considered a number of examples where the provision of evidence was an important part of the change process (Stories in 5: Going local with digital manufacturing; Mercy Corps; If not why not?; Humanitarian Performance Monitoring), and some participants went as far as to suggest that evidence is a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition of change.

Whether or not this is the case (do we need evidence for change, or can change happen without it?) it is interesting to consider how evidence was used to support change – because it seldom seemed to happen in a ‘straight line’, with people considering evidence, and then deciding to follow the evidence in their actions. Instead, participants explained how evidence was often used late in the change process to provide a sense of certainty, and so emotional security, around decisions that had already been made. Evidence was also used to bring people together and provide a common platform for discussion: ‘when there are disagreements, you can have that conversation at a very different level. You have it around technical evidence...and it allows you to surface what might be a tension’ (Evaluation and evidence panel). It is interesting to see, in these cases, how the value of evidence lies in its ability to address some of the social and emotional challenges to change, rather than purely to address technical questions.

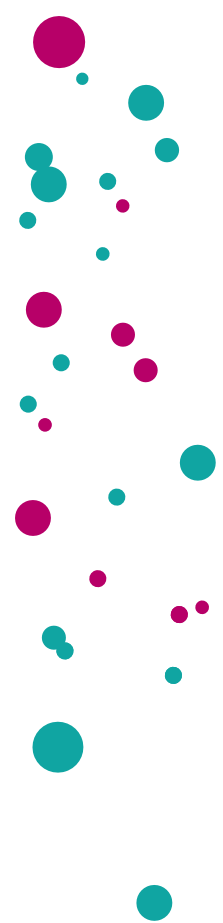
It was also interesting to see the circumstances under which evidence became important to a change process. It seems that evidence is more likely to be used where it is specifically wanted or commissioned, or where it is answering a specific question that decision-makers are already asking. It is also more powerful at certain times – in situations of uncertainty or doubt, people may be more likely to turn to evidence. Evidence may also become more important in decision-making where the organisation, or system, ‘raises its sights’ and focuses more on outcomes than on conducting activities according to ‘industry tradition’ (Evaluation and evidence panel). And finally – and importantly – the importance of evidence in making decisions may differ from one organisation, and even one individual, to another. As one presenter said: ‘I threw facts at him and I threw argument at him, and he wouldn’t budge ... Sometimes it’s only the visual, it’s only the human story that’s going to move people there in their heart, and not up there in their head’ (Story in 5: Campaigning for Yemen).





CREATING – AND UNDERSTANDING – CHANGE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

A ‘mechanistic’ approach to change



The Transformative Agenda process⁷ and, to a degree, a number of the institutional attempts to increase accountability, demonstrate the ‘standard’, policy-led model to bringing about change in the humanitarian system. A problem is identified and policies are developed at headquarters – based on varying degrees of evidence – to address it. These policies are often supported by guidance on how to operationalise them at various levels of the organisation. Generally, changes focus on the ‘hard’ and visible aspects of the organisation – structures and procedures – and are supported through ‘roll out’ communication and training activities that aim to communicate the change and to make people aware of, and able to follow, the new procedures.

This type of change process has its strengths: the structures and procedures of an organisation obviously do have an effect on how it behaves and the results it achieves. It is also readily understood, in that it turns the process of change into a project (similar to those which many humanitarians implement) with defined activities and outputs, which are expected to lead to ‘outcomes’: changes in the way that individuals and the organisation as a whole work. There is generally an element of monitoring and reporting on progress, which maintains attention on the change process and makes it more likely outputs will be produced (Evaluation and evidence panel, Opening panel). And, importantly, the focus on the tangible offers the promise of clarity and control in situations which often feel overwhelming or ‘out of control’ and allows oversight and financial accountability (Scott-Villiers, 2002).

The approach (which also underpins much ‘change management’ in the public and private sectors) is linear and rational. It assumes that the future can be broadly predicted, largely because people will react in a rational way or – if

they do not – they will allow their actions to be controlled by people higher up in the hierarchy. Essentially – as Gareth Morgan points out in his seminal book *Images of Organization* (2006)⁸ – this approach works on the assumption that an organisation is a bit like a machine: with inputs and outputs, levers for change, and the possibility of being ‘re-engineered’ (see also Handy, 1993; Olson and Eoyang, 2001; Collinson, 2016). Since it sees the organisation as a machine, it assumes that it can be changed in the same way as a machine, and ‘works well only under conditions where machines work well: when there is a straightforward task to perform [and] when the environment is stable’ (Morgan, 2006: 27).

Unfortunately, these conditions seldom hold in humanitarian change processes. We have seen that the humanitarian system is made up of large number of interconnected, dynamic actors, affected by global economic and political shifts, and demonstrating a strong culture. All of this means that change is anything but straightforward, requiring many activities across a large number of interconnected processes (Protection and resilience panel, Localisation panel). It also means that humanitarian change processes take place in an unstable, rapidly changing environment, where predetermined plans quickly become redundant (Funding panel). Crucially, while machines are made up of cogs, organisations are made up of people, and people do not always react as expected, or do as they are told: humanitarian organisations have found that they ‘cannot simply communicate directives to change policy or practice and expect them to be implemented’ (Sandison, 2006: 133).

Despite these drawbacks, the ‘mechanistic’ model is remarkably pervasive, and tends to dominate much of our thinking around change. This is partly because it is a model which fits well with the organisational imperatives of donors – to demonstrate concrete and tangible results, and to know that money will be spent on things that are in line with priorities (David and Mancini, 2003; Niland et al., 2015; Scott, 2005). In fact, donor-led initiatives such as Results Based Management (RBM) have gone a long way to normalise a rational and linear approach to planning, and to thinking, in the sector. But it is too easy to blame the donors. Many of us tend to default to a mechanistic approach, perhaps believing tangible changes are more ‘real’ than behavioural or cultural changes, perhaps comforted by the sense of control – even if we know, at some level, that this ‘control’ is an illusion.

While the mechanistic approach may be very common in humanitarian change programmes, it does not seem to be the most successful in terms of leading directly to change. In one (rare) review, the World Food Programme (WFP) found that only 17% of changes at the field level were associated with this type of approach: where change happened it was more likely to be the result of accommodation to local circumstances or a consequence of changes to funding, and was generally driven by innovations from staff, rather than organisational



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directives (Ressler et al., 2012). Mechanistic, top-down approaches do play a role in change. As one speaker said: '[changes to] Needs assessment started in policy, the CERF started in policy, [and so did] the cluster system'. (Funding panel). Another pointed out that 'the whole education in emergencies discussion ... has been very much started at the top' (Protection and resilience panel). But where these approaches are successful, they seldom play out in a mechanistic or linear way. Closer inspection of the programmes that lead to change often shows more of a 'top-down, bottom-up combination': 'while you have the public face of the [change programme], you have other things going on in the background' (WHS, TA and Cash panel). These 'other things' – informal meetings of groups of 'enthusiasts', or people at field level experimenting with a different way of doing things – may not always be very visible (and so any success that occurs is attributed to the mechanistic approach) but they are important in explaining how change actually happens (Funding panel, Evaluation and evidence panel, Protection and resilience panel).

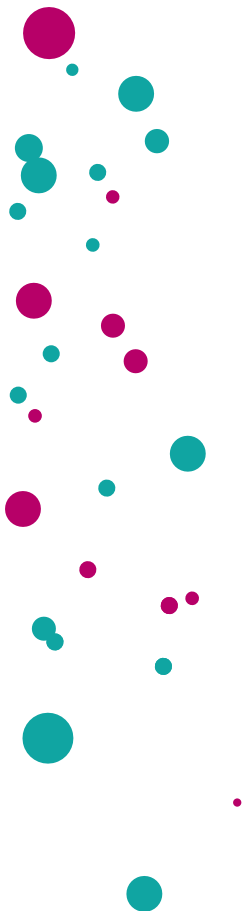
If we want an approach that is closer to how we observe change happens, we may need to consider other, less mechanical, ways of thinking about organisations, and of supporting change.

The humanitarian system today – models of competition

Morgan's insight in *Images of Organization* is that the way we think about organisations influences the way that we try to change them. So, if we think of the organisation as a machine, we try to change it in the way we would repair a machine. If, however, we think of an organisation as a community, we will be more likely to use approaches designed for social change; or if we think of it as a person, we might try to change its behaviour by 'changing its mind'. Of course, the organisation is none of these things, but 'the metaphor may create valuable insights' if it is used as a conscious tool (Morgan, 2006: 5). At the same time, because these metaphors highlight only certain elements of an organisation, their unconscious use can create distortions and misperceptions, and 'the way of seeing through metaphor becomes a way of not seeing' check. In the following section, we examine some other metaphors for the humanitarian system, and consider how these might influence our approach to change.

The market model

In a system that is as diverse as the humanitarian sector, it is quite possible for different models, or elements of different models, to exist concurrently. Indeed, we tend to hold a variety of different metaphors in our minds at any one time. And so, while the 'machine metaphor' underpins much of the thinking about organisational change, other models are also fairly common in the sector, which are used to explain why change does (or doesn't) occur.



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CHANGE ACTUALLY HAPPENS**

**(WHS, TA AND CASH PANEL, FUNDING
PANEL, EVALUATION AND EVIDENCE PANEL,
PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE PANEL)**

One such metaphor is that of the market. The idea here is that humanitarian organisations compete with one another, and with other actors such as the private sector, for ‘market share’. Change operates as a process of ‘creative destruction’ whereby the organisations that can provide and ‘sell’ the most effective goods and services prosper and grow, while those which do not become obsolete, lose customers, and eventually die.

The model is often referred to, explicitly or implicitly, in discussions of the humanitarian system, and of change. International humanitarian organisations are compared to entrepreneurs in a ‘humanitarian marketplace’ (Weiss, 2013: 4), to multinational corporations (Kent et al., 2013) and enterprises (Kent, n.d.) which ‘employ the same strategies ... [as] profit-making corporations’ (Walkup, 1997: 51) Changes are seen in terms of ‘market share’ (Steets et al., 2016), and the perceived inability of established humanitarian organisations to change leads to forecasts of failure: that these organisations will be rendered obsolete by new actors, better suited to the demands of the humanitarian market in the 21st century.

It is a powerful metaphor, not least because many people in leadership positions subscribe to it (Cosgrave et al., 2012). International organisations plan for growth (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010), see each other as competitors, and look for comparative advantage: there is ‘a preoccupation with growth, competition and market share’ (Bennet, 2016: 57). Indeed, some donors have actively tried to move from metaphor to reality, introducing market mechanisms to ‘boost efficiency ... cut waste [and] curb corruption’ (Cooley and Ron, 2002: 9).

It is also a very useful metaphor in many ways. It reminds us that the humanitarian ‘system’ is not a single, centralised hierarchy, but a large number of relatively autonomous actors. By emphasising the possibility of organisational collapse, it provides a strong emotional impetus for organisational change. It supports innovation (which the model often sees as a tool used by market actors to increase their market share) and is the basis for ideas like the H2H (humanitarian to humanitarian organisations group) of ‘humanitarian entrepreneurs’ and the Ground Truth approach to obtaining feedback from affected people. It was formative in the thinking that helped to create the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) (Accountability and participation panel). Critically, the market metaphor emphasises the importance of crisis-affected people in making decisions regarding humanitarian action, by recasting them as customers rather than as beneficiaries (ibid.).

It is important to note, however, that real markets do not always operate in the ways that the metaphor suggests. Markets are not exclusively competitive: there are many examples of rival companies ‘collaborating to compete’, working together to create conditions which will enable them to better



meet their objectives (Information technology and social media panel, see also Collinson, 2016). And market competition does not necessarily favour younger, smaller, more agile organisations. While the 'life cycle' of companies is decreasing (a fact that is often used to suggest that the process of creative destruction is becoming more intense in the digital age), this is not necessarily because 'dinosaur' firms are failing, but often because they are taking over smaller, more successful competitors (Daepf et al., 2015). The market is not a level playing field – in the UK, for example, the fiercely competitive grocery sector is largely dominated by firms that have been trading for over a century, and these firms increased their market share from 55% in 2000 to 66% in 2016,⁹ both by imitating and innovating, and also by buying up smaller competitors. Metaphor and reality also tend to diverge when it comes to the role of regulation: while the metaphor looks only at the market, real markets do not operate in a vacuum, and change in these markets is not solely driven by innovation, but also by government regulation and the legal environment. Finally, while the metaphor often assumes that markets create efficiency by eliminating wasteful duplication, the opposite may in fact be the case – competition is actually based on an element of duplication of products and services. The duplication is there, but the cost of (at least some of) this duplication is transferred from consumers to shareholders.

And if the market metaphor, as used by humanitarians, does not fully describe real markets, nor does it fully describe the humanitarian sector. While some commentators describe the system as if it were already a market, and others aim to make it more like one, the current reality is that the market metaphor is just that – a metaphor. The humanitarian system is like a market in some ways, but it is not in fact a market. In many humanitarian contexts (particularly conflict-affected contexts) there is very limited, if any, competition: few actors wish to, or are able to, provide services. These actors do not always behave in ways that market actors would: at both the operational and the systemic level, there are examples of collaboration that go well beyond collaborating to compete, and which can't be explained by a market logic (Cosgrave et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2016). Nor is the nature of much humanitarian work, or the criteria for success, as clear and unambiguous as they are in markets (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Collinson, 2016): What is the 'bottom line' for a humanitarian agency? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in the humanitarian 'market' the 'customers' are not the consumers of goods and services. Donors pay for the services, and the people affected by crisis are not in a position to choose which services they receive, or from whom. Humanitarian organisations do not survive, grow or die on the basis of 'customer' satisfaction (as the metaphor suggests that they should) but on decisions made by donor agencies, which are influenced by a wide range of factors unrelated to the value of the services to the people who use them (de Geoffrey et al., 2015).



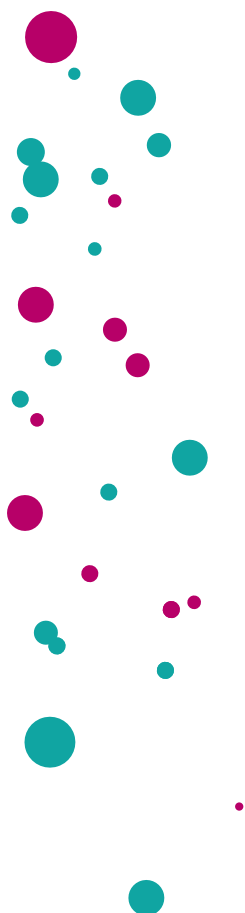
BOX 2: SUPERMARKETS AND CHANGE

The UK grocery sector has seen very significant changes in recent years, as supermarket chains have sought to adapt to and use technological, economic and demographic changes to increase profits. Technological advances have affected processes across the board, from supply-chain management to online shopping, while changes in the property market and in consumer behaviour led first to a significant growth in out-of-town 'superstores' and more recently to a resurgence in smaller, high-street 'convenience' stores. The 'credit crunch' following collapses in the banking sector in 2008 also appears to have helped discount stores such as Aldi and Lidl, by attracting more affluent customers to their lower-margin, stripped-down stores. While these discounters still control a fairly modest share of the market (Aldi has 7% of the market, and Lidl 5%) they are growing faster than the 'big four', and have recently seen a spurt in growth as inflation hits the supermarket shelves.

To date, at least, these changes have not led to the dethroning of big incumbents by nimble innovators (Ocado, an online-only store, which calls itself the 'evolution of shopping', has captured only 1.4% of the market over 16 years), but the 'big four',¹⁰ along with supermarkets in other G20 economies, have had to make numerous changes to the way they work in order to remain competitive.

The overall objective of much change in the sector is both simple and measurable: the 'bottom line'. In attempts to improve the bottom line, many changes in the sector have been designed according to what some observers have called 'Theory E'; rapid structural changes generally aimed at cutting costs, imposed from the top down according to clear, quantified plans. Theory E approaches often include 'purges' of staff – either directly as a cost-cutting measure, or as a way to address resistance to change. Interestingly, even changes that aim at increasing staff 'empowerment' and 'engagement' have used directive, Theory E style approaches: detailed explicit prescriptions from head office outlining the type, frequency, duration and agenda of staff-engagement meetings, along with regular monitoring of managers' behaviour to ensure that they were behaving as expected.

Some authors suggest that this approach to change is suited to a sector where staff turnover is high, and people's sense of commitment to their work is fairly low. They also suggest that the approach is a good cultural fit where profit and of competition are unashamedly valued. The approach also seems to be successful in increasing profit – but generally only in the short term: in the long term, the approach can damage the company's capacity. As a result, companies such as at Asda have increasingly attempted



to incorporate more emergent, bottom-up approaches to change – more like those suggested by the mind or systems models – into their existing Theory E programmes.

The world of supermarkets also provides some interesting reflections on the political model of change, which – in some ways – reflect the experience of the humanitarian sector. While one might expect that customers would hold power in the system, and change initiated to meet their requirements, some authors have suggested that, in fact, customers have only limited ability to bring about change: very many customers live in areas where there is very little choice between retailers, and customers have imperfect information on which to base choices (while supermarkets have increasingly detailed information on customer choices). As a result, supermarkets may hold more power in the system than is commonly assumed. At the same time, supermarkets do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a complex system in the same way that humanitarian agencies are – although in this case the system is composed largely of networks of suppliers. Within these systems, the supermarkets, as the ‘buyer’ of services, enjoy significant power, in much the same way that ‘the donors’ do in the humanitarian world. However, the supermarkets can be less powerful than they appear. The supermarket–supplier relationship is marked by unexpected dynamics, alliances and reversals. While supermarkets are more likely to be able to force changes in suppliers, these suppliers can also use a variety of strategies and sources of power to try to gain influence and force change in the system themselves.

(Clarke, 2000; Dapiran and Hogarth-Scott, 2003; Nohria and Beer, 2000; Ogbonna, 1992; Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 2003)

The interests model¹¹

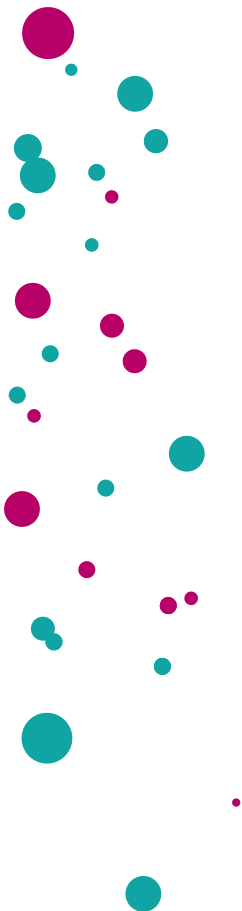
The fact that humanitarian organisations do not rely for their funding on the people they aim to assist, but rather on donors (mainly rich-world governments, but also individuals, trusts and corporations), brings us to a second model of how the humanitarian system is structured, and – by extension – how it changes.

In the interests model, the humanitarian system is seen as a large number of organisations, all of which are actively pursuing their organisational interests. While these interests are often not defined in the literature, the analysis generally focuses on increasing the organisation’s power, and, as a corollary, increasing income or autonomy from the control of others. The fulfilment of stated humanitarian objectives is not considered as an interest here: the focus is on less legitimate, more self-serving interests (what Morgan would describe as ‘career interests’, rather than the more legitimate ‘task interests’).





The interests model is useful, in that it makes explicit the tension between organisations' stated aims and their desire for self-preservation, growth and power.



In contrast to the market model, the interests model often groups organisations according to their perceived common interests. Donors are seen to have one set of interests, and large international NGOs another.¹² More broadly, the humanitarian 'haves' are seen as having an interest in keeping their power away from the 'have nots'. Traditional donors, large international NGOs and UN agencies form a 'humanitarian club' (Barnett and Walker, 2015: 131); a 'highly centralised and exclusive group' (Bennet, 2016: 58). In this model, much of the lack of change exhibited by the humanitarian system can be explained by the desire of these established actors to retain as much power as possible, and to prevent new competition. At the Annual Meeting, there was much talk of interests and incentives as being central to the change process – in terms both of supporting and constraining change. Speakers linked the creation of the Sphere standards to a desire by large NGOs to prevent their autonomy being curtailed (Story in 5: Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda), and discussed how the vested interests of organisations had slowed down the use of cash transfers (WHS, the TA and Cash panel) and prevented an early response in Somalia in 2010 (Protection and resilience panel). The theme recurs in the literature: the lack of progress on protection can be seen as a result of 'vested interests and seemingly intractable institutional agendas and preoccupations (Niland et al., 2015: 10); lack of movement in early-response programming is, at least in part, because a move away from food-aid programmes would lead to a loss of income for many agencies (Jaspars, 2006); and donors resist activities which 'result in their control over field level activities being significantly reduced' (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010: 8).

The model is useful, in that it makes explicit the tension between organisations' stated aims and their desire for self-preservation, growth and power. This focus on power is particularly helpful, as (unlike the market model) it emphasises the inequalities of power within the humanitarian system: particularly between donors and implementers, between large and small organisations, and between organisations headquartered in the 'global north', and those in the 'global south'. It also reminds us that organisations – and the people in them – will tend to pay attention to those things which are in their interest, and may be blind to, or simply ignore, those that are not. As a result, areas where radical improvements could be made may be overlooked (Funding panel).

By focusing on interests – albeit a rather narrow band of interests – the model also contains suggestions for change. The first suggestion is that if you want to make changes, you first need to find powerful allies: 'Advancing feasible ideas for reforms with any real bite depends first on locating the actors within the sector that have sufficient power to create and sustain new incentive systems' (Collinson, 2016: 23). The second is that change can result from a system of 'trade-offs', as long as this does not lead to a net loss of power on the part of important actors. Essentially, organisations will be prepared to lose power

or money in some areas, as long as they gain it in others. This logic – and the interests model as a whole – has become increasingly prevalent in the system. As ever more observers despair of humanitarian agencies ever ‘doing the right thing’, they make proposals for change based on ‘financial incentives ... for example, linking funding decisions to beneficiary satisfaction’ (Steets et al., 2016: 43). The largest and most recent example of this is the Grand Bargain, which (as the name suggests) appears to support a transactional approach to change, whereby agencies exchange concessions while aiming to preserve their interests.

Again, the model probably reflects some truths but obscures others. It is based on certain working assumptions which are probably not entirely true: that people are rational actors, and will consistently make decisions (on the basis of good information) to preserve their interests; that these interests are clear and relatively undifferentiated; that interests are common across organisations; and that the strategies that organisations adopt to guard their interests invariably work out as planned.

Any review of change in the organisational sector would, however, suggest that these assumptions do not always hold. In the following section, we look at some situations where rationality and interests do not seem always to apply, and consider how they might be explained.



OTHER MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING CHANGE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

The system as society

One alternative way of thinking about the humanitarian system – and for thinking about how it might change – is to imagine the system as a society, complete with politics and with culture. This approach can help us to build on our understanding from the models currently in use, and also to consider elements of change that we might otherwise overlook.

The importance of politics

If we imagine the humanitarian system as a society, we have to see it as containing politics. All societies are political. Whereas politics is anathema to the rational, mechanical model of the world, and appears as an unfortunate but necessary element of organisational life in the interests model, an approach that sees the humanitarian system as a society not only recognises but also welcomes the centrality of politics. Politics is not ‘a dysfunctional force that can be attributed to some regrettable set of circumstances or causes’ (Morgan, 2006: 163), but ‘an essential part of organizational life ... not ... an optional and dysfunctional extra’ (ibid. p.150). It is the method by which tensions and conflicts are resolved, ideas are tested and change comes about. As Duncan Green notes, power can be used to do bad, but it is also a requirement for doing good (Green, 2016). Change in the humanitarian system, as in any system, occurs ‘through a process that is inherently political’ (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010: 4).

So, if we aim to support change, we should look more closely at how politics happens in the societies we know best. As recent experience has shown, political outcomes are often unexpected, and hard to predict through a simple mapping of interests. There are various reasons for this. First, ‘interest groups’ are generally much less monolithic than they might at first

appear: ‘the monoliths of “the state” or “big business” or “the international system”’ are actually ‘turbulent networks full of potential allies as well as opponents’ (Green, 2016: 243). As panellists at the meeting suggested, donors do not share identical interests (as is becoming more apparent as the Grand Bargain process proceeds) and neither do international NGOs or national civil society organisations (CSOs) (Funding panel). Even within one organisation, it is common to find different and competing priorities (Accountability and participation panel, Localisation panel; Story in 5: Merging Merlin and Save the Children). Second, any individual or organisation will tend to have multiple interests at the same time (Accountability and participation panel, Protection and resilience panel). Studies of organisational change in the humanitarian sector have shown that, while these interests include the maintenance and growth of power, they also include a broad range of other concerns: changes often come about when these other concerns are understood to be more important than power (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010; Kent, n.d.). Third, power is held in many different ways in the system. Money and control of resources are certainly important, but in the humanitarian world, as in the broader political world, so are control of knowledge and information, use of networks and relationships, alignment with broadly held ideologies and proximity to a situation and ability to act. The ability to make changes will depend on the relative importance of these variables in any given context, and on how these sources of power are used. Finally, interests tend to evolve in response to changes within and outside the humanitarian world. Meeting participants gave a number of examples of this: governments who were sceptical of civil society deciding that their interests lay in supporting NGOs (Localisation panel), or significant changes in a donor’s assessment of risk occurring as a result of realignment of interests (Funding panel).

In short, considering political processes shows us that multiple stakeholders, all with a variety of interests to fulfil, will attempt to exploit many different types of power to create or prevent change. This is a far more ‘fluid’ process than the interests model would lead us to expect: ‘interests themselves are varied, often in flux, debated, and worked out through interactions’ (Barnett and Finnemore, 2016: 706) It is also a more hopeful one for anyone involved in change. If interests are not unitary, fixed and monolithic, or do not guide behaviour in predetermined and predictable ways, then change is not purely the preserve of the powerful, and there is far more opportunity for the committed, skilful and political individual or group to have influence.



Considering political processes shows us that multiple stakeholders, all with a variety of interests to fulfil, will attempt to exploit many different types of power to create or prevent change.

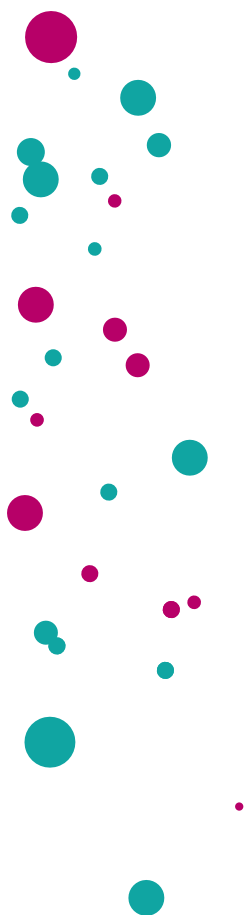


The role of culture

Politics is not the only social element that greatly affects change: so too does culture. The importance of changing culture (or sometimes changing ‘mind-sets’) is broadly acknowledged in the humanitarian literature. Recognising that procedural changes have not brought about the level of change they had hoped for, humanitarians have called for ‘culture shift’ around, for example, the Transformative Agenda and the Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) initiative (Dyukova and Chetcuti, 2014; Kreuger et al., 2016; Niland et al., 2015). Organisational culture is seen as central to innovation (Obrecht and Warner, 2016) and to accountability, and it is the sector’s culture that ‘create[s] compelling reasons to remain closed and centralised and averse to innovation, learning and transformation’ (Bennet, 2016: 5), see also (Walkup, 1997).

But while we recognise that culture is important, and can stimulate – or more often delay – change, humanitarians seem less certain about what culture actually is, and how it might be addressed. In this we are not alone. Social anthropologists, who dedicate much of their time to studying culture, disagree profoundly on what it is, why it exists, and how it is created and changed. For some, a culture is a set of social structures and phenomena that meet the needs of individuals in the society, or which address social tensions, and so allow the society to maintain equilibrium. Others see culture as a way of ensuring that members of a society internalise and reproduce its power inequalities, or as expressions of common, basic human thought processes that find different forms in different places, or as a means of basic social communication that allows people from the same group to predict and understand how others will behave, without necessarily sharing objectives or values. These differing understandings of culture imply different relations between culture and individual action and so, critically, differing levels of ability for an individual to ‘change’ it – is the culture hard-wired into their brain, and so directing their actions, or is it more something with which they interact and which determines them, but which they also determine?

Organisational theorists have tended to be even more diverse and less helpful in their understandings of what culture is, and how it changes. The most commonly used approach to culture in organisations is that of Edgar Schein, who says that it is the ‘taken for granted, underlying, and usually unconscious assumptions that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings and behaviour’ (Schein, 2000: 129). It is a learned response to ‘major internal and external tasks that all groups face’ (ibid.), outlining key issues such as the relationship of the group to the environment; the nature of human relationships – who people are, and how they should relate to one another – and the nature of correct or useful activity. Some of the key points here, which are shared by many organisational theorists, are that culture is not conscious, or even visible to the people who are part of it: rather it is ‘taken for granted’ or ‘the norm’. It is relatively holistic – the different elements of the culture, the beliefs, rituals and so on, cover most situations and mutually support each other in a system of meaning. And it generally determines behaviour, while also being continually reformed by behaviour.



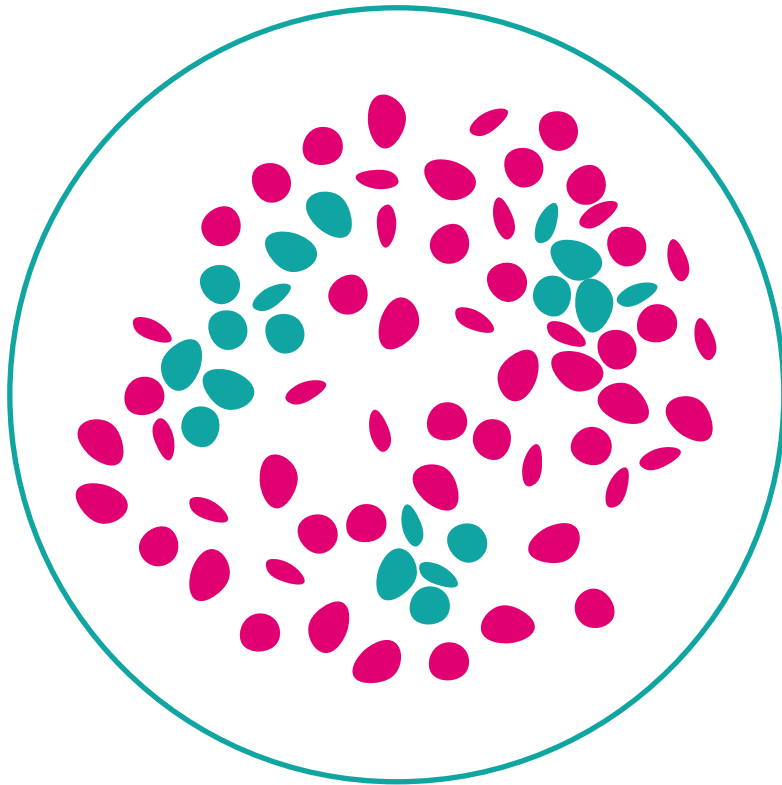
A number of scholars have considered the specific culture of humanitarian agencies, and how it might be changed over time.¹³ For Barnet and Finnemore (who look specifically at one organisational type – the International Organisation) organisational culture is largely determined by the structures and processes of bureaucracy: rules, routines and specialisation. Collison applies the theories of DiMaggio and Powell (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) to suggest that the development of humanitarian culture is largely influenced by external circumstances – by donor behaviour and by other humanitarian organisations and the humanitarian system (Collinson, 2016). For Mark Walkup, the particular culture of humanitarian organisations is largely a result of the psychological stresses which affect many humanitarian workers, and the coping strategies they adopt in response to these stresses. These coping strategies are institutionalised, and transmitted to future generations of humanitarian workers, who then reinforce the culture. Walkup considers what this might mean for culture change ‘organizational cultures are not static; they constantly evolve as factors influence their perpetual reconstruction and redefinition. Therefore, there are many opportunities to break the vicious cycle of organizational dysfunction’ (Walkup, 1997: 56), particularly by providing support to individual employees. This understanding of culture as something which is continually recreated is similar to that of Schein, who sees it as ‘an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction’ (Schein, 2000: 137). However, for Schein, much of this reality is ‘set’ early on in an organisation’s history, and so changes are harder to effect, and will generally be a result of the behaviour modelled by leaders.

If we are going to engage in or with change, we need to consider culture. This is particularly true if we are interested in deep change within an existing system (it is much less important if the change is more superficial, or involves replacing the whole system or organisation with another one). This is frustrating in many ways. Just as in society as a whole, we know culture is there, but may find it difficult to identify or explain; we know that culture evolves, but, as we have shown above, there are very different ideas as to how culture is created, and how it changes, or can be changed: ‘Current available evidence does not identify any effective, generalisable strategies to change organisational culture’ (Parmelli et al., 2011: 1). So perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from seeing the system from the perspective of culture is that it is likely to be difficult to change. The model is useful in other ways, too. It reminds us that organisations are not just collections of individuals – they are social spaces, and any change has a strong social dimension. It also, importantly, reminds us that social groups are not entirely rational – that just as rational, neoclassical economics finds it difficult to explain behaviour at cultural festivals, such as Christmas or Eid, so too might a rational approach to change have difficulty explaining why people support, or resist, things which do not seem related to their interests.

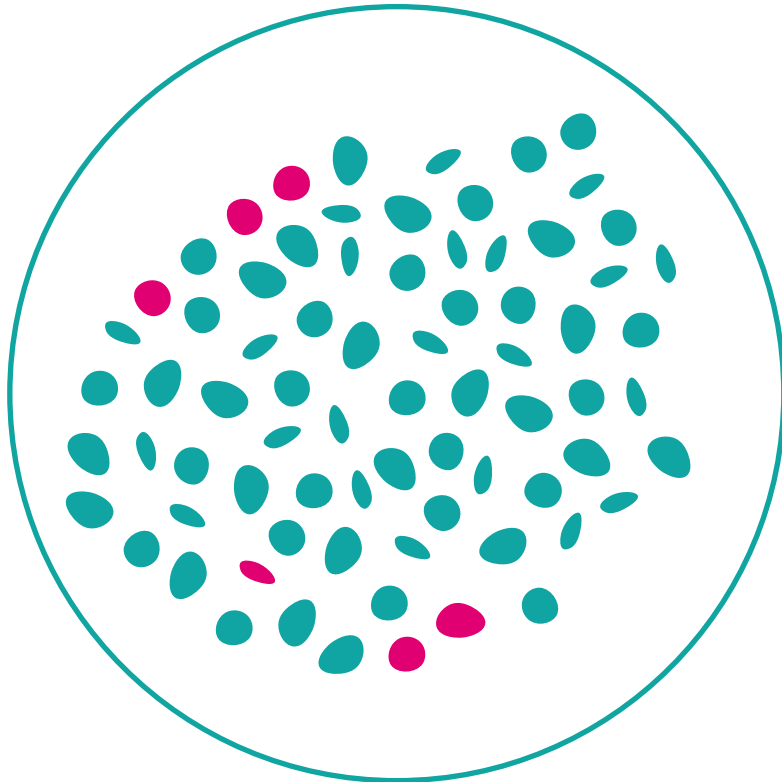


Figure 1: Changing like an ecosystem

What if we think of it as an ecosystem of independent organisms acting and reacting to each other and to changing situations? Normally, their individual adjustments don't amount to much.



But lots of little changes can build up to a tipping point and reshape the system as a whole.



This graphic is part of an animation on this topic. Watch it at www.alnap.org/31am

The system as an 'ecosystem'

It has recently become increasingly common to refer to the humanitarian 'ecosystem' (e.g. Various, 2016). In some ways, this is confusing: ecosystems are generally defined as biological communities of organisms interacting with each other and with their environment, rather than social communities or organisations. But as a metaphor, the idea of an ecosystem makes sense, because it is an example of a very specific type of system – the 'complex adaptive system'.

Not all systems are the same. Some are fairly simple, composed of a small number of elements doing predetermined tasks. It is fairly easy, even without training, to understand how they work. A stapler is a fairly good example. Some are complicated, with many elements, with multiple relationships, working in predetermined ways. An aeroplane is a good example of a complicated system, in which a huge number of parts work on a very large number of sophisticated operations. To the untrained observer, it is almost impossible to see how this works. With enough expertise, however, it is possible to fully understand all the relationships in the system, and to predict with 100% accuracy how any particular part will work in any particular situation, because despite the complexity, the parts can only do what they are designed to do. When people use 'machine models' of change, they tend to assume that organisations or the humanitarian system work like an aeroplane, as a complicated system.

But, as we have seen, they don't. Events and activities in the humanitarian system do not follow predetermined routines or programmes. This is because the humanitarian system, like an ecosystem, is not just complicated – it is complex. Ecosystems and the humanitarian system are two different types of complex adaptive system.

What does this mean? Like animals in an ecosystem, but unlike fuses in an aeroplane, the elements that make up the humanitarian system have a certain amount of freedom to act, and use this freedom to adapt their behaviour depending on the actions of other organisations. Because all of the elements are acting and reacting all the time, this leads to complicated webs of action, response and new action reaching across the whole system. One consequence of this is that it is impossible to predict how the system as a whole will behave in the future: how a forest will grow and change in response to the introduction of a new organism, or how the humanitarian system will respond to a new initiative. Complex adaptive systems are 'non-linear' and unpredictable.

A second crucial element of complex adaptive systems is that they are self-organising. Through the sequences of action and response (known in the literature as 'feedback') the elements that make up the system will tend to organise themselves into a situation of equilibrium. Ben Ramalingam, whose book *Aid on the Edge of Chaos* (Ramalingam, 2013) provides a fascinating



review of the workings of complexity in the aid industry, explains that this feedback can be ‘amplifying or dampening, slow or fast, predictable or unpredictable (Ramalingam, 2013: 157). In general, the feedback will tend to dampen down change and move the system back to equilibrium. But it can also push the whole thing out of equilibrium, to a tipping point, when relatively small changes (such as the famous butterfly flapping its wings) lead to a complete resetting of the system into a very different shape.¹⁴ Which explains the third thing that it is helpful to understand about complex adaptive systems: ‘Change . . . occurs in slow steady processes such as demographic shifts and in sudden, unforeseeable jumps. Nothing seems to change until suddenly it does’ (Green, 2016: 16).



The system is constantly changing without our intervention, and our efforts to change it will be more like joining a football game than sitting down to fix a broken clock.



The metaphor of the ecosystem, then, implies that change is non-linear and unpredictable; that the system will tend to return to a steady state; but that radical, sudden change is possible. In terms of change, it suggests that a planned, linear approach is unlikely to work: instead we should be aware of what is happening in the system at any given point, and be prepared to act or adapt to support change as the context changes. It also usefully reminds us that the elements of a system all relate to each other, and so change in one area will affect, and be affected by, what is happening in other areas. Finally, the metaphor helps us to understand that in working with the humanitarian system, we are dealing with a dynamic, living process, and not a static object. The system is constantly changing without our intervention, and our efforts to change it will be more like joining a football game than sitting down to fix a broken clock.

The system as a mind

The final metaphor for systems that we will consider here is that of the human mind. It is a metaphor widely used among organisational thinkers, and has had a profound impact on how organisational and systemic change are understood. Just as the culture metaphor draws on anthropology, the mind metaphor uses psychology to better understand how human beings – and by extension human systems – change their minds.

A number of different theories and approaches grounded in psychology have been used to try to understand these changes. Some of the better known include Kubler Ross’ ‘five stages of grief’ model (Kubler-Ross, 1969), Argyris and Schön’s single and double-loop learning model (Argyris and Schön, 1974), and, to a degree, the ‘nudge’ model that has recently gained popularity in UK and US politics.¹⁵

Perhaps the most influential approach to individual and organisational change, however, has drawn on Gestalt psychology, which addresses the relationship between the world and our perception of it. Broadly, the approach suggests that human beings do not perceive the whole reality of which they are a part (‘the ground’) but unconsciously select certain elements to create

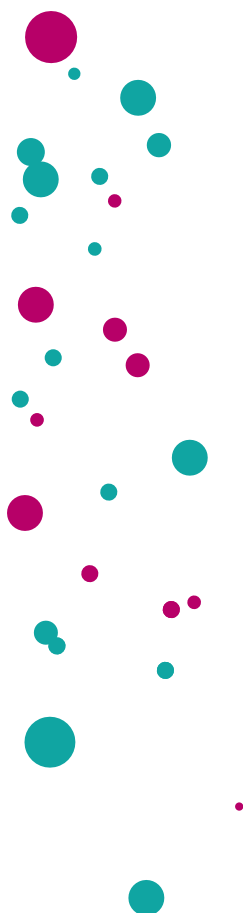


Figure 2: Changing like a mind

What if the humanitarian system is more like a human mind? We all know the mind is a hard thing to change...



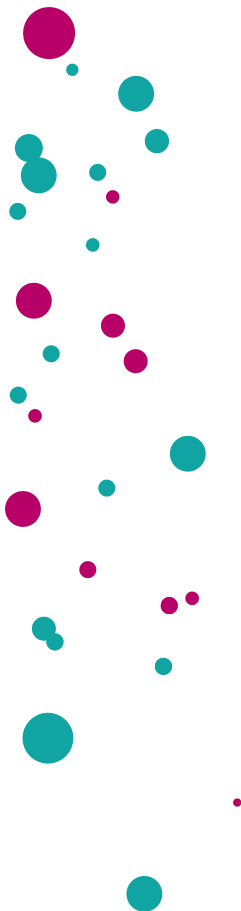
...people aren't always rational, and perceptions, fears and emotions can derail change processes.



a 'figure': an internally consistent representation of reality that is not in fact the sum of the elements which initially created it, but which is experienced as the whole. These figures are extremely durable, but can be changed in a process whereby the individual becomes aware of inconsistencies, and then directs energy to breaking down the existing figure and creating a new one. Because 'human action is a self-regulating system that deals with an unstable state in such a way as to produce a state of stability' (Nevis, 2005: 18); the mind will generally resist this process, as it aims to maintain the stability of the existing figure. Resistance to change, then, should not be seen as a conscious process to subvert new ideas, but rather as a normal and healthy process that enables the individual (or organisation) to retain stability and purpose in a chaotic world.

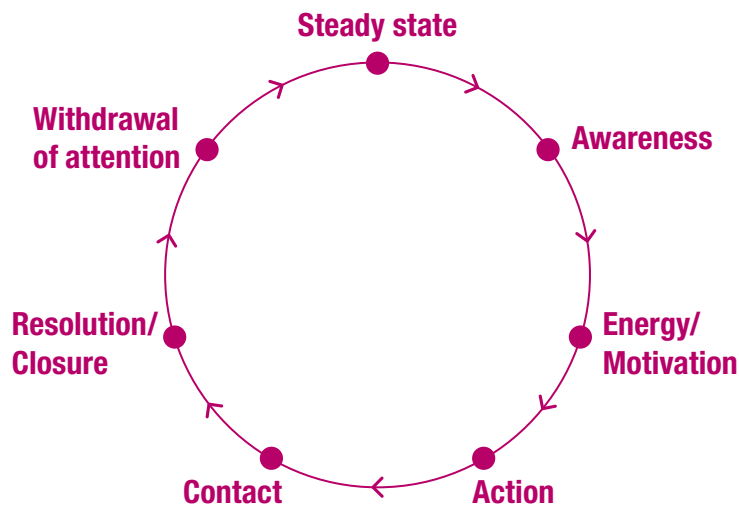
This resistance takes various forms which aim to deflect attention and energy from the destruction of the current state, and which may not initially appear as resistance at all. These include: projection, where we disown aspects of ourselves and our ownership of a situation ('we can't do it because the donors won't support it'; 'the problem is the system: it doesn't want to change'); deflection, where we relate to a problem in ways which move the energy away from really changing the situation (by creating guidelines or lists of recommendations, for example, which provide the appearance of 'doing something' while not fundamentally engaging with underlying issues); confluence, where we avoid using energy in conflict and disagreement, and settle instead for superficial agreement (failing to agree on precise definitions of concepts such as accountability, but instead using broad definitions which hide challenges and tensions could be an example of confluence); and introjection, where we swallow ideas uncritically, without paying real attention to them ('yes, that sounds like a good idea, we should sign up to that').

Considering the system as a mind opens us to a fuller and potentially useful understanding of resistance to change. The model suggests that there can be no real change without resistance, and that this resistance is a natural element of any healthy system. It also, crucially, redefines resistance as processes that divert energy away from the need to change, and the processes that are involved in change. From this perspective, a broad range of activities, including many we often think of as contributing to change, can be seen as unconscious attempts to prevent change from happening.



BOX 3: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

In Gestalt thinking, the process of change is one in which we take apart our existing perception of the world, in order to create a new understanding. This process goes through a series of stages, outlined in this diagram of the 'gestalt cycle of experience':



We can think of these stages like this: imagine you are walking along a beach. You realise that there is something sparkling in the corner of your eye (awareness) and decide to go and have a look (mobilisation). You walk over and pick up the sparkling object (action) which turns out to be an intricate, blue-green shell. You spend some time investigating the shell, looking at the whorls and cleaning it of sand (contact). Your interest and energy declines, and you throw the shell away along the beach (closure). Then you walk away (withdrawal).

Of course, in this example, the change is minor – your understanding of the world, and the beach, is just as it was before, except for the fact that this picture now has a blue-green shell in it. But even with such a small change, there are many ways in which you could have prevented it from happening: not paying attention to the sparkle, not walking over to the shell, not picking it up and looking at it. All of these would have been perfectly reasonable choices, and would have prevented you from changing your original purpose and interrupting your walk. This helps us understand why, in many cases, change doesn't happen: 'in many cases, these innovating teams, they were dealing with a system that wouldn't even recognise that there was a problem' (Innovation panel – describing how the system refused to move its attention to a situation).

Knowing how change happens, and the types of 'resistance' behaviour that preventing it from happening, can help us to design better processes of change.





HOW CAN WE SUPPORT CHANGE IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

Hopefully, the models presented in this study provide additional ways of thinking about change, and help to explain some of the organisational behaviours that we often observe when we are involved in change. In particular, the models remind us that change in any system involves large numbers of actors, that these actors are related to one another in different ways, and that their actions are not easily predicted: they are influenced by a continually changing set of concerns, including relationships of competition and collaboration; unexamined, and often invisible, cultural beliefs; and powerful emotions around loss, hope and anxiety. Confusion, resistance, unexpected events: these are not awkward peripherals around a change process, they are the very stuff of change itself.

The models, taken together with our experience of change in the humanitarian system, also call into question the degree to which we can 'create' or 'manage' change. We have seen that change is continually happening in the system, and that much of it comes about as a response to external forces, or as an unexpected consequence of (often seemingly unrelated) changes happening elsewhere in the system. The models go some way to explaining why this should be, by recasting the humanitarian system as a dynamic social and political arena rather than an inert machine – a system which, like our own societies, is continually changing whether we want it to or not.

But while this may be academically satisfying, it is not – on a practical level at least – very helpful. Because however difficult it may be for an individual or a group to make change happen, this is what the majority of the participants at the meeting (and presumably most of the readers of this paper) aim to do. They do not have the luxury simply to observe how change happens – they

are also expected (or expect themselves) to make it happen, or at the very least support it to happen. As a reader, you may well join participants at the meeting in asking: 'so what?'

Unfortunately, and despite the promises of any number of 'how to' books outlining change-management processes, it is unlikely that any single descriptive model, let alone any single design for change, will ever work in all circumstances: 'No two change processes need look the same. In fact this is an impossibility – no technique ever materializes in the same way twice' (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 1998: 10). So instead of presenting a patented roadmap for change, this section outlines some key, practical actions that might help to facilitate processes of change. These actions are drawn from real cases in the humanitarian sector: from presentations and discussions at the meeting, and from written accounts of change processes in humanitarian organisations. We have attempted to select actions that are associated with successful change (that is, they have proved largely successful in a number of different contexts, and have not been demonstrably unsuccessful in any of the situations studied). The success of many of these actions can be – at least partially – explained by the models presented above, and we have tried to draw at least some of these links. The actions are laid out under broad headings – from things to do when initiating a change process onwards.

Before you start: setting expectations

Before initiating a change process, it is important to clarify and test underlying assumptions about the change itself and about the nature and duration of the change process you are starting.

Humanitarians believe in change. Participants at the meeting appeared to believe that change in humanitarian action is both necessary and possible. This is hardly surprising: at the centre of humanitarianism is a 'deep radicalism ... [the belief] that human beings are not meant to suffer' (Rieff, 2002: 18). It is based on utopian values, a belief that moral principles can be upheld, and changes achieved, even in the worst situations on earth. It is perhaps hardly surprising, then, that humanitarians tend to set ambitious targets for change.

At the same time, humanitarians appear to underestimate the complexity of actually bringing these changes about. If we can draw one conclusion from the alternative models presented here – the system as mind, as society, or as complex system – it is that planned change is likely to be more difficult than we often think. It is much easier to fix a machine than to change a society – and a key message from the meeting, and from the literature, is that we should expect attempts at organisational or systemic change to be more like changing a culture than like replacing a fuse.



So the system has, arguably, developed a tendency to believe both that big changes are possible, and that they are easy to achieve: to believe in 'big change overnight', in the words of one meeting participant. But these beliefs and assumptions are often left unexplored, and significant commitments of time, energy, money and expertise are made on the basis of unconscious or unexamined expectations.

This matters, if it means that scarce resources are committed to ambitious schemes which have little chance of success (not just a humanitarian problem: As Olson and Eoyang remind us, 'the future is easier to imagine than create' (Olson and Eoyang, 2001: 115) and the expert consensus is that the majority of planned change initiatives in all sectors fail (Kotter, 1996; Maurer, 1996; Olson and Eoyang, 2001). It also matters because, where different stakeholders hold different expectations, it can lead to conflict and decrease the possibility of success. Finally, if change efforts are judged by unrealistic standards, they leave people demoralised and unwilling to support necessary changes in the future.

These problems can – to a degree – be forestalled if those considering attempting organisational or systemic change stop to consider the nature and scale of the change that they expect to see. On the basis of discussions at the meeting, the sort of questions that might help with this are:

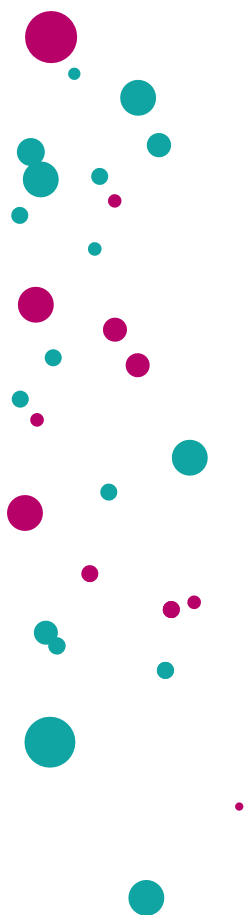
- What is the problem or opportunity? How do we know?
- What are the underlying causes of this situation?
- Who would have to do what differently to address these underlying causes?
- How great a change is this for them, and how welcome a change would it be?
- How much influence do we have with them?

This is not a complete list, and it is certainly not a template for designing a change process. But discussions around such questions can help to identify the degree, scale and dimensions of the change, and so help set expectations.

Participants also suggested, in a number of panels, that it is important to consider expectations around the change process itself. The first point to note here is that the change (as a result) and the change process (to get to that result) are different things. There is a danger of getting caught up in the process, and neglecting the end results; concentrating solely on the process can even move you away from the results that you wish to achieve (Localisation panel).



Planned change is likely to be more difficult than we often think... The majority of planned change initiatives in all sectors fail.



The second point is that the relationship between a change and the change process is generally complex, not linear. Because we expect there to be a linear input between inputs and outcomes, ‘we are always looking for big waves of change, and we ignore the little ripples’ (or the butterfly’s wings, to use a favourite image from complexity thinking).

But we should not necessarily assume that big changes require big processes. Looking back on a number of changes that had occurred in the system, participants noted: ‘there’s potential to improve, to have a big impact by improving the way that we motivate and monitor ourselves against some of the smaller change agendas’ (Funding panel). ‘Sometimes just going back to basics, and doing the basic things right, is transformative ... it’s just these small little things that you tweak along the way that have a really big impact’ (WHS, TA and Cash panel – similar points were made in the Opening panel, and the Innovation panel).

Another, related challenge around framing expectations is the idea that big change necessarily requires complete change: that the system has to change completely in order for transformation to occur. It is true that organisations and systems are interconnected, and that (as we will see below) changes in one area generally require changes in other areas. But not in all areas. In fact, ‘[Change] Theory would suggest that if fundamental – or even significant – change is to occur ... some characteristics of the organisation must not change’ (Goodstein and Burke, 2000: 389). This is an interesting perspective. To take one current example, localisation is a powerful idea, and would create massive change in terms of who provides aid. But how significant would the changes be in terms of other dimensions of change? Would humanitarian operations occur in different places? Would different goods and services be provided? It is likely that there would be both significant changes and significant continuities. Similarly, a move to cash would imply massive change in what is provided, and how – but some sectors would probably not see major change (Steets et al., 2016), and many organisations would remain in powerful positions, albeit with a more normative than operational role. When thinking of transformation, many people instinctively think of a process of revolution and replacement. But replacement and change are very different approaches, and while attractive as an idea, ‘you can’t go for all out revolution on everything, simultaneously, and expect it to work ... revolutions don’t have a fantastic track record in a lot of different aspects of social life, right? There are revolutionary changes, but oftentimes these are specific changes within a broader set of constants’ (Evaluation and evidence panel).

A third and final area where humanitarians often make unfounded assumptions is that of time.¹⁶ There can be a tendency to see change processes as projects, which can be completed in finite, and normally



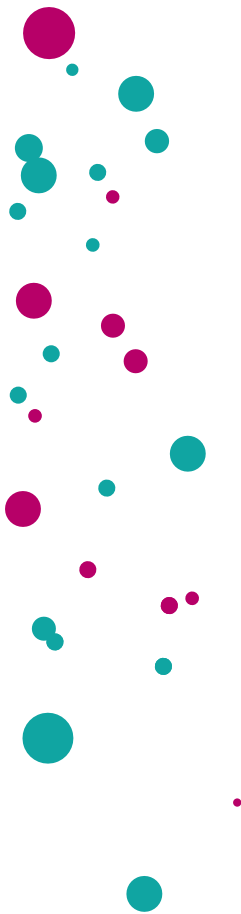
fairly short, periods of time. While there was at least one example at the meeting of a ‘very quick’ change (Stories in 5: Merging Merlin and Save the Children), in general, change takes longer, and sometimes much longer, than the annual funding cycles by which much humanitarian life is measured (panels on funding, localisation, information technology and social media: Stories in 5: From teaching to learning: education reform in Finland). In ALNAP’s previous work on change, the processes studied had been on-going for periods of three to 15 years (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008), and these longer timescales also held for initiatives considered for this report (David and Mancini, 2003; Guijt, 2004; Lipson and Britton, 2016; Vann, 2015) and accord with the experience of other sectors (Kotter, 1996; Scott et al., 2003).

This means that change processes, which people expect to be fast and exciting, and to produce tangible results fairly quickly, will often feel slow and frustrating (WHS, TA and Cash panel, Information technology and social media panel). The very idea of an end point, and of a change project which has a clear beginning, middle, and end, can also lead to frustration (and, in some cases, a requirement to ‘speed up’ or lose support – and in particular donor support): several speakers suggested that, in fact, this is not how change actually happens: rather, it is a continuous process, taking place in a constantly changing context, so that when an end point is reached it can already have been superseded by events, or by new requirements (Innovation panel).

These points may seem merely academic, however, they have real implications for processes of change in the humanitarian system. This report is being compiled around one year after the Grand Bargain was agreed: a significant, multi-stakeholder, sector-wide change initiative. A number of reports have been published, considering the progress that has been made to date (Derzsi-horvath et al., 2017; van Praag, 2017a, 2017b) and some people involved in the process have voiced their concern that enthusiasm for the Grand Bargain is declining. At the same time, participants at the Annual Meeting suggested that fulfilment of Grand Bargain targets (around localisation, for example) would not necessarily fully achieve the desired changes, and might, in some ways, work against them. It seems justifiable, at least, to wonder what participants expected could be achieved in a year, how the experience (and particularly the speed) of the process has affected levels of engagement, and how participants expect the process of change to evolve over time, in the light of new learning and changes in the external environment.

Laying the foundations – multi-stakeholder groups

One theme which recurred throughout the meeting was the importance of establishing a broad group of stakeholders to support the change process. It is a theme which also features strongly in accounts of humanitarian change processes, and which has emerged in ALNAP’s earlier work on change and on innovation (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008; Obrecht and Warner, 2016).



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NEW REQUIREMENTS

(INNOVATION PANEL)

As we have seen, the standard, ‘mechanistic’ approach to organisational change tends to assume that the object of change – be it an organisational structure or a way of working – is a discrete and separate element, with little relationship to the rest of the organisation. It also tends to see changes as essentially technical in nature, and to overlook the social, cultural or emotional meaning of changing the status quo.

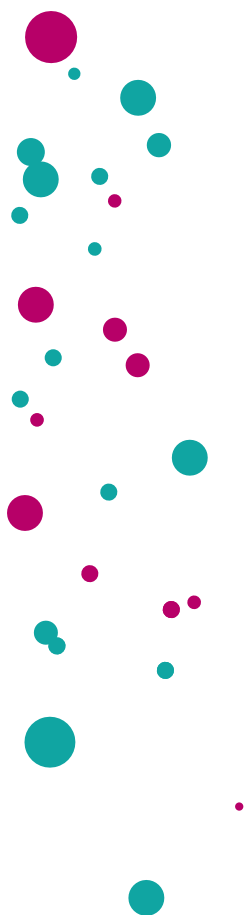
As a result, many processes of change involve only a handful of people, often working within a single department: these people generally have expertise in the structure or process to be changed, and this expertise is assumed to be all that is required to effect the change.

In contrast, speakers on several panels advocated ‘bring(ing) all the key actors together’ to support the change process. In practice, this meant bringing together people from across the organisation (where changes were occurring in a single agency) or from across the system (for broader changes, affecting multiple organisations). It also, often, meant bringing people in from ‘outside’ – from other organisations, or from other sectors (Story in 5: Campaigning for Yemen).

The benefits of multi-stakeholder groups in change processes

Meeting participants made a number of powerful arguments for developing these multi-stakeholder groups. By bringing together people with a variety of viewpoints and with differing expertise, it became possible to get a better understanding of what the change might involve (a point we return to in the section on design, below). Engaging a broader range of people in the change process – including those who could block implementation, or those whose support would be needed to institute the changes – also made people feel heard, focused attention on the changes, and tended to decrease resistance and increase the sense of ownership (Story in 5: Mercy Corps, see also (Ressler et al., 2012). As one speaker explained (discussing the Sphere process) ‘broad buy in, an inclusive process where everybody can find a home for their contribution was incredibly important and powerful, because [it gave] a sense of feeling invested in that agreement ... and then bringing that back into your own work’ (Evaluation and evidence panel).

At the same time, inter-functional or inter-organisational groups can reduce competition between departments or organisations (Innovation panel; Information technology and social media panel), and could, in some instances, prevent the creation of parallel and duplicated change initiatives (Innovation panel, see also Lipson and Britton, 2016) They also provide a platform for different bodies to share their experiences and learning on implementing changes, and so – hopefully – prevent the duplication of mistakes (Funding panel; see also Cosgrave et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2016; Scott, 2005).



Less tangibly, but equally importantly, the creation of groups can provide individual members with support to advocate for change in their own organisation: ‘we sometimes need an external force to harness the energy to bring about internal change’ (Accountability and participation panel). Groups can also help to build support for change across the system: the NEAR initiative, the Charter for Change, and the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), were three examples that were mentioned (Localisation panel and WHS, TA and Cash panel).

This latter point relates to the culture and shared assumptions of the humanitarian system. Much of what passes for ‘reality’ in the humanitarian world (as in any social system) is actually a social construct – a shared picture created by the various actors engaged in a situation. Humanitarian actors ‘help to define shared international tasks (like development) and create and define categories of actor (like refugee)’ (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). They often create an ‘understanding’ of situations and needs in particular contexts (‘rapid transition to development’ in South Sudan (Poole and Primrose, 2010: 1), or a ‘post conflict’ situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Darcy et al., 2013: 10), which, even when erroneous, are very powerful. The tendency of humanitarians to create mental models, and the power of these models once created, has been noted in a number of other situations (Darcy, 2009; Knox Clarke, 2013). To the degree that reality is social, then changing that reality is also a social activity. ‘Perceptions ... drive change in the system’ (Taylor, 2009: 1037). Inter-agency groups provide a possibility for new narratives to take shape, amplify these narratives (Accountability and participation panel) and influence members to accept these narratives through peer pressure (Funding panel). More than one donor has changed policy in order to prevent ‘growing criticism and isolation from the donor community’ (Chandler, 2001: 696).

The nature and functions of multi-stakeholder groups in change processes

Given all of these potential advantages, it is not surprising that meeting participants kept returning to the importance of multi-stakeholder groups. And in the only case presented where such a group had not been created, those involved suggested that ‘if we did it again, we would have definitely sat down earlier, collectively ... and together designed the strategic plan ... at headquarters, and also across the different country programmes’ (Story in 5: Merging Merlin and Save the Children). But it should also be noted that, while the advantages of these groups tended to be similar across the various change processes, their nature and functions differed – often quite significantly – from one process to the next. In some, groups were involved in creating a picture of the current situation, and a vision for change. In others, they helped to design the change process (see section below), lobbied for attention and resources to be directed to the change process, or shared experiences and learning around



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implementation. In terms of structure, some groups – such as the ALNAP urban Community of Practice – were fairly informal communities of practice. Others – such as CaLP or the NEAR initiative – were more formalised networks, with a centralised secretariat and structured membership. Others were not standing groups, but processes, which brought in stakeholders at specific moments: this latter model was used in a number of organisational change processes, as well as in the system-wide Sphere project.

So it is probably not enough to just bring a large group of stakeholders together around a change. It is also important to clarify how this group might best be involved, and to what degree it will engage with decision-making. Such decisions are not set in stone – platforms, networks and communities of practice can be at their best where they are opportunistic, and reacting to changing circumstances. But – as we discuss below – this flexibility and adaptiveness probably works best when the objective and role of the group in decision-making have been agreed.

Designing change

Starting with what works

Whatever the humanitarian system may be – a machine, a mind, or a society – it is certainly not a blank sheet of paper. And yet, when designing a change process, it can be tempting to think that it is: that what is already there should be erased and replaced with a completely new design. We have already seen that radical change does not, necessarily, mean a complete replacement of what is already there. When it comes to designing the process, we can take this idea further: radical change may actually come from adaptations that have already occurred somewhere in the system.

The interviews conducted for this paper brought home the fact that, while the changes that we seek do not always happen, the system is always changing and adapting, often in major and important ways. Using the metaphor of the ecosystem, we might think of these changes as the naturally occurring genetic mutations that lead an animal or plant to evolve, and become more effective in its environment. In designing a change process, it makes sense to start by looking for these ‘naturally occurring’ changes. As Duncan Green said in the opening panel of the Annual Meeting: ‘I’m a great believer in looking at where the system has thrown up solutions already. Some people call it positive deviance ... [ask yourself] Where has the system produced better examples of whatever issue you’re concerned about, and then try and learn from it’. Reviewing change across the development and humanitarian sectors, Ben Ramalingam makes a similar point: those designing change should try to ‘identify the spaces where change is already happening and try to encourage and nurture them’ (Ramalingam, 2013).



When we look at change programmes that appear to have had some success in the humanitarian system, we can see this approach in action. The introduction of clusters was easier where ‘proto clusters’ or cluster-like bodies already existed (Street, 2009). In one organisational change programme ‘staff as far apart as Orissa and Rio de Janeiro said ALPS was asking them to do what they were already doing: “At last”, one said, “our organisation is catching up with us”’ (Scott-Villiers, 2002: 432).

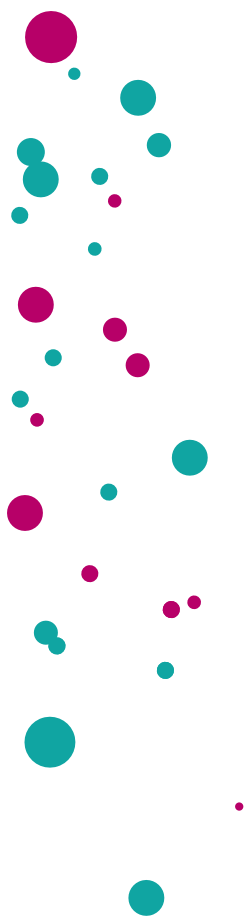
Discussions at the Annual Meeting suggested that there are many areas where, if we were to look carefully, we would find examples of positive practices – in accountability, in funding, in innovative practices for providing aid. In some cases (notably the Grand Bargain), change processes are looking for, and considering, these outliers (system 1.1, funding 2.1). Overall, though, there was a general sense that ‘the system’s terrible at engaging with [these examples] and saying, “Well why are people behaving like this? How can we support that, rather than continuing to do the thing that we were going to do?”’ (Innovation panel). One concrete design suggestion from the meeting, then, is that before any other decisions are taken, those involved in change should look for these unusual situations, and try to learn from them. One approach to doing this, which has been used successfully in other sectors, is Appreciative Inquiry (Annis Hammond, 1996).

Deciding on an overall approach to design

Another consistent theme at the meeting related to the need for change processes to be broad (working across a system), deep (working at a level of detail) and flexible (changing as the context changed or as new elements came to light).

As we have noted above, humanitarian organisations – and the broad humanitarian system – are made up of interconnected, interdependent parts, and so changes in one area will tend to require changes in other areas: programmatic changes are likely to have ‘long-term implications in terms of communications, fundraising, grant management, a whole raft of implications’ (Localisation panel; see also TA, WHS and Cash panel, Accountability and participation panel, Information technology and social media panel).

In addition, these changes will generally be quite detailed: ‘you can’t stay on the level of the policy declarations. You will have to go into the details’ (Funding panel); and ‘get very technical’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel; see also Protection and resilience panel). One fairly specific and limited example from the meeting gives a taste of the problem: ‘Introducing something like rapid diagnostic tests for malaria means changing the actual architecture and patient flow of your clinic’ (Information technology and social media panel). Here change to the medical procedures has ‘knock-on’ effects on the administration and physical structure of the work, and these knock-on effects



require detailed technical changes (which may, in themselves, require more changes elsewhere). The importance of recognising connection and detail, and the negative consequence of not doing so, are frequently recognised in reviews of humanitarian change processes (David and Mancini, 2003; Goold and Britton, 2000; Guijt, 2004; Lipson and Britton, 2016; Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013; Ressler et al., 2012; Ternstrom, 2014; Wigley, 2006).

And, if being systemic and detailed is not already difficult enough to design into a change process, successful processes also need to be flexible and able to change over time. This is because the different organisations involved, or the details that need to be addressed, may themselves change as they respond to changes in the external environment, or as new ‘unplanned’ elements come to light, or as a ‘knock-on’ result of changes made earlier in the process. As Duncan Green writes: ‘One of the main lessons I drew from researching ten case studies ... Is the importance of unpredictable events and accidents’ (Green, 2016: 239). Ben Ramalingam gives a number of illuminating examples of unexpected outcomes in *Aid on the Edge of Chaos* (and see also and see also Barnett and Walker, 2015; Chandler, 2001; Kreuger et al., 2016; Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013),¹⁷ and participants at the meeting provided many more, including the unexpected consequences of collecting large amounts of data for humanitarian programmes (Information technology and Cash panel); negative effects of cash programming on social structures (TA, WHS and Cash panel) and the paradox of the Grand Bargain, which contains a stream to decrease the reporting burden, but actually increases the amount of reporting required (Funding panel). For any change programme, this presents a challenge – as one presenter put it ‘the challenge of the unforeseen. The challenge of the unanticipated, unexpected, un-deliberated’ (Information technology and social media panel). These unanticipated events can throw a carefully planned programme off its tracks, or can open opportunities which the plan is unable to exploit – unless the ability to change and adapt has been deliberately built into the change programme itself.



Another consistent theme at the meeting related to the need for change processes to be broad, deep and flexible.



Broadly speaking, there appear to be three approaches to the design of change processes, which we might think of as ‘classical’, ‘participative’ and ‘iterative’, and these approaches address the challenges of breadth, depth and flexibility in different ways. In the classical approach, change processes are designed by a small group, often at the top of the organisation, and then implemented through ‘roll-out’ activities to the rest of the organisation. The problem here is obvious – the approach is not good at addressing any of these three challenges. Classical change processes often overlook the way that the planned change will affect the rest of the organisation, and they are generally light on detail. In fact, to the degree that this approach achieves results, it is normally because it has taken on elements of one of the other two approaches at a later date (Opening panel; TA, WHS and Cash panel).

The second approach recognises the interconnections that lie at the heart of most organisational structures, and attempts to take them into account by bringing together as broad a group of stakeholders as possible, looking at as much detail as possible, in the creation of the plan. This is broadly the approach taken, for example, by the Grand Bargain (Funding panel) and in a number of internal change processes (see for example: Story in 5 – Mercy Corps). There are a variety of different ‘whole system’ or ‘large group’ design mechanisms that can be used to try to achieve this form of broad, detailed plan (a number of which are listed under the ‘whole systems work’ section in the bibliography of change techniques, Annex 2). While this approach recognises that successful change needs to be both inclusive and detailed, it is still often based on the fundamental assumption that it can be planned in advance, and that the implementation will, broadly, follow the plan. As a result, this approach to planning, unless frequently repeated, can prove relatively inflexible over time.

The third approach to design, the iterative approach, also recognises the importance of inclusivity and detail, but rather than attempting to plan these in at the start, it accepts that many of the important links, and much of the most important detailed planning, will only become apparent as the change process evolves. The orientation to design here is one that prioritises action over planning: making changes, looking for the reactions to these changes, and then addressing these reactions. It is, interestingly, a design process which does not rely heavily on a plan (interestingly, because design and planning are often seen as synonymous), emphasising instead broad, general rules and information sharing (see below). Participants at the meeting described the approach as: ‘building it while playing it’ and being ‘responsive and creative’; or, as one humanitarian manager explained ‘we don’t count the pot holes before beginning a voyage; we navigate them on the way’ (Ressler et al., 2012).

A second characteristic of the iterative approach is that it tends to be less concerned with centralised control of the change process, recognising that for change to really take off, it will need to be owned and controlled by diverse

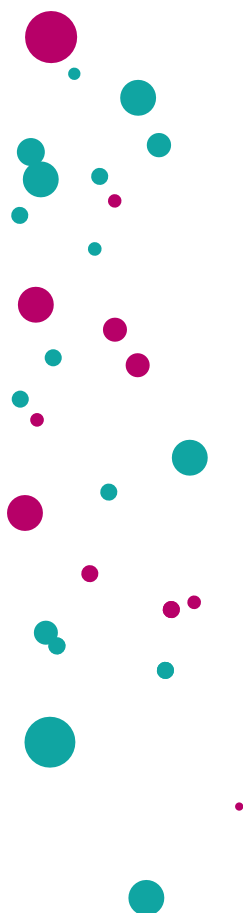
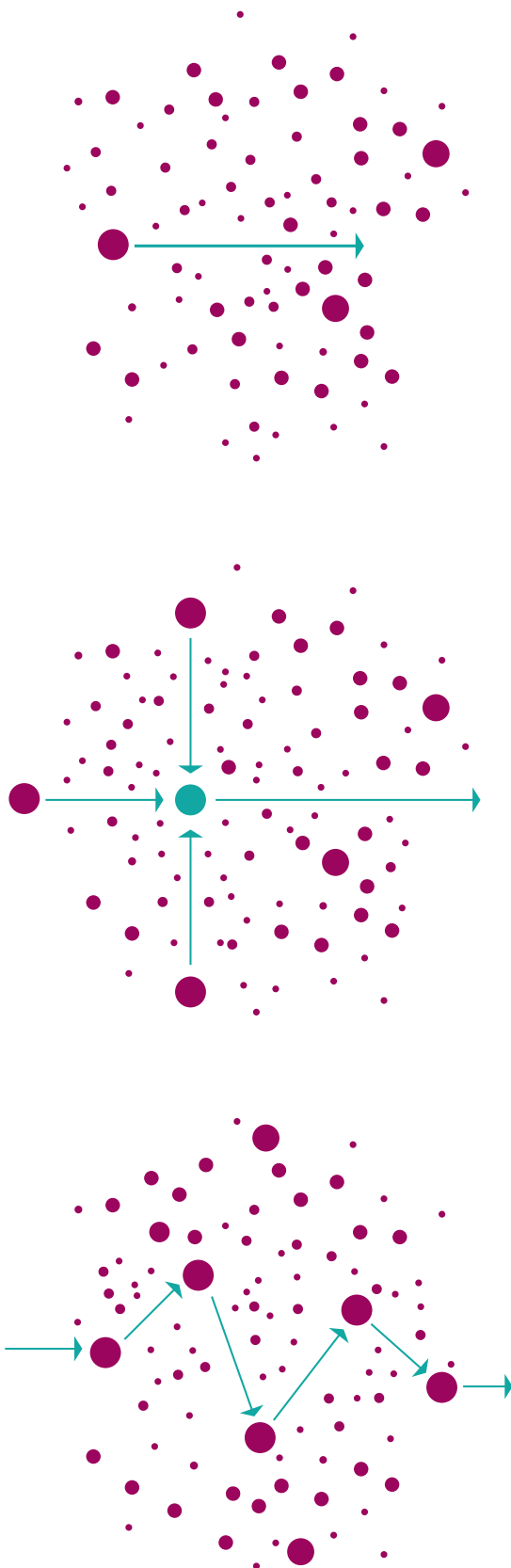


Figure 3: Three designs for change



CLASSICAL

A plan is produced by a small number of people and then 'rolled out'. Because the plan generally does not consider all of the elements that need to change, and is not designed to change as the situation changes, this approach often fails.

COLLABORATIVE

This process recognises the interconnections that lie at the heart of most organisational structures and attempts to bring together as broad a group of stakeholders as possible, looking at as much detail as possible, in the creation of the plan. The focus is on planning but often these plans are not flexible enough to adapt as the context changes.

ITERATIVE

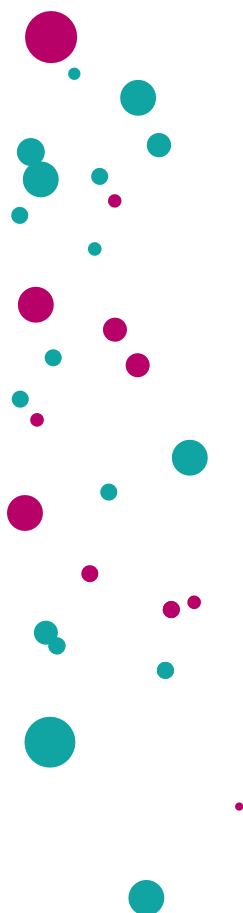
This process also recognises the importance of inclusivity and detail, but rather than attempting to plan these in at the start, it accepts that many of the important links, and much of the most important detailed planning, will only become apparent as the change process evolves. The orientation to design here is one that prioritises action over planning, with a large and changing number of people planning and re-planning as a response to the changing situation over time.

actors across the organisation or system. It is interesting to note, here, that two of the most successful change initiatives in the humanitarian system, the Sphere standards and the use of cash, have both been very decentralised – cash has been owned by the many agencies who have attempted to use the approach, and Sphere has been spontaneously translated and used, in many cases, with only limited oversight from the centre.

Discussions at the meeting tended to support this iterative approach to change (Protection and resilience panel, Funding panel), and it has been recommended in a number of reviews of humanitarian change processes (Featherstone, 2016; Ressler et al., 2012). However, the approach is not without challenges. As the changes ‘ripple out’ across the organisation, and different parts of it make their own adaptations, overall coherence and a common sense of purpose around the change can get lost. At this stage it is quite likely that the process becomes lots of different processes, moving at different speeds, or not moving at all (David and Mancini, 2003; Guijt, 2004). As with so many elements of the change discussion, success appears to lie in creating a balance: here between too much control and too little. Change cannot be fully planned or controlled, but without some form of plan or control, change is unlikely to happen.

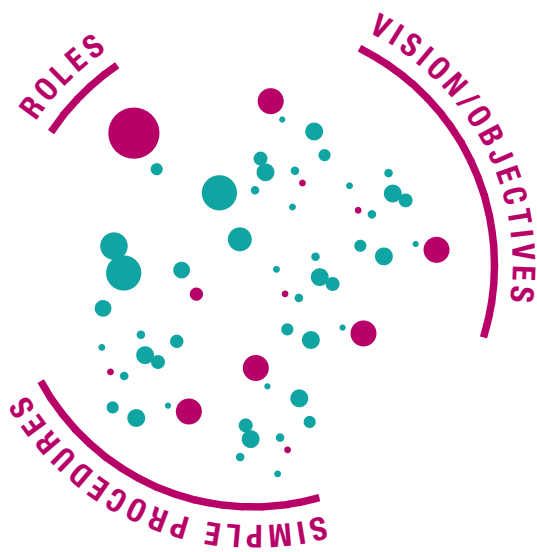
One review of change in a humanitarian organisation captures and – to a degree – resolves this tension: ‘Between unplanned change and a rigid processes of change is a middle ground in which change processes are structured to empower, monitor, guide, problem-solve and actively support’ (Ressler et al., 2012: xi). ALNAP’s research on innovation comes to a similar conclusion: the tension between unplanned and over-planned change can be best resolved by ‘a broad but clear’ approach to the process that creates ‘a balance between structure and flexibility’ (Obrecht and Warner, 2016: 42).

At the meeting, ALNAP Members illustrated a number of ways in which they had balanced structure and flexibility. Support was, in some cases, provided to the change process through central units, which worked with otherwise largely autonomous teams ‘like an octopus, with tentacles going into a number of teams to influence their work’ (Story in 5: Mercy Corps). Information collection and shared learning activities (as we shall see below) were employed to ensure that a ‘picture’ of the changing organisation was created, to allow those involved in the change to understand and respond to emerging issues. And, as we see in the next section, broad goals and responsibilities were established to create a ‘container’ for the change process.



Setting boundaries and parameters

Figure 4: A successful container for change



‘When you talk about the need to be flexible, adaptable, all the complex theories that you write about, being flexible and adaptable, but at the end of the day, each and every one of us wants something predictable. So how do you deal with the paradox of wanting to be flexible and adaptable, and yet actually the comfort is in having something quite predictable?’ (Opening panel).

The importance of creating an outline, or ‘container’, as part of the design of a change process was another consistent theme of the meeting. These containers reassured participants and managers that the process was not completely out of control. They also gave a shared understanding of the process, while leaving ample scope for localised initiatives – an extremely important function in a system which, as we have seen, is highly dispersed and comprises hundreds of autonomous organisations.

Three areas of structure emerged in the meeting, and are identified in the literature on humanitarian change processes, as being particularly important. The first is the vision or objective of the change process: success ‘requires a real clarity of focus on the end result, the change that you’re looking for, rather than focussing on the change process’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel). Clarity of vision seems to have contributed to a number of successful change (Opening panel; Story in 5: Campaigning for Yemen; Lipson and Britton, 2016). on the other hand, less successful programmes have often been unclear about the benefits the change will bring, concentrating too tightly on the desired change itself, or on processes to reach it, rather than on the results that the change is designed to achieve (Kreuger et al., 2016; Ressler et al., 2012; Street, 2009; Vann, 2015).

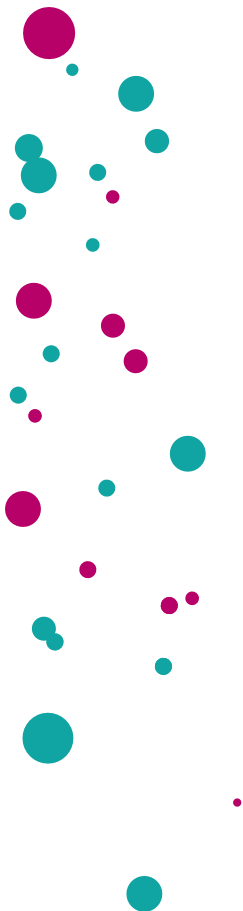
The second area of structure concerns roles – who is meant to do what? The importance of clarity of roles in complex environments has been seen both in humanitarian programmes (Knox Clarke, 2014) and in innovation programmes in humanitarian organisations (Obrecht and Warner, 2016). Again, where roles are not clear, change programmes seem to be less successful (Gostelow et al., 2010; Guijt, 2004; Kreuger et al., 2016; Niland et al., 2015; Ressler et al., 2012). It can be particularly important to identify who is responsible for making which decisions, and who is responsible for implementing them (a RACI diagram can be useful for this). As noted above, where large numbers of stakeholders become involved, it becomes even more important to clarify who is doing what – at least at first: in many cases, roles will change over the life of a programme. What matters is that they are clear at the outset, and that changes, as they occur, are agreed and communicated.

The final area of qualified certainty lies in establishing outline procedures that are broad enough to encompass a variety of circumstances, but specific enough to be useful. Eisenhardt and Sull (2001) have championed the idea of ‘simple rules’, ‘straightforward, hard and fast rules which define direction without confining it’ (Eisenhardt and Sull, 2001: 1). They suggest that organisations work in complex, adaptive systems will benefit from making basic rules about when to stop and start activities, and the types of activities they will, and will not, perform. These rules should be periodically reviewed, to ensure that they are leading to success. Without the benefit of *Harvard Business Review* articles, many effective humanitarian programmes working in difficult and unpredictable conflicts have developed simple rules for themselves (Knox Clarke, 2014), as have development activists (Green, 2016). The fact that these rules are often tacit and unwritten does not make them any less effective. However, for a change process, it can be helpful to identify, and periodically review, these ‘rules of the game’, as a way of ensuring that the very diverse activities involved share some degree of commonality.

Communicating to support change

The importance of communication

Because change relies, ultimately, on people’s behaviour, it is important that people understand the reasons for change, the benefits it will bring, and the scope and nature of the change process. This is particularly difficult in globally dispersed humanitarian organisations, and even more difficult in the atomised humanitarian system: critiques of the TA, for example, suggest that one of the main constraints to success has been a lack of information on what it was all about (Dyukova and Chetcuti, 2014; Street, 2009). At the same time, high levels of communication were seen as critical to the success of change efforts elsewhere in the system (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010; Scott-Villiers, 2002). One rule seems to hold: however much the change is communicated, it should probably be communicated more.



What to communicate

The literature review of humanitarian change processes conducted for this paper suggests that it is particularly important to communicate the intended results of the change process – the effects that the process is having (Ressler et al., 2012; Vann, 2015; Wigley, 2006). It is also important to communicate ‘next steps’, so that people have a sense of what is happening (Story in 5: Merging Merlin and Save the Children).

Communication as a two-way process

Communication is, of course, about more than conveying information. It is also about influencing the emotional climate that surrounds the change process, and addressing (both conscious and unconscious) resistance to change. What is communicated is obviously important here: communicating results can create a sense of positive activity and success, while explaining the process (to the degree it can be explained) can reduce anxiety. But equally important in addressing concern and resistance is how you communicate. One-way, ‘broadcast’-style communication (through email and websites, for example) can be easily ignored: important because, as we have seen, ignoring a change process is one of the most fundamental forms of resistance to change. One-way communication also gives no opportunity for the kinds of discussion which allow people to make a mental connection with a process, think about the change and what it might mean for them. ‘[Y]ou want to get at the hidden agenda, and then do a critical reflection on it ... you want to find out what it is that you don’t know, and then you want to do a critical reflection on it’ (Evaluation and evidence panel). So it is no surprise that two-way discussions seem to be a more effective way of communicating. A number of humanitarian change processes have found that staff meetings, online fora, and training events – where discussions and disagreement are encouraged – have helped the change process (Story in 5: Mercy Corps; Evaluation and evidence panel), while a number of other processes which did not include two-way communication later wished they had (Story in 5: Merging Merlin and Save the Children, (Cooley and Ron, 2002; Ressler et al., 2012).

An important element of any discussion around change is disagreement. This may seem counter-intuitive, but again it can be explained by a consideration of how resistance happens at the level of the individual and of the organisation. Change processes are often messy, and involve disagreements and conflict: speakers at the Annual Meeting talked of conflict as ‘inevitable’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel) and said ‘if [conflict and confusion] aren’t there, you’re not really looking for meaningful change’ (TA, WHS and Cash panel, see also Funding panel). However, anxiety and disagreements are very often hidden. People may consciously hide disagreement because they don’t want to antagonise powerful figures (while, often, doing whatever they can to frustrate changes) or they may unconsciously hide it by not thinking about the change process at all. In either case, the result is to make changes less likely to happen.





Facilitating open discussion, and disagreement, can help identify elements of the process that were previously overlooked. They also bring people's attention to the process and allow them to be heard.



Facilitating open discussion, and disagreement, can help identify elements of the process that were previously overlooked, such as new stakeholders or new details that need to be addressed. They also, crucially, bring people's attention to the process, and allow them to be heard.

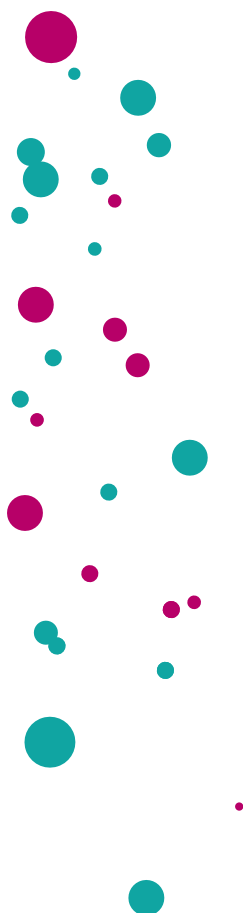
Actions really do speak louder than words

Much of the most important communication around change does not take place through communication activities at all, but through the actions of those involved in the change process. Actions speak louder than words, and 'Staff care most about what they see others doing' (Wigley, 2006: 33; see also Accountability and participation panel). Previous ALNAP research has suggested, for example, that for feedback and accountability systems to be fully implemented in an organisation, organisational leaders need to be comfortable with giving and using feedback themselves (Bonino et al., 2014). Where change activities require people to change their behaviours, it is vital that senior staff, in particular, model these behaviours.

It may also be important for the change process itself to appear to be different from other processes in the organisation, and so draw attention to the change and communicate that a real change is happening. The 'traditional' approach to change – packaging the change as a 'project' (often with a log frame), producing tools and guidelines, and 'rolling them out' so closely parallels 'business as usual' that it may, paradoxically, communicate that a change is not going to happen: 'the more you build stuff into routines, the easier it is to just pay lip service to it, and not actually do it properly' (Accountability panel; see also Gostelow et al., 2010; Lipson and Britton, 2016). Discussions at the meeting suggested that a useful approach might be for people involved in the change to ask themselves 'what would this change process look like if we were doing it in the system that we are going to create?' Processes aiming for greater accountability, for example, would put greater emphasis than is normal in the organisation on engaging people and responding to their concerns and criticisms, and would publish data about the cost of the change process. Processes aiming to improve the use of evidence in decision-making might make a point of providing evidence to show the potential benefits of the approach.

Monitoring and learning from the change process

A number of the panels and stories of change at the meeting highlighted the importance of monitoring the change process (Opening panel, Funding panel, Protection and resilience panel; Story in 5: Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda). As one speaker said, in relation to the Grand Bargain, 'the concrete targets agreed ... provide a vehicle for real change, not another set of principles agreed somewhere and then forgotten' (Funding panel). This focus on setting targets for the change process, and then monitoring whether or not they are achieved, is perhaps unsurprising. Measurement of progress against defined outputs and outcomes is a key element of Results Based



Management (RBM), and so of much humanitarian programme design – and, as previously noted, it provides clarity and supports accountability on what is being achieved by a programme.

But, as we have seen, a classical, results-based, management approach is not necessarily the most effective in a change process. Processes of change are not easily controlled or managed from the centre, and predetermined targets may well become obsolete as a change process develops, and may divert attention from the important, but unintended, changes that are almost certainly taking place.

So, just as we need to rethink our attitude to the design of change, so we need to rethink, or at least expand, our expectations of monitoring. In particular, we need to shift our thinking in two areas – the purpose of monitoring, and what is monitored.

Much ‘classical’ thinking on monitoring is based on the idea those in control need ‘to be sure that something is happening’ (Funding panel) so that they can use their power to ensure corrective action when it is not. This approach works in change processes where managers have control over them. And, in most cases, there will be people who do have some control, or at the very least influence, over how the process unfolds – who may withhold necessary funding or political support. To the degree that this is the case, there is still a place for monitoring to ensure expected results.

But this control is also severely limited: enduring change in the humanitarian system tends to happen because people want it to, and not because they are told to make it so. Under these circumstances, the purpose of monitoring alters. It becomes more a platform for creating a common picture of what is happening across the process, and for prompting discussion and learning between people engaged in different elements, or in different locations. One participant described their monitoring process as ‘a tool that has allowed us to start a conversation on what we are actually looking for’ (Resilience and protection panel), and another said that monitoring helps people involved in the process ‘reflect on what they’ve done, and reflect to see, actually have we made progress towards those benchmarks and principles ... It gives you food for thought. If you didn’t have that, we could just continue with business as usual’ (Accountability panel). The emphasis is on connecting people to the process, and to its potential and achievements, as much as it is on holding people to account for results.

The second important area to consider is the ‘what’: what is monitored. And this takes us back to the difference between the classical and the iterative approaches to design discussed in the previous section. Because just as monitoring against predetermined targets is a central element of classical

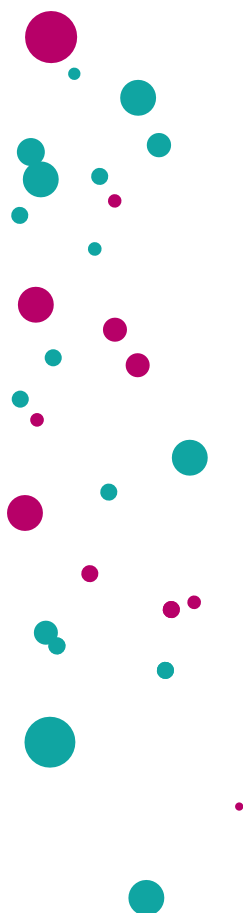


project design, so creating the emerging picture of what is happening in the area of interest, and of how this relates to actions taken, is central to iterative design. There is, after all, no point in being flexible and able to respond to changes in the environment if you don't have any way of knowing when or if these changes are occurring. In this sense, monitoring becomes less about targets, and more an enquiry into:

- What is happening?
- How does this relate to what we are doing?
- Are new people or groups of people becoming involved?
- Is there anything that is working particularly well, which we should support?
- Are there any unexpected consequences? Is there anything that we should do about them?

Consistently asking and answering questions of this type allows for an approach which 'interweaves thought and action, learning and adapting as we go' (Green, 2016: 7).

Unfortunately, the humanitarian system has not advanced very far with this type of progressive sense-making and understanding in any form of programme, let alone in internal change programmes. In humanitarian responses, information is generally collected 'up front', in one-off assessments. Far less attention is given to collecting information about situations as they unfold (Global Clusters, 2015; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015; Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014). There are some promising avenues of enquiry. In the development sphere, the Doing Development Differently (DDD) movement has championed this type of monitoring as part of 'adaptive programming' (Valters et al., 2016) and can point to success in programmes such as the State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) (Booth and Chambers, 2014). Approaches such as outcome mapping and outcome harvesting offer some interesting, and potentially powerful, approaches to understanding processes as they unfold. At the same time, in the humanitarian world, the idea of adaptation based on regularly updated information has been shown to be a core element of success in a number of innovation programmes (Obrecht and Warner, 2016). It is an area requiring further work, because it continues to constrain effective change (Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013; Ressler et al., 2012).



Leadership and change

There were a number of animated conversations at the Annual Meeting on the topic of leadership and change. The conversations covered two related, but slightly different, topics – the role of formal leaders in change and the task of ‘leading change’ – and it is probably important to separate them.

The first topic concerned the role of formal leaders (that is, people with formal authority – Executive Directors, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), and Country Directors) in change processes.

There was general and widespread agreement that the support of people with formal authority made a big difference to the success of a process of change. This is backed up by the literature review (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008; Kreuger et al., 2016), which also suggested that in some cases a lack of leadership support had held changes back (Niland et al., 2015).¹⁸ Leadership support was important for a number of reasons: formal leaders could focus and maintain attention on the need for change (Accountability panel; Featherstone, 2016); direct resources to the change process (Story in 5: Campaigning for Yemen; Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008); make people in the organisation less anxious about the risks involved in a change process (Story in 5: Campaigning for Yemen) and use their personal networks to build support across and beyond the system (Opening panel). They could also, crucially, communicate the commitment of the organisation to change by modelling the change in their own behaviour (Accountability panel).

There can, however, be challenges to obtaining the support of leaders, particularly if they have been in the organisation for some time: significant change ‘challenges how things are done and thus also confronts the leadership or management culture in place’ (Lewinsky, 2016: 16). Senior leaders – even those who support the change at a rational level – are perhaps more likely to resist it at an emotional level than other members of the organisation, as they have more investment in the status quo. So it is no surprise that in several cases, successful changes in the humanitarian sector have been accompanied by the departure of senior management (Jayawickrama and Pan, 2010; Kent, n.d.; Scott-Villiers, 2002).

Given the potential of formal leaders to support, or to frustrate, changes, an important task for those trying to facilitate change can be to engage with the leadership of the organisation, to make them think about the change programme, and to surface and consider any concerns that they might have. In strongly hierarchical organisations, these conversations can often be more easily conducted by someone external to the organisation. Another approach can be to identify those people who have influence over senior leaders – peers in other organisations, the Board, or the media – and bring the change initiative to their attention through these more circuitous routes (another area where multi-stakeholder groups, as outlined above, can be useful).



There is no point in being flexible and able to respond to changes in the environment if you don't have any way of knowing when or if these changes are occurring.

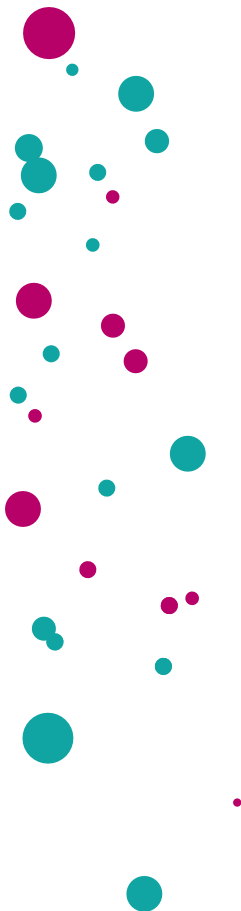


The second set of conversations at the meeting focused on the task of 'leading change'. While formal leaders were seen to be important, a number of panels suggested that we should not necessarily expect them to lead change. As we have seen, successful approaches to supporting change are rather different from standard management, or even leadership. As John Kotter observes, 'the solution to the change problem is not one larger than life individual ... many people need to help with the leadership task' (Kotter, 1996: 30). And so, while the single charismatic individual could play an important role, we should usually expect leadership to be a more collective process, with leadership functions spread among groups of people (Innovation panel, Opening panel). These leadership groups do not simply spring into being. The existence of such a grouping will often require that the formal leader accepts a (measured) loss of control, and is open to ambiguity, doubt and conflict. Given the role of resistance in change processes, these groups should expect to encounter conflict – both outside and within the group, and periods of frustration and anxiety (as well, hopefully, as periods of great creativity and success). They should be open to changes in membership as the process unfolds, which can cause further instability and conflict (Schutz, 1958). These challenges underline the importance of clarity around vision and role, and suggest that leadership groups do well to invest time in building trust and group identity.

Resourcing and supporting the change process

It might go without saying, but funding is an important element of the success of many change processes. In the Sphere process, for example, a key element of success was the amount of funding put into training activities (Evaluation and evidence panel) while ring-fenced funds allowed the Norwegian Refugee Council to conduct pilot activities and pay for additional monitoring to see if these activities were successful (Featherstone, 2016). On the other hand, a lack of funding has undermined a number of change processes (Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013; Ressler et al., 2012).

A second resource that is often in short supply is time. Change processes put additional expectations on staff – not just on those directly involved with designing and implementing the change, but the many people across an organisation or system who need to find new ways of working. It is important that this is recognised from the outset, and that time is made available (Accountability and participation panel, (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). In particular, new ways of working should replace, and not duplicate, existing procedures (Story in 5: Mercy Corps; Accountability panel).



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT
IS KEY TO SUCCESSFUL
CHANGE: BE IT BY
DIRECTING RESOURCES
TO THE CHANGE PROCESS
AND MAKING PEOPLE IN
THE ORGANISATION LESS
ANXIOUS ABOUT THE
RISKS INVOLVED IN IT, OR
BY USING THEIR PERSONAL
NETWORKS TO BUILD
SUPPORT ACROSS AND
BEYOND THE SYSTEM

(STORY IN 5: CAMPAIGNING FOR YEMEN,
OPENING PANEL)



Funding as well as time and staffing are important elements of the success of many change processes.



Finally, a number of change processes have been hampered by the lack of specific skills on the part of the organisation's staff (see for example (Ressler et al., 2012). Working in new areas, or in new ways, often requires new skills. Recruitment of staff with these skills has often been a 'key ingredient' in the success of change (Featherstone, 2016; Vann, 2015); Localisation panel, Funding panel, Urban Panel, Story in 5: Mercy Corps). In addition to their skills, new staff are likely to bring enthusiasm for new approaches (Mowjee and Greenhalgh, 2013): recruitment on a large scale can make an important contribution to culture change (Accountability and participation panel; Evidence and accountability panel).

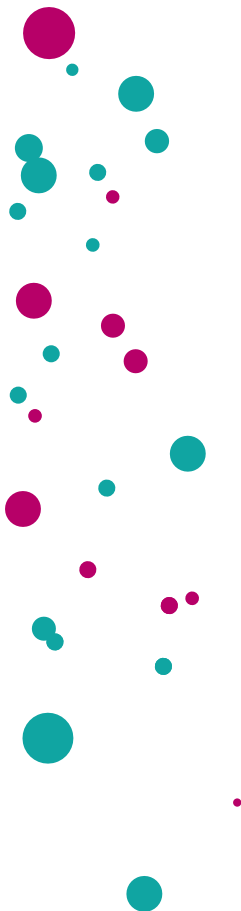
BOX 4: CHANGING HEALTHCARE – THE EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

Evidence-based medicine is an approach which advocates making decisions in healthcare (regarding the treatment of individual patients, the formulation of policies, or the administration of health services) on the basis of the best available evidence, rather than on the clinical judgement of health practitioners, or the opinions of policy-makers.

The approach has been championed by academics and health experts – particularly in the English-speaking world – since the 1980s, and is supported by health leaders, government authorities and professional organisations, who point to the importance of evidence-based practice in achieving better, and (in the long term at least) more cost-effective outcomes for individual patients and for populations as a whole.

While the evidence-based medicine agenda has undoubtedly been responsible for significant changes in health policy, health education, and the behaviour of many health professionals, 'one of the most consistent findings in health services research is the gap between best practice (as determined by scientific evidence), on the one hand, and actual clinical care, on the other' (Grol and Wensing, 2004: 57); in fact, to some observers, this gap appears to be a 'chasm' (Scott, 2003: 2761).

Research suggests that there are a number of powerful factors which, even after 30 years, continue to militate against the adoption of evidence-based approaches. Health professionals require time to access the latest evidence, access to databases (which can be expensive) and skills in assessing and weighing evidence: in many cases, one or all of these requirements is lacking – and where they are present, existing procedures are often not structured to allow the full use of resources.



But the constraints are not exclusively related to resources or procedures. Many health professionals are strongly influenced by their peers, and where there is not a 'critical mass' of individuals who practise evidence-based approaches, they will be more likely to fall back on their original training, personal experience or the opinions of colleagues. They can also be influenced by a culture which prioritises action, and the provision of health services, over reading and research.

Successful attempts to increase the use of evidence in decision-making among practitioners have tended to be associated with the provision of resources and training, reconfiguration of working processes to provide more time for catching up on research, clarity of vision regarding the benefits to be achieved, leadership support, monitoring, and the recruitment of new staff. They also tend to take several years to implement. Even these factors do not, however, guarantee successful behavioural and cultural change, and what works in one situation will not necessarily work in another: 'the reality [of change] is messy and challenging and not easily represented by rational models' (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2002: 174).

Based on: (Aarons, Hurlburt, and Horwitz, 2011; Grol and Wensing, 2004; Jette et al., 2003; McCluskey and Lovarini, 2005; Michie et al., 2005; Parmelli et al., 2011; Rycroft-Malone et al., 2002; Scott, 2003; Stetler, Ritchie, Rycroft-Malone, Schultz, and Charns, 2009) public mental health, social service, alcohol/drug sectors.

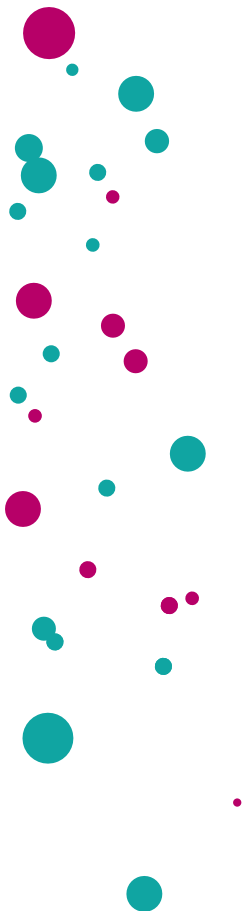


FINAL THOUGHTS

Many meetings in the humanitarian sector attempt to identify what should change. The 31st ALNAP Annual Meeting was unusual in that it allowed people from across the sector to consider, instead, how change happens. Given the resources that are spent on various change initiatives in the humanitarian system – resources that, in many cases, could be used to support more direct life-saving activities – it is important to conduct these change initiatives in such a way as to make them likely to succeed. And yet, for all the recent calls for change, there has been very limited attention paid to how change can best be achieved.

From this perspective, we hope that the meeting will lead to increased emphasis and discussion among ALNAP Members and other humanitarian practitioners on the ‘how’, as well as the ‘what’ of change. Discussions around change can be difficult: very few processes are fully successful, and most involve some false starts, ambivalence and disagreement. It is perhaps for this reason that change programmes are seldom openly discussed or externally evaluated, and any such evaluations are often kept within the organisation, and not shared more widely.

Discussions at the meeting were frank and informative. Participants considered, and learnt from, what had not worked, as well as what had. If we are to change the way we do change, and improve our attempts at improvement, we would do well to follow this lead, and to document, share and discuss our experiences.

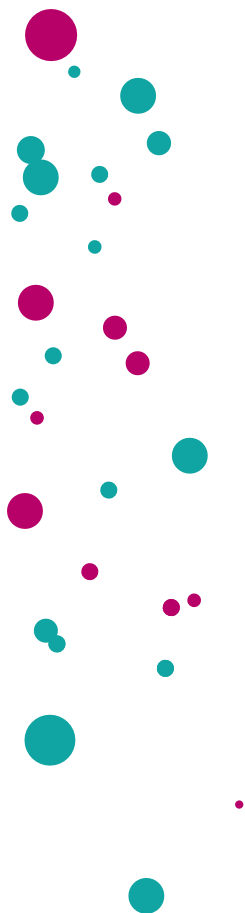


NOTES



1. Although these terms have frequently been used in opposition to one another, they are in fact not mutually exclusive – it is quite possible to have an incremental transformation.
2. An approach led by production of tools and guidance has perhaps been more effective in creating the clusters and pooled funds (WHS, the TA and Cash panel) than in creating significant changes in accountability practices (Accountability and participation panel).
3. Walkup (1997) identifies a similar dynamic in humanitarian organisations, although he takes a more negative view, seeing ‘defensiveness and delusion’ as a psychological coping strategy that individual humanitarians adopt to mitigate the stress they feel in their work, which then shapes humanitarian culture and inhibits learning, improvement and change.
4. Or, at least, of emergencies to which the international system had access: some interviewees noted that this may be as much a result of increased access after the Cold War as of increased need.
5. Interestingly, similar findings have occurred in the field of health care (Parker et al., 2000).
6. Although it was written five years earlier, which may explain the different conclusion.
7. ‘As a headquarters-led, inter-agency change process, the Transformative Agenda had a tendency to solve problems by creating guidance, processes and structures’ (Kreuger et al., 2016; 36). But it is also worth noting that it did attempt to improve on the standard change process by incorporating ‘an approach to guidance dissemination that is softer and more people-centered’ (Kreuger et al., 2016; 37).
8. This paper owes a great debt to Morgan’s *Images of Organization* (2006), both in terms of its underlying concept – that mental models are instrumental in the design and success of change processes – and in how this section is structured.
9. If Asda (founded 1949) is included, the relative figures are 83% and 69% of market share respectively. The increase in market share of the big supermarkets over the period 2000–2015 appears to be largely a result of acquisitions of smaller chains. Information from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_supermarket_chains_in_the_United_Kingdom.
10. The big four are Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons and Asda.

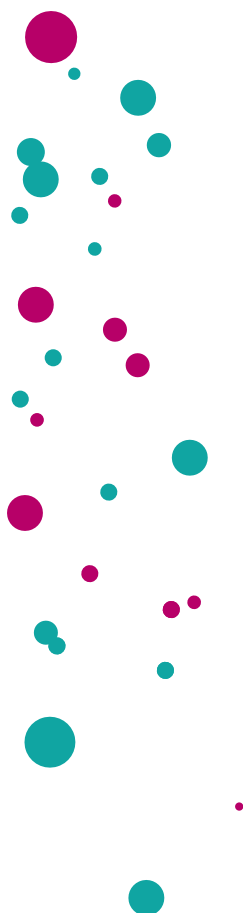
11. In an earlier version of this paper, this was referred to as the 'political economy model', as it is most clearly articulated in documents which take a 'political economy' approach to the humanitarian system. However, a number of readers objected that while the model presented here was an accurate reflection of the approach in the literature reviewed for this paper, it was not necessarily an accurate reflection of 'political economy' as a field of enquiry. Hence the change of name.
12. The best examples of this approach are probably Steets et al., 2016 and Cooley and Ron, 2002.
13. Constructive deconstruction provides a very good, and more thorough, overview of these arguments.
14. A 'phase transition' occurring at 'the edge of chaos' for those interested in the terminology.
15. 'To a degree' because while nudge theory has some psychological influences, it derives mainly from behavioural economics, and has been criticised by some psychologists for taking too little account of psychological processes.
16. It is sobering to compare the experience of the humanitarian sector with that of the health sector in relation to change (and in particular, the health sector's experience of introducing evidence-based medical practice). First, the health sector has been much more successful in documenting change processes, and attempting to find effective approaches to change. Second, the sector appears far more sanguine about the degree to which change can be achieved, and the time that it takes (Aarons et al., 2011; Grol and Wensing, 2004; McCluskey and Cusick, 2002; Scott, 2003; Wallen et al., 2010).
17. The emergence of unexpected results is not restricted to the humanitarian world: healthcare reform has led to 'seriously dysfunctional, as well as functional consequences' (Scott, 2003: 117).
18. The role of leadership is also seen as important in change efforts in other sectors (Kotter, 1996; Parmelli et al., 2011; Scott, 2003).



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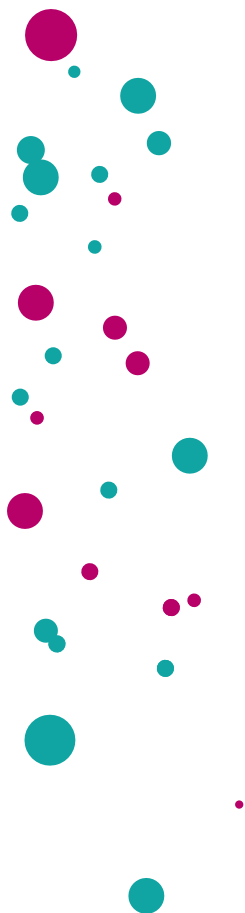
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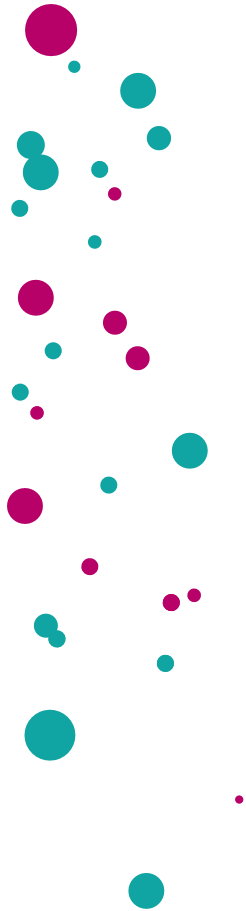
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ANNEX 1: HOW THIS PAPER WAS WRITTEN



This paper is based on a background paper – *Changing humanitarian action?* – produced to inform discussion at the 31st ALNAP Annual Meeting (2017).

The original paper was developed on the basis of a literature review using the search terms: ‘Change humanitarian system’; ‘Change humanitarian organisation’ and ‘Change humanitarian organization’ in Google Scholar. As time was limited, only the first 100 results were considered. From these 100 results, documents were included when they related to organisations that are part of the formal international humanitarian system, and where they considered a process of change (rather than simply making recommendations for change). This search resulted in the inclusion of 20 documents. To these were added several that the writer and the ALNAP team were already aware of or were cited in the selected documents. All documents were then coded using MAXQDA software.

The literature review also included two mini reviews of literature related to Evidence Based Medicine and UK supermarkets. Both used Google Scholar, and considered only the first 50 results. Documents were included only where they described change processes, or identified factors that had contributed to successful change processes.

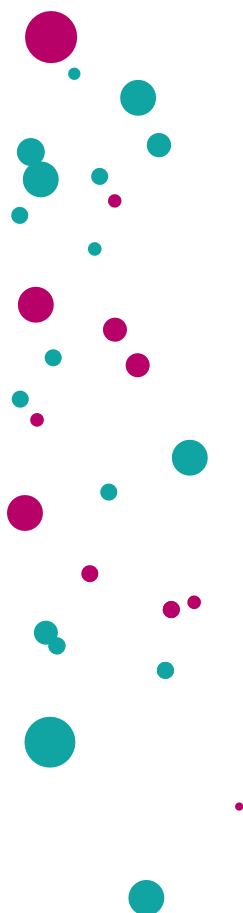
To this literature review were added 28 interviews, conducted by using a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviewees were a purposive sample of individuals, all of whom had more than ten years’ experience in humanitarian action, and had both direct experience of humanitarian work and experience of organisational / systemic change programmes in the humanitarian sector.

In writing the meeting study, all of the panels of the meeting (the opening panel and nine thematic panels, including Q and A following panels) were recorded and transcribed, as were the ten 'story in 5' presentations. Panels and stories were planned to give the broadest possible range of experiences around change programmes in the humanitarian system as possible. In selecting speakers, the meeting team attempted to ensure a range of types of programme, types of organisation and location. These transcriptions were coded, using the same coding frame as for the background paper. New codes were added where meeting discussions raised topics or issues that had not emerged in the initial literature review and interviews.

For the present study, the author also conducted a further literature review using the same search terms and criteria, using Academic Search Complete (EBSCOhost) provided by Oxford Brookes University. Again, the search was confined to the first 100 results, and additional resources were identified from citations within these documents. All were coded in MAXQDA, using the adapted framework.

As it was based on the background paper, this study retains much of the original overall structure and text. Significant changes were made where the meeting identified new learning, or where discussions interrogated themes in the background paper, and either refuted it or added further considerations. Generally, points were included where they were referred to on several occasions in the meeting, and – ideally – where the experience of participants and that of the evaluations and reviews of change processes in the literature aligned. In general, individual meeting participants are not quoted in this report (as the transcriptions do not name the individual speakers, or those making comments from the floor). Audio recordings of all the panels, as well as videos of the stories in 5, are available at www.alnap.org/31am.

The main limitations in writing the report were those of language – only English-language documents were considered – and time. Many accounts of organisational change processes are unpublished grey literature, and can be obtained only through the organisation concerned. The author is aware that there are many informative accounts in the system which, for lack of time, he did not seek out. Hopefully, however, these accounts would not invalidate the broad conclusions outlined at the meeting. And, of course, we would be delighted to include any such reports in the ALNAP Humanitarian Evaluation and Learning Portal, whether they support or contradict the conclusions presented here.



ANNEX 2: SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CHANGE AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT



Pat Pegg Jones, who provided a keynote speech at the meeting, kindly offered to provide a select bibliography on organisational development, change and change management, with a number of guides and 'how to' documents that may be of use to ALNAP members engaged in change initiatives.

Organisational Development & Change Management

Beckhard, R. and Harris, R. (1987) *Organizational Transitions. Managing Complex Change*. 2nd ed. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. (www.alnap.org/resource/25265.aspx).

Cameron, E. and Green, M. (2015) *Making sense of change management: a complete guide to the models, tools and techniques of organizational change*. London: Kogan Page. (www.alnap.com/resource/25267.aspx).

Bridges, W. (2002) *Managing transitions: making the most of change*. London: Nicholas Brealey. (www.alnap.org/resource/25266.aspx).

Cheung-Judge, M. Y. and Holbeche, L. (2011) *Organisation development: a practitioner's guide for OD and HR*. London: Kogan Page. (www.alnap.org/resource/25268.aspx).

Collins, J. (2006) *Good to great and the social sectors: why business thinking is not the answer*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. (www.alnap.org/resource/25269.aspx).

Pegg Jones, P. and Standish, S. (2006) *People, projects and change – practical tools for managing change projects*. London: Premium Publishing. (www.alnap.org/resource/25270.aspx).

Quirke, B. (2000) *Making the connections: using internal communication to turn strategy into action*. Aldershot: Gower. (www.alnap.org/resource/25271.aspx).

Smith, R., King, D., Sidhu, R. and Skelsey, D. (eds). (2014) *The effective change manager's handbook: essential guidance to the change management body of knowledge*. London: Kogan Page. (www.alnap.org/resource/25272.aspx).

Whole systems work

Axelrod, R. H. (2000) *Terms of engagement – changing the way we change organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (www.alnap.org/resource/25273.aspx).

Bunker, B. B. and Alban, B. T. (1996) *Large group interventions: engaging the whole system for rapid change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (www.alnap.org/resource/25274.aspx).

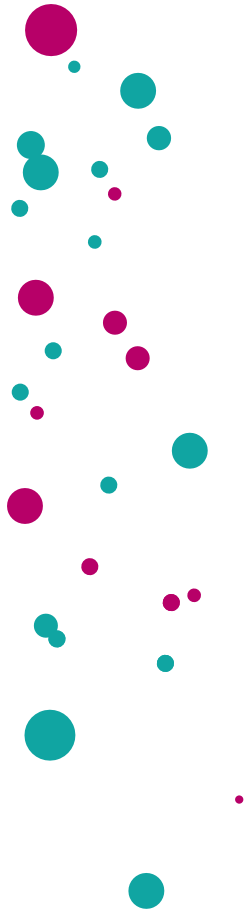
Bunker, B. B. and Alban, B. T. (2006) *The handbook of large group methods: creating system change in organizations and communities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (www.alnap.org/resource/25275.aspx).

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Dannemiller Tyson Associates. (2000) *Whole-scale change: unleashing the magic in organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (www.alnap.org/resource/25276.aspx).

Owen, H. (2008) *Open space technology: a user's guide*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (www.alnap.org/resource/25278.aspx).

Weisbord M. and Janoff, S. (2010) *Future search: getting the whole system in the room for vision, commitment, and action*. 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (www.alnap.org/resource/25279.aspx).



ANNEX 3: INTERVIEWEES



Allegra Maria Baiocchi, UNOCHA

Mihir Bhatt, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute

Antonio Donini, Independent

Marc Dubois, Independent

Véronique de Geffroy, Groupe URD

Manu Gupta, Sustainable Environment Ecological Development Society (SEEDS)

François Grunewald, Groupe URD

Claude Jidibar, WFP

Zlatan Milisic, WFP

Panos Moutzis, UNOCHA

Norah Niland, Independent

Lewis Sida, Independent

John Twigg, formerly University College London

Francisco Rey, IECAH

ANNEX 4: PANELS AND PANELLISTS

The panels referred to in the main study took place at the ALNAP 31st Annual Meeting, on 14 and 15 February 2017. Below is a full list of panels and panellists. Audio recordings of all panels can be found at www.alnap.org/31am.

Systemic change from above and below: WHS, the Transformative Agenda and cash

Chair: Heba Aly (IRIN)

Panel: Jemilah Mahmood (IFRC), Tensai Asfaw (OCHA), Wendy Fenton (ODI)

Changing who is in charge: the localisation agenda

Chair: Manu Gupta (SEEDS)

Panel: Sema Genel (Support to Life), Katherine Nightingale (CARE), Christopher Demerse (Global Affairs Canada)

Responding to changes from outside the sector: information technology and social media

Chair: Marc DuBois (Independent)

Panel: Kristin Bergtora Sandvik (PRIO), Emily Keane (Save the Children)

Changing the funding landscape: multi-year cycles, the Grand Bargain and Country-Based Pooled Funds

Chair: Niklas Wiberg (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Panel: Nan Buzard (ICVA), Lydia Poole (Independent), Henrike Trautmann (ECHO)

Changing the role of affected people: accountability and participation

Chair: Monica Blagescu (Disasters Emergency Committee, DEC)

Panel: Astrid De Valon (UNHCR), Mamadou Ndiaye (OFADEC), Alyoscia D'Onofrio (IRC), Isabella Jean (CDA)

Approaches to change: evaluation and evidence, standards and certification

Chair: Joanna Olsen (Catholic Relief Services, CRS)

Panel: Christine Knudsen (SPHERE), Marian Casey-Maslen (CDAC Network), Kirsten Gelsdorf (University of Virginia)

Changing where we act: urban response and refugees in upper and middle-income countries

Chair: Sandrine Tiller (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF)

Panel: Tess Berry-Hart (Calais Aid), Evaristo De Pinho Oliveira (ICRC), Isabelle Sandberg (MSF)

Changing the focus of what we do: protection and resilience

Chair: Patricia McIlreavy (InterAction)

Panel: Norah Niland (Independent), Henrike Trautmann (ECHO), Dan Maxwell (Feinstein International Center)

Innovation as a driver of change

Chair: Josiah Kaplan (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (Elrha)

Panel: Alice Obrecht (ALNAP), Kim Scriven (Independent)



ANNEX 5: STORIES IN 5

The stories in five referred to in the text above all took place at the ALNAP 31st Annual Meeting, on 14 and 15 February 2017. Below is a full list of stories and story-tellers. Video recordings of the stories can be found at www.alnap.org/31am.

From teaching to learning: education reform in Finland

Speaker: Jouni Kangasniemi (Finnish Ministry of Education)

If not, why not? Using cash transfers in the Pacific Island Countries

Speaker: Michela Luzzi (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT)

Outcomes and Evidence Framework (OEF)

Speaker: Sheree Bennett (The International Rescue Committee, IRC)

Humanitarian Performance Monitoring

Speaker: Koorosh Raffii, UNICEF

Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda

Speaker: John Borton (John Borton Consulting)

Going local with digital manufacturing

Speaker: Laura James (Field Ready)

Towards an anticipatory response

Speaker: Deepti Sastry (START Network)

Campaigning for Yemen

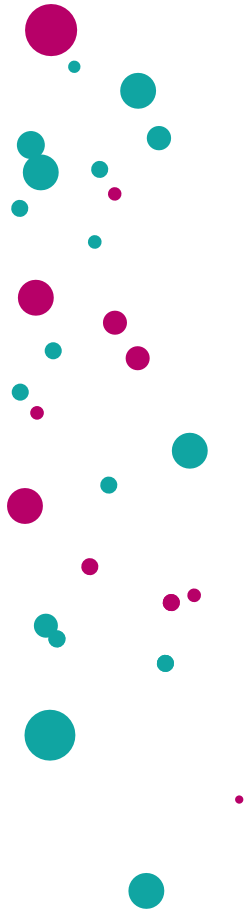
Speaker: Maya Mailer (Oxfam GB)

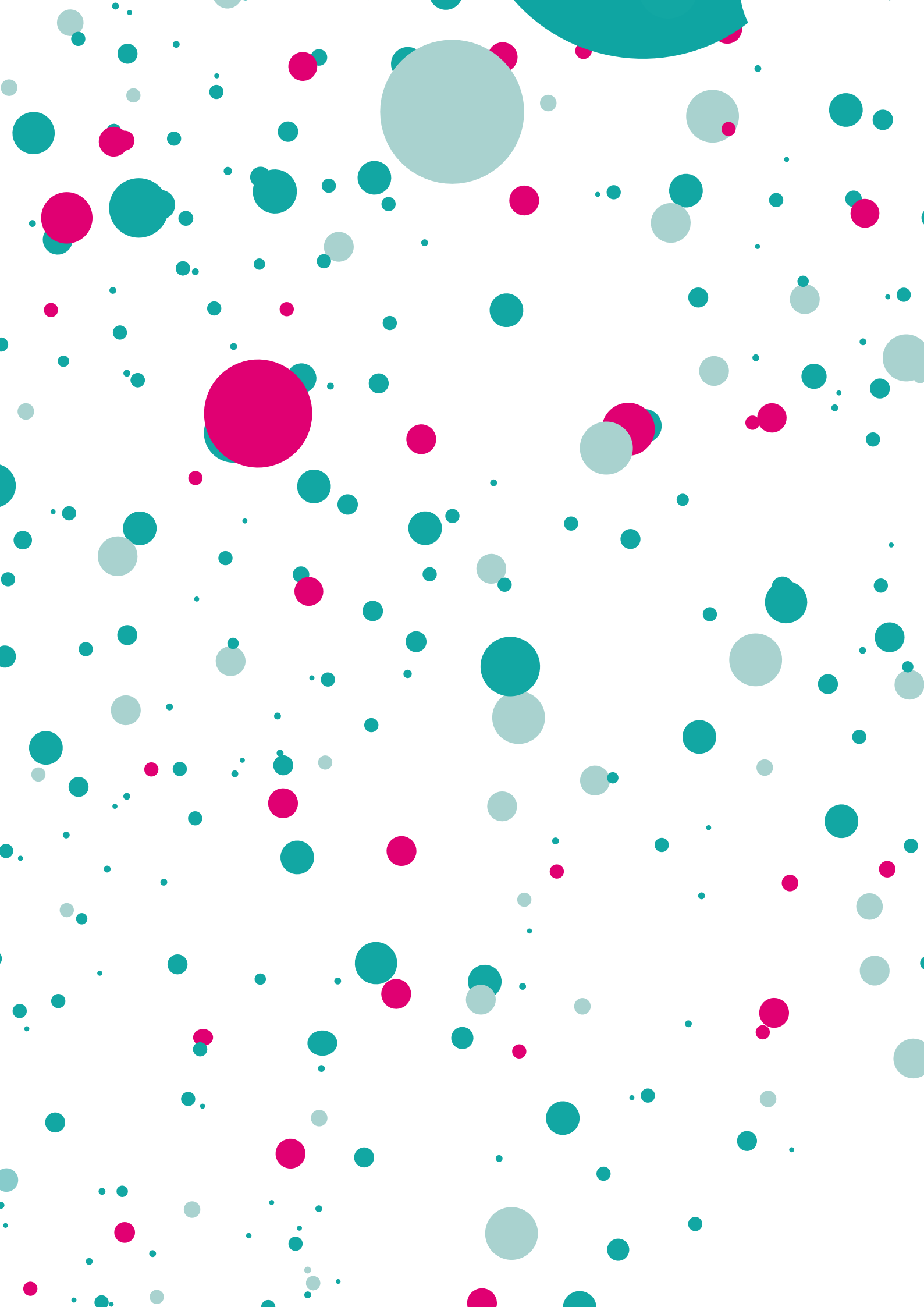
The merger between Merlin and Save the Children

Speaker: Paula Brennan (Save the Children)

How legal and shelter programmes can work together

Speaker: Kirstie Farmer (Norwegian Refugee Council)







Related ALNAP publications

**31st Annual Meeting paper:
Changing humanitarian action?**

The Global Forum results & analysis

The State of the Humanitarian System 2015



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