

Performance of Administrative Reforms: Can the Organizational Development Approach Reconcile Utopia and Dystopia?

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Abstract

Performance in implementing administrative reforms calls for change management systems that aim to help beneficiaries and all other stakeholders take ownership of the results obtained. This performance depends on many factors, including the approach adopted to introduce these reforms and manage the resulting transformations, including their perverse effects, which threaten the well-being of beneficiaries. However, the eminently technician or managerialist logic of the rational utopian thinking that underpins modernizing reform projects creates a rupture with the real workflow of implementing these reforms. This rupture hypothecates the chances of achieving the organizational performance objectives of these public services. At the same time, these utopias carry with them risks of dystopia that will undermine the confidence of the actors concerned and their belief in the legitimacy of these reforms. We adopt an organizational and public policy analysis perspective, which we apply to the process of organizational change through a realist literature review. The aim is to examine the contribution of the organizational development (OD) approach, as a method for managing organizational change, to improving the performance of administrative reforms by taking into account these undesirable unexpected effects. The article contributes to the actualization of the OD approach as an action-research method. It offers an analysis of the practical and managerial implications of this approach, to meet the challenge of learning and unlearning within organizations, and enable them to evolve from a change management approach to one of managing organizations' capacity to change.

Keywords

Performance of Administrative Reforms, Methodology of Intervention in an Organizational Milieu, Action Research, Organizational Development,

1. Introduction

This article is concerned with the intervention approach in organizational milieu, and specifically in public services. We adopt the point of view of analyzing the conditions for success and sustainability of the reforms introduced, which focus on the involvement of the beneficiaries of the results during implementation. To give a clear idea of the scope of the subject and the complexity of the underlying issues, let's recall that, through their ontological nature, public services have a structuring role (Bourgon, 2017; Metzger, 2000, 2001, 2007; Morin, 2008; de Rosnay, 2007). This role is exercised on a more global social level, and on a strictly organizational level through the structuring of the State's administrative system. When it comes to adopting and implementing administrative reforms, the abundant existing literature shows that each country has its own history, trajectory(s) and achievements. In this literature, the expression "administrative modernization", which recurs repeatedly to describe these reforms, reflects a permanence—even an "inescapability"—which expresses, according to Metzger (2000: p. 8), "the existence of fundamental issues that have never been stabilized, such as the role of the State or the privileged mode of its action" (cf., Beer, Eisenstah, & Spector, 1990; Emery, 2010; Huerta, 2008; Ngouo, 2003; Timsit, 1998). At the dawning of the 21st century, drawing lessons from the rather mitigated results¹ obtained from efforts to modernize public services, several analyses conclude that it is necessary to rethink the architecture and functioning of the State in its various irreplaceable roles at the service of the general interest (Bourgon, 2017; Morin, 1999, 2011). For Bourgon (2017: p. 651), for example, this means "*reframing public challenges in the light of emerging reality rather than a theoretical construct inherited from a bygone era; rediscovering the fundamental principles that make societies governable and reinventing the conditions needed to create a better future*".

The imaginary root of utopia leads us to see in utopian projects the potential combination of rather pathological aspects, of distortion or excessive distancing from reality, with more "productive" dimensions, through the social role they play in our symbolic relationship to reality (Picard & Lanuza, 2016: p. 73).

Under the stress of action, [along the real workflow of implementing adopted plans (see the plan of the realized utopia)], the situation substitutes

¹Across the European Union (EU) and even in the USA, Pollitt (2015: p. 12) highlights the frequent failure of "New Public Management (NPM)" type public management reforms. Specifically, he notes that in the majority of studies presenting serious information on the changes attributable to these reforms, the proportion of findings indicating improvement (rather than stagnation or deterioration) was modest. We must "have the courage to acknowledge the weaknesses, contradictions and limitations that seem inherent in all administrative prescriptions" concludes Pollitt (2015: p. 16).

intrigue for strategic rationality (Journé & Raulet-Croset, 2008: p. 48).

In the light of the permanent nature of administrative reforms, combined with the equally permanent social structuring role of public services, and the poor performance achieved (cf., Note #1; according to Colletterte (2008: p. 33); quoting Smith, 2002, success rates worldwide are around 33%), two hypotheses can be put forward. Either a hypothesis of utopian optimism (rational utopia) supported by these reforms or the pessimistic hypothesis of a dystopian future. In other words, a future dominated, for the development of public services, by the impact of the perverse effects of these reforms on citizens' quality of life. These two concepts of utopia and dystopia are in a relationship of tension that has all the characteristics of a paradox. We use this concept of paradox in the sense of "enduring, even permanent, contradictions between elements that are apparently mutually exclusive but nevertheless coexist" (Cameron and Quinn, 1988: p. 2; Lindgreen and Maon, 2019: p. 139). Conflicts between the interests of the organization and the well-being of individuals, or in inter-organizational relations during the implementation of value co-creation projects are, from this point of view, common examples in public services. The mobilization of these two concepts of utopia and dystopia can thus be apprehended as a meeting ground for the critique of the dynamics and processes of administrative reforms with the concept of organizational development (OD) apprehended as an introductory approach to these reforms that would reconcile them according to an integrative approach. This perspective, which we have chosen, takes into account, on the one hand, the complex nature of change, and admits, on the other hand, that paradoxes are consubstantial with the reality of administrative reforms (Lewin, 1951, 1965; Lindgreen and Maon, 2019; March, 1991; Ngouo, 2022). By adopting it, the article is in line with the dialectical change approach in organizations (Gagnon, 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

Our research problematic focuses on the contribution of the OD approach to managing the ongoing tension between "rational utopia" and "dystopia" in the dynamics of introducing administrative reforms. The main question is: when implementing these reforms, *how can OD help to mitigate the degree to which the hopes of the stakeholders concerned are dashed?* These stakeholders are indeed, generally more marked by a pessimistic, dystopian vision of the results to be obtained (or obtained) and, in reaction, deploy a diversity of behavioural responses of resistance to change, which can evolve and modify over time (Bareil, 2008: pp. 92, 94-95).

The article is divided into four points. Once the introduction has been made, the second presents the conceptual framework of the research, first defining the key concepts of the study, including the concepts of utopia and dystopia, followed by our methodological approach. The OD approach is described in the third section. In this section, we show why and under what conditions OD can help reconcile "utopia" and "dystopia". This section concludes with an analysis of the theoretical and practical implications of the research findings for the

management of administrative reforms. In the fourth section, we discuss the article's limitations, future prospects, the research results and the conclusion of the paper.

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

This initial point gives us an idea of the importance of the subject and the article's relevance to the construction of knowledge in the field of administrative reform and the "activity" of management and organization, as well as our conceptual framework and methodological approach, in view of the epistemic requirements involved. It is divided into two sections. The first deals with the conceptual framework, presenting definitions of the study's key concepts. The second describes the methodology we adopted to carry out the study. With regard to the construction of knowledge, let us specify, so that we always have it in the background, that our attention is focused on the epistemic dimension component of any epistemological paradigm that is concerned with knowledge elaborated in action and practical experience (Avenier, 2009; Fixsen, Naom, Blase et al., 2005; Hatchuel, 1994; Martinet (Dir.), 2007). Epistemic work then aims to question the relationship between the empirical material collected and the theoretical knowledge mobilized. In particular, it involves questioning the relevance of the theoretical lens through which empirical situations have been or are being studied.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

We start by clarifying the meaning of the concepts of "administrative reform" and "performance of an administrative reform". We go on to define the concepts of "utopia" and "dystopia". For both concepts, we specify the theoretical perspective we adopt to analyze them in this article. We conclude with an outline of the conceptual framework of analysis adopted for the article.

2.1.1. Notions of Administrative Reform and Performance of Administrative Reform

The Organizational Development (OD) approach we have adopted is an intervention approach (in the sense of Hatchuel, 1990, 1994) that is part of an inductive logic-based approach to analyzing organizational situations and managing the dynamics of collective change. The objective pursued by choosing the OD approach is to be able to take into account the intrinsic characteristics of the organizational milieu in which we want to introduce reforms and meet the challenge of *learning* and of *unlearning* (Audet, 2009; Autissier, 2010; Gravel, 2007; Hatchuel, 1990, 1994; Kamdem, Chevalier and Payau (Dir.), 2020; Ngouo, 2000, 2008; Yvan, 1997). Following this approach, any intervention in the field of administrative reform is seen as a *knowledge* process that can take the form of "action research", in which the intervener/researcher plays the role of "third-party forewarn", or "intervention research", in which the intervener/researcher plays the role of "third-party helper" (Autissier and Moutot, 2016; David, 2000; Ron-

deau, 2008). In recent years, research in the field of the management of change that interests us here has highlighted the complex and chaotic nature of change, which does not always develop according to predefined plans (Bootz, 2013; Collette, 2008; Rondeau, 2008; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). In terms of contributing to the construction of knowledge about administrative reform, the utopian spirit has a dual interest (Picard and Lanuza, 2016): 1) to see in committed projects a potential combination of pathological aspects by drawing on the imaginary root of utopia; 2) to invite us to rethink social life using imagination as a method of accessing a particular type of knowledge. In this article, we define administrative reform as *a change deliberately introduced or emerging in a public institution with a view to improving its performance* (Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008; Brassard, 2003; Burnes, 2004; Mazouz and Gagnon (Dir.), 2019).

We consider that any administrative reform project falls into the category of social public phenomena characterized by complexity, ontologically carrying paradoxes and necessarily part of a public policy (Ngouo, 2022: pp. 702-706; de Rosnay, 2007: pp. 29-67). Here, and in terms of its content, change, as Brassard (2003: p. 255) defines it, can be analyzed either as a process, or as a new reality introduced into or emerging from an organization. Moreover, because of its public and political nature, a reform project “must, to succeed, obtain a high level of support from all stakeholders” (Jacob, Rondeau and Normadin, 2008: p. 109; cf., hypotheses 4 to 6 in Fixsen et al., 2005: pp. 96-97).

From this point of view, the expression “performance of administrative reforms” is understood in the sense of “*performance implementation*” conceptualized by Fixsen et al. (2005). The concept of “*implementation*” is defined in this article in the sense of enactment; that is, as a set of activities including those specified in the prescribed work and those initiated in the course of action to actualize the prescribed work and aimed at putting into practice an activity or program of known dimensions. In contrast to an adopted reform plan, or an act of language of any kind, the “implementation” activity is a construction (necessarily dialectical) of a new organizational *reality*; a construction which mobilizes all the stakeholders concerned, both inside and outside the organization. *Performance implementation* means “putting procedures and processes in place in such a way that the identified functional components of change are use with good effect for consumers” (Fixsen et al., 2005: p. 6). This means ensuring that the work done to actualize the reform’s prescriptions during implementation pays particular attention to the welfare requirements of the beneficiaries of the results, so that the enchanting dream conveyed by this reform is not transformed, through its short- and long-term effects and impacts, into a nightmare for them.

According to Pondy and Mitroff (1979), the reason why change practices currently implemented in organizations have such a high failure rate (cf., Note # 1) is that, stemming from the classical school of organizational theory, they are situated at a lower level of complexity than the phenomenon they are trying to

apprehend (Barnabé, 2010: p. 13; Bourgon, 2017: pp. 650-651). Strongly influenced by the approaches of the institutional isomorphism current (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), the change practices adopted are fundamentally based on the idea of the pre-eminence of *prescribed work* over *real work*, if not total ignorance of the latter. In so doing, they overlook the fact that planned actions, within the framework of a public policy for example, only effectively exist from the moment they are actualized in the strategies of concrete actors, along the flow of real work. As Journé and Raulet-Croset (2008: p. 48) describe this real-life workflow from a “situated” perspective, actors are immersed in an indeterminate context that requires them to seek meaning (sensemaking) in their actions; “the situation substitutes intrigue for strategic rationality”, they conclude. According to Wheatley (2006), all these strategies are based on a need to control the world, and on the implicit assumption that we live in a simple, orderly and predictable world (cf., the technicist rationality assumptions of Taylor, Fayol). The resulting change practices have also become enmeshed in this functionalist, mechanistic conception of the organization, which often translates into linear change practices leading, among other things, to the phenomena of bureaucratic vicious circles (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Pollitt, 2013, 2015; Timsit, 1998; Reynaud, 1997). In short, as (Barnabé, 2010: p. 13; quoting Capra, 2004) points out, it seems that it is the grip of the mechanistic vision in management that is today one of the main obstacles to organizational change.

2.1.2. Concepts of Utopia and Dystopia

The documentary analysis reveals the origins and meaning of the two concepts “utopia” and “dystopia”, as well as their status as objects of study in sociology. In science-fiction literature, as in music and film, utopian and dystopian works offer two types of view of society: a utopian, optimistic, unrealistic, quasi-unrealizable view; and a dystopian, nightmarish view that paints a bleak imaginary society with the aim of denouncing its shortcomings.

We define the two concepts as understood in this article. We specify the theoretical perspective from which we mobilize them in relation to the challenges of administrative reform performance. The definition of the two concepts is followed by an illustration of the dystopian effects of the reforms introduced in public administrations.

Defining the concepts

Historically, the creation of the word utopia is attributed to the English author Thomas More in his book “*The Island of Utopia*” published in 1516 in Latin (Metzger, 2000; Picard and Lanuza, 2016). The book is structured in two didactically opposed parts. The first presents a *critique of the existing*, i.e. sixteenth-century English society; the second presents the *substitute model* that should replace this existing, a model that paints “an egalitarian golden age in which daily life is perfectly regulated” (Metzger, 2000: p. 215).

Etymologically, the words “utopia” and “dystopia” are formed by a prefix, the “u” meaning “good” in Greek for “utopia” and the “dys” meaning “bad” in

Greek for “dystopia”. These prefixes are associated with the same radical “to-*pos*”, which means “place” in Greek. The word “dystopia” is thus defined as the opposite of “utopia” (for more on these concepts, see, for instance, Kentron, 2010; or Versins, 1972).

The term *utopia* refers to a work that paints an ideally organized society, a perfect society, intended as such by the author of the work (e.g., the second part of Thomas More’s book, or Frederick Windsor Taylor’s theses on the scientific organization of work (SOW)). Metzger (2000: pp. 224-225) summarizes some of the characteristics of an utopian conception of the social (*social utopia*) that emerge from Taylor’s doctrine²: 1) assumption of the ideal man, hard-working, sober, ambitious and solitary; 2) doctrine of the “*One Best Way*” of corporate governance, with management governed by laws as precise and clearly defined as the fundamental principles of engineering; 3) educating the employer about his ignorance of working hours and his role in creating the conditions for a “harmonious” and scientific rationalization of production; 4) denying all employees any aptitude for autonomy and self-discipline, and adopting a social approach to work characterized by the practice of separating “conception” from “realization”. It should be pointed out that, having been a mechanical worker, Taylor was an engineer with empirical knowledge of the “inside” of the working world (cf., Note #2). The term *dystopia* refers to a society that is dysfunctional, imperfect, and undesirable for the people concerned, a future that is worrying and hopeless, and also intended as such by the author of the work. The first part of Thomas More’s work, which describes the dysfunctions of 16th-century English society, is a case in point. de Gier (2020) cites the example of Eggers’ book (“*The Circle*”) (Eggers, 2013), which highlights the image of an American company dominated by web giants that controls the working lives and living conditions of its employees. Through “online management techniques as subtle as they are powerful, the protagonist [Mae Holland, age 24] is indirectly forced to constantly increase her work speed, while at the same time her margin for manoeuvring and freedom of expression are limited”, he observes (para. 12).

Examples of dystopian effects of public administration reforms

The current context of public administration development in all countries, a context that is very strongly influenced by the explosion of digital economy applications, offers numerous examples of dystopian effects. Think, for example, of the undesirable effects of “social networks” through which “myths and lies become more influential than facts” (Bourgon, 2017: p. 649). Other examples of this are the various projects for the digital transformation of these administrations through the “dematerialization” of administrative procedures, with the highly laudable aim of facilitating communication between the administration and citizens/users while combating, among other things, corruption. These in-

²Dos Passos ([1938] 1960: pp.745-749); cited by de Gier, 2020: para. 32, a proponent of dystopian reform, writes concerning Taylor, that “once he became a foreman [...], he subdivided the position of team leader into different functions: ‘speed leader’, group leader, timekeeper, organizer. He considered the skilled workers too recalcitrant, preferring the simple laborer ready to do whatever he was told”.

initiatives expose administrations to a variety of risks, such as cyber-attacks, hacking into personal data stored in professional databases (health, insurance, ...), the attribution of false registration numbers to bogus civil servants in order to receive fraudulent salaries, the usurpation of document processing profiles in computerized administrative service delivery systems, leading to embezzlement of various kinds, and the misuse of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) systems through a mixture of the false and the true. Dertouzos (1999: pp. 93, 204-224, 237-334) and de Rosnay (2007: pp. 70-251) give examples of the threats to human beings arising from scientific and technical progress in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT). Furthermore, by overlooking the GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out) rule for data processing in management information systems, the analysis of the risks inherent in these applications overlooks the strategies mobilized by actors in “situation”, who are exposed to various types of bias. One example is the *a posteriori* data reconstruction bias, which poses the problem of distorting the information provided by the actors involved in the situation, especially if they feel they are being evaluated according to an accusatory logic (Journé, 2005; March and Simon, 1969). March and Simon (1969: p. 161) speak of the adoption of uncertainty-absorbing behaviors by these actors. Journé (2005: p. 67) observes that accusatory logic raises the threat of being blamed for “fault”, and consequently elicits defensive reactions from those involved in the “situation” or problem being analyzed or evaluated. On this subject, Mazouz, Garzon and Picard (2012) describe examples observed in public administrations, of data falsification and adaptation to figures that lead to acts of deviance so that these data and figures can be perceived as justified. Another point to note here concerns one of the necessary conditions for the effectiveness of these reforms, which is the prior existence, in each country, of a secure, reliable and stable Internet connection. This is far from being the case in every country in the world.

At the time we are writing this article, and with regard to administrative bureaucracies, the various criticisms of this model strongly inspired by the principles of Taylor’s SWO are examples which, by denouncing its flaws, call into question its claims to improve the performance of public services (Autissier et al., 2018; Barnabé, 2010; Crozier, 1963; Mazouz and Rondeau, 2016; Morin, 2008, 2011; Pollitt, 1995, 2013, 2015; Timsit, 2003; Reynaud, 1997; Xavier, 2013; World Bank, 2012). Re-reading Jean-Paul Sartre’s “*Critique of Dialectical Reason*” (1960/2004) from the perspective of organization theory, Fleming (2022) observes on the theme of technology, that Sartre formulates pessimistic, even “tragic” conclusions (pp. 11-12). For Sartre, he summarizes, tool-based technical innovations are designed to improve people’s existence (the optimistic, utopian aspect). However, once institutionalized, technology can acquire independent powers that produce ends not of man’s making, as we have just illustrated above. As “we use them, machines begin to use us. What Sartre calls becoming “*a man-thing*” (Critique, p. 90) [...]. Man becomes the machine of the machine: and

to himself he is his own exteriority (Critique, p. 90)” (counter-finality, dystopian pessimism). Sartre’s conclusions can be compared with Eggers’ (“*The Circle*”) (Eggers, 2013) analyses of the impact of Web technology on American society, cited above in de Gier (2020).

Various scientific works analyze these dystopian effects of information and communication technologies (ICT) from the perspective of the paradoxes of systems, technical tools and software used as management instruments (Aggeri and Labatut, 2010; Aggeri, 2017; Dietrich, 2000; Grimand, Orly and Ragainne, 2018; Melan, 1993; Ragainne, Emery and Giauque (Dir.), 2018; de Rosnay, 2007; Wysocki and Young, 1990). By way of example, the “*empowering/constraining*” paradox, the dilemmas of “*service delivery*” and “*cost control*” faced by the organization’s information systems unit, as well as the *negative impacts* of some managerial instruments on the performance of public organizations, are abundantly described (Aggeri and Labatut, 2010; Benner and Tushman, 2003; Bollecker and Nobre, 2016; Gibert, 2009; Grimand, Oiry and Ragainne, 2018; Handy, 1995; Hudon and Mazouz, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Lewis, 2000; Mahy and Carle (Dir.), 2015; March, 1991; Mazouz, Garzon and Picard, 2012; Mériade, 2017; Melan, 1993; Poole and Van de Van, 1989; Putnam, Fairhurst and Banghart, 2016; Vandangeon-Dumez, Grimand and Shafer, 2018). de Rosnay (2007: pp. 209-212) describes the threats of the prospect of machine-to-machine communication that would run through man without his knowledge. Mériade (2017) shows, for example, that the prescription by public authorities of some management tools such as Activity-Based Pricing (“*Tarifcation à l’Activité, T2A*”) in hospital establishments in France has instead produced a constraining effect that prevents these establishments from taking into account the territorial, social or medical specificities of their territory of location.

The behaviours generated by these various dystopian effects can substantially compromise the chances of achieving the objectives pursued by the “*performance implementation*” of the reforms undertaken. This is despite the degree of robustness of the implementation monitoring system adopted by each administration. Thus, for example, in the context of “joint negotiation” regulation, financial trade-offs are often made to the detriment of the expectations of the human resources involved in the activity concerned (employees and beneficiaries of the results of the reform).

2.1.3. Theoretical Perspective on the Two Concepts of Utopia and Dystopia

After presenting the chosen theoretical perspective, we define the concept of “rational utopia”, on which the rest of the article is based.

A risk and negative consequences analysis perspective

We adopt an *anticipatory* perspective for these concepts in this article. Specifically, the anticipation of risks, notably those inherent in reform projects underway, or anticipation from a foresight perspective applied to the development of public policies (e.g., education, health, transport, urban planning, environmental

protection, etc.). This perspective is central to the problematic of sustainable development and organizational social responsibility (OSR). From this perspective, which can be analyzed in terms of the paradox of performance³, dystopia is analyzed as a way of putting the utopian project into perspective. Utopia and dystopia are then the result of a political project aimed at making an ideal possible; in this case, the ideal of modernizing public services. The focus of utopian versus dystopian analysis is then on the possible consequences of political change. This is a forward-looking sensemaking process, as described by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). The dystopian work is then analyzed as a narrative of anticipation to put the organization's strategy into perspective. Dysfunctions are seen as the negative consequences of political will. Exercises involving the identification of negative consequences in the field, of a decision to be taken, or the formulation of risk hypotheses in the logical frameworks of development projects are part of this logic (cf., UNDP, 2009 or the rational processes of problem analysis and decision-making according to the Kepner-Tregoe method, ENAP, 1978). By way of illustration, we summarize in the following **Box 1** the issues involved in assessing the negative consequences of a decision to be taken using the Kepner-Tregoe method.

The concept of rational utopia

Based on this perspective of anticipation, the literature (Metzger, 2001: pp. 243, 249) distinguishes between two modes of using the word utopia: 1) a *rational*, positivist mode, based on scientific analysis using the hypothetico-deductive method; 2) a *sentimental*, popular, romantic mode. In relation to theories of organizational change, Metzger (2000, 2001) adopts the rational mode, associating utopia and rationality to define the concept of "rational utopia". He draws on the assumption underlying any reform project, according to which "we could develop a 'science of society' and, with it, provide ourselves with the means to make society more rational" (Metzger, 2000: p. 222). Thus, he writes (Metzger, 2001: p. 249): "*What rational utopias have in common is their reference to science. a tendency to reduce everything to a principle deduced from nature, belief in the existence of pre-existing laws, the desire to found a science (the mathematical calculation of destinies); meticulous organization of work and leisure, the importance of arithmetic*".

Highlighting the fact that dystopia is taken into account as a result of a scientific analysis based on the hypothetico-inductive method, de Gier (2020) adds that from a scientific point of view, over and above the content, it is also the methods used (field research, collection of facts and figures) by the authors of industrial novels that prove relevant to sociologists. In a way, the concept of "rational utopia" illustrates how managers' utopia-inspired modernizing reform projects are implemented, anticipating their dystopian effects.

³This paradox expresses the coexistence within the organization of contradictory (or antagonistic) representations of the organization's goals. It pits the individual, who has appropriated the organization's long-standing, stabilized strategic vision, against the organization, faced with the vision of tomorrow proposed by its managers (Cf. Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

Box 1. The issues involved in the step of assessing the negative consequences of a decision to be taken, using Kepner and Tregoe's method.

The rational decision-making method advocated by Kepner and Tregoe breaks down the decision-making process into eight steps, to be followed rigorously in the right order and direction. These steps are:

- 1) State the purpose of the decision;
- 2) Establish objectives in terms of expected results and available resources;
- 3) Classify objectives according to two criteria that indicate their importance—imperatives and desirables—then determine the relative value of the desirable criteria using, for example, weighting indices;
- 4) Develop the options—A, B, C, D, ... —that satisfy these objectives and from which the choices will be made;
- 5) Evaluate each option using criteria indicating the importance of the objectives;
- 6) Select, as a provisional decision, the best option resulting from this evaluation;
- 7) ***Evaluate the negative consequences of the provisional decision, which may not be the best one if we take into account the effects that the actions to be taken to achieve the objectives pursued may have in the future,***
- 8) Make a final choice.

The assessment of the negative consequences of the decision (its dystopian effects), answers the following two questions:

- a) *If this provisional decision is taken, what anomalies, shortcomings, dysfunctions or disadvantages for the human actor could result?*
- b) *How could this option hinder growth and development?*

The analysis covers a number of areas, including the quality and relevance of the results to be produced in the short term, their medium-term effects and long-term impacts, human resources and the factors influencing their performance, the dynamics of the organizational system (formal and informal organization, vertical and horizontal coordination, intergovernmental relations, communications, decentralization and delegation, ...), financial resources, material resources, technological resources (software and equipment, factors of influence external to the organization (influence of stakeholders in the decisions to be made, target populations, organization of parliamentarians, pressure groups, etc.). This analysis includes the identification of difficulties in implementing the provisional decision.

The assessment involves estimating the degree of threat posed by each identified negative consequence. This involves first estimating the *probability* of the consequence actually occurring, then the degree of impact if it does occur, and its *severity*. The exercise can mobilize the methods and tools used in the field of foresight (statistics, dialogue with stakeholders in the field involved in the decision or policy concerned, etc.).

The final decision is a choice; the choice of the option that presents an impact, in terms of threat, that the decision-maker, through his *personal judgment*, feels he can manage.

- If all the options have a very high total impact, the decision can be postponed and the analysis continued;
- If one option has a low total impact and no negative consequences with a high probability of occurring, and a high degree of severity if it does occur, the decision-maker can retain this choice as his decision.

Source: Author's summary based on ENAP (1978).

From the definition of the concept of utopia, Metzger (2000, 2001) distinguishes three levels of analysis of a rational utopian project. **Table 1** summarizes these levels and their descriptions, to which we have added comments related to our research problematic in the third column.

Metzger (2001: p. 256) points out that “the very dynamics of rational utopia, through the interaction between the practical and the imaginary, can be seen as a place where it is always possible to go beyond. The quotation from Picard and Lanuza (2016: p. 73) in the introduction to this article emphasizes the social role of utopian projects.

Table 1. The three different levels of utopia.

Levels	Description	Comments
<p>Intellectual creation plan (structured in two parts; a critique of the existing and a description of the ideal)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical process, helps knowledge to progress • Close to the hypothetico-deductive method, it exerts the creative force of hypotheses. • Managers and reform designers see social issues as controllable and deformable, to make it harmonious, transparent and coherent. 	<p>“The utopian dream is a dream made up of frames or scenarios that are constantly rewritten, repainted and reworked with each generation” (Fischer, 1993: p. 220; quoted by Metzger, 2000: p. 220).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Friedberg’s levels of analysis and diagnosis of intervention (Friedberg, 1997: p. 359)
<p>Level of the imaginary, of beliefs (the details of the city constitute so many strict applications of the general principles organizing global society. Here, the local embodies the global).</p>	<p>The ideal model is a complex set of force-images designed to rationalize the imaginary. It is made up of beliefs that value the will, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress is in the nature of things; • Public opinion is ignorance (elitism); • Social hierarchies are based on hierarchies of knowledge. <p>Presents the risk of ideological drift/recovery. Can be enriched and interacts with reality. The reform project, as an <i>a priori</i> model, claims: 1) to respond to dysfunctions; and 2) to have been developed by applying rational principles.</p>	<p>Through these powerful images, “utopia arouses enthusiasm or deepens dissatisfaction” (Thomas, 1997: p. 32; quoted by Metzger, 2000: p. 220).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Friedberg’s concept of project-groups (Friedberg, 1997: pp. 382-384) and Muller’s concept of global and local frames of reference (Muller, 2005: p. 411).
<p>Level of practice: utopia realized (producing harmony may require oppressive social control by experts or by everyone)</p> <p>The institutionalization of the ideal model is not without consequences, for “to realize utopia is to stop time and establish conformism; to ensure the stability of the perfect world, all conflict must be evacuated” (Metzger, 2000: p. 221).</p>	<p>The ideal is a detailed guide to action. Requires absence of conflict and ignores dialectics.</p> <p>Implies: <i>an-historicism</i>; conformism; reinforcement of the feeling of omnipotence.</p> <p>Leads to transformation of the original model (experimentation), or to totalitarianism.</p> <p>During implementation: 1) if injunctions are taken literally, with zeal, the organization’s structures and functioning will become rigid; 2) if, on the other hand, successive experiments are carried out, the management group will learn to master new change auxiliaries.</p>	<p>“Utopia consists in treating problems as problems of architecture and urban planning” (Ruyer, 1950: p. 44; quoted by Metzger, 2001: p. 251).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See, for example, all the criticisms of bureaucratic systems in the literature. • See the difference, for a given reform, between “prescribed work” (the ideal model) and “real work” (transformation, actualization of the ideal model during implementation); between “prescribed performance” and “real performance”; between “<i>paper implementation</i>” and “<i>performance implementation</i>” in Fixsen et al. (2005: p. 6).

Source: Adapted by the author from Metzger (2000, 2001).

2.1.4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The current dominant trend in the evolution of knowledge production in organizational change management is strongly marked by the emergence of a new epistemological paradigm, the “learning and evolution” paradigm. This paradigm takes into account, on the one hand, the fact that the environment is constantly changing, and on the other hand, the need for a progressive and reflexive evolution of an organization that knows how to draw knowledge from its actions

and actions from its knowledge to improve its performance (Demers, 1999; Fall, 2008; Jacob, Rondeau, & Normandin, 2008; Johnson, 2012, 2013; Soparnot, 2005). Johnson (2012: pp. 34-35) concludes that the study of the *capacity to change* proposes a context of change that is analyzed in a specific, unique, episodic and constructivist situation. This, he points out, is a situation in which “the ‘real’ context is then considered only through the interpretation of the organization’s actors, who are influenced by their structural and cognitive positioning” (p. 35). The need to define these logics of change according to a “situated” approach underlines the importance of the actualization work that takes place during the implementation of adopted reforms, and in particular, the problematic of the “management situation” as analyzed in management and organizational science (MOS) (Journé and Roulet-Croset, 2008; Weick, 2022). Ontologically, this management situation is characterized by a central *sense-making* activity (Weick, 2022) and by the fact that “*actors locally reconstruct the organization by mobilizing resources in a way that is not prescribed and not foreseen by the original organization*” (Journé and Roulet-Croset, 2008: p. 37).

The available literature offers a number of models that facilitate intelligible access to the concept of organizational change by conceptualizing its structure or dynamics. A conceptualization that also takes into account the need for logics of change based on the “situated” approach. In this article, we use the four models shown schematically in **Appendix A** as our conceptual framework. Autissier, Vandangeon-Derumez, Vas and Johnson (2018) propose a descriptive matrix based on types of change. They retain two parameters to define the proposed types, namely, 1) the method to be adopted in relation to stakeholders (negotiate? or force?); 2) the time to be devoted (take the necessary time (permanent), “long-time”? or “fast time” (break-up)?). By crossing these two parameters, Autissier and his colleagues define a matrix of four types of change: *continuous* (long and negotiated), *proposed* (fast and negotiated), *directed* (fast and imposed) and *organized* (long and imposed). This model is shown in **Appendix A, Figure A1**. Focusing on major strategic changes, which he calls “transformation”, Rondeau (2008) proposes another matrix based on two parameters: 1) the *strategy* adopted in change management (planned change or project management, organizational development, political, “evolutionist” or “situationist”); 2) the *nature or object* of the change. Emphasis may be placed on *processes* (integration, optimization, agility (Badot, 1998; Barrand, 2006; Vickoff, 2007, 2008)), *practices* (development, professionalization, accountability), *resources* (control, accountability), *positioning* (differentiation, distinctive niche). The combination of these parameters enables him to define four types of transformation: “*Refurbishment*” (planned change or project management strategy and process); “*Renewal*” (organizational development strategy and organizational practices); “*Realignment*” (political strategy and organizational resources); “*Redeployment*” (evolutionary or situationist strategy and positioning). He observes that these different types of transformation take place simultaneously and cannot be treated in-

dependently. This model is shown in **Appendix A, Figure A2**. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) propose a typology of change based on two parameters: 1) the *driving factor or mode* of change (prescribed or constructed), and 2) the choice of *unit of change* (a single organizational unit—individual or group—or multiple organizational entities). They deduce a matrix of four ideal types of change based on four theories: 1) *evolutionary theory*; 2) *dialectics*; 3) the *life cycle*; 4) *teleology*. This model is represented by **Figure A3** in **Appendix A**. Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol (2008) focus specifically on “management innovation” within organizations. “Management innovation” is defined as an emergent or radical change that introduces new practices, processes, structures or techniques that are “new to state of the art and intended to further organizational goals” (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 829). They propose a conceptual framework for analyzing these processes based on two axes (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 832): the *axis of activities* (motivation, invention, implementation, theorization and labeling, and the *axis of stakeholders’ actions* (internal change agents and external change agents). This model by Birkinshaw and colleagues is shown in **Figure A4** in **Appendix A**. As they point out, the processes that characterize this type of change “are typically complex, recursive, and occur in nested and repeated cycles of variation, selection and retention” (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 832).

Each of these models has a precise *epistemic function* in relation to our research question, and with reference to our epistemological posture. For example, they show that the challenge of “*performance implementation*” of reforms in administrative bureaucracies, which are reputed to be closed to variety and diversity, raises numerous problems, notably of an ontological and methodological nature. These four models combined can be used as an intervention tool in the diagnostic phase of the OD approach, as presented later in the article.

Dialectical change in Van de Ven and Poole’s (1995) model has characteristics that relate to the notion of “paradoxical tensions”, which we mobilize in this article (cf. Ngouo, 2022). This dialectical approach places the management of contradictions within a political vision of organization and change, and integrates a constructive mode of change (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). The aim is to highlight the need to adopt paradoxical thinking (Lewis, 2000) or to define the conditions of performativity by overflow (Berkowitz and Dumez, 2015) to guarantee the success of the strategies and plans adopted as the framework for the reforms undertaken.

2.2. Methodology Adopted

We specify the theoretical perspective of analysis that we adopt and conclude with a description of the method used to analyze the collected material.

2.2.1. A Dual Theoretical Perspective for Analysis

We carried out a realist review of the literature (Paré, Trudel, Jaana and Kistsiou, 2005; Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey and Walshe, 2005). The review covered the themes of “administrative reform”, “organizational change”, “organizational de-

velopment”, “utopia”, “dystopia”, and “complexity theory”. For the article as a whole, we situate ourselves within the pragmatic constructivist epistemological paradigm (PCEP) (Avenier, 2009, 2011; Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012; So-mekh and Lewin, 2005). This posture enables us to take into account the complexity of real workflows, starting from the actors’ lived experience to reconstruct the structuring of the field under consideration. This, in order to build models facilitating cognitive tasks (representing, explaining, analyzing...) that reflect the ontological particularities of this ground (e.g., Fixsen et al., 2005: pp. 11-22; Friedberg, 1997: pp. 177-193, 303-326, 345-356).

To build the argument of the article, we have adopted an *organizational perspective* (Friedberg, 1997; Pichault, 1993, 2008, 2009) and a *public policy analysis* perspective (Muller, 1985, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2015; Ngouo, 2022). According to the perspective of cognitive analysis of public policy, the object of public policy is the “future” of societies, a space within which a society projects itself into the future (Muller, 2000) (see above for a definition of the concept of utopia).

Linking in with the problematic of intervention performance, the contribution of the dual theoretical perspective adopted can be read at the three levels of *analysis*, *diagnosis*, and *project-group(s)* (Friedberg, 1997: pp. 359-381). Through Muller’s (2015) concepts of *self-referentiality* and *self-reflexivity*, the project-group level, which is one of the four key elements of Kurt Lewis’s model, is part of a logic of steering a collective and participatory process of self-diagnosis and self-correction, drawing on the contribution of public policy analysis.

2.2.2. A Documentary Analysis

From an interpretative perspective we carried out a literature review of the documents selected for the realist review. These documents include articles from scientific journals, books and publications from certain national public administrations and international organizations. We took the concepts of “utopia” and “dystopia” as the theme for analysis of all these documents (Gauthier (Dir.), 1997; Miles and Huberman, 2003; Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008; So-mekh and Lewin, 2005). This method, which refers to any effort to reduce qualitative data and construct meaning, uses a set of systematic procedures to produce valid and reproducible *inferences* (Fixsen et al., 2005: p. 84; Gauthier (Dir.), 1997: p. 332). It depends as much on the type of texts analyzed as on the type of interpretation targeted. Here, the analysis of the documents selected was aimed at seeking the reflexive contributions of the concepts selected for an approach to the introduction of reforms in public services, based on an organizational development (OD) type of approach.

3. Organizational Development Approach

We present here a set of elements that allow us to understand the ontological nature of the OD approach. The presentation is structured around three points: 1) the definition of OD; 2) strategies for operationalizing OD, and; 3) a discus-

sion of OD's contribution to the introduction of administrative reforms.

3.1. Defining OD as a Field of Professional Practices

The literature contains several definitions of OD as a constantly evolving field of professional practice, teaching and research (Beckhard, 1975; Bélanger et al., 1983; Cummings and Worley, 1999; Dolbec, 1997; Robbins, Judge and Gabilliet, 2006; Tessier and Tellier (Dir.), 1992). All these definitions highlight several dimensions of OD.

We retain the following definition in this article (Bélanger et al., 1983: p. 141; Tessier and Tessier (Dir.), 1973: p. 3; cf., Beer, 1980: p. 18; Pesqueux, 2015: p. 23).

OD is one of the forms of “planned change” that consists of a “deliberate effort at change usually carried out according to democratic or cooperative methods and which uses and applies data, theories and scientific methods borrowed from the whole of the human sciences, in particular from social psychology and the applied social sciences.”

It is important to focus on the postulate of “planned change” on which the definitions proposed in the literature are based. As OD is at once a field of professional practice, teaching and research, this postulate provides a key clarification of the nature of this approach, in that it clearly situates the level of its epistemological expectations and requirements.

Kurt Lewin's postulate of *planned change* to define OD refers to the idea that only *voluntary*, *deliberate* and *concerted* changes are considered in the OD approach, and not changes of an incremental type (punctual or continuous), or of a radical type or resulting from emergent processes (e.g., Brassard, 2003). A planned change is, in fact, “*an intentional, purposeful change activity that results from the deliberate efforts of a change agent, in response to a perceived performance gap*” (Rhéaume, 1992: pp. 68-83; Robbins et al., 2006: p. 621). Planned change has two objectives: 1) to increase the organization's ability to adapt to changes in its environment; 2) to modify the behavior of its staff. The planned change that Kurt Lewin proposes revolves around four key elements, namely (Burnes, 2004: pp. 311-313): 1) *Field theory* (an approach aimed at understanding the behavior of a group by mapping the reality and complexity of the terrain in which the behavior is observed); 2) *Group Dynamics* (change must take place at group level and focus on factors such as group norms, roles, interactions and socialization processes in order to create “disequilibrium” and change); 3) *Action Research* (using both field theory to identify the forces acting on the group to which the individual belongs, and group dynamics to understand why group members behave as they do when subjected to these forces); 4) the three-step change model: *Unfreezing-Moving-Refreezing*. This third step is an integrated approach to analyzing, understanding and bringing about planned change at group, organizational and societal levels.

Lewin's postulate has been the subject of much criticism in the literature, not

least because, by definition, this model does not take emerging changes into account (Bareil and Aubé (Dir.), 2012; Durieux, 2001; Soparnot, 2009; Wirtenberg, Lipsky, Abrams et al., 2007). Gagnon (2000: p. 28) observes, for example, that the level of stakeholder participation in the change effort generated by OD interventions over the past 40 years (1960-1995) falls short of expectations, in terms of “maintaining the dialectical unity of ‘free choice’ and ‘forced compliance’”. Responding to these criticisms, Burnes (2004: p. 311) observes, with regard to the four key elements of the model recalled above, that “although these elements tend today to be treated as distinct components of his work, Lewin saw them as a unified whole, each of them necessary to the achievement of planned change”. Burnes (2004: p. 311) points out that the categories of small-scale incremental change and large-scale radical change will have to be rejected in favor of a “third category” that lies between the two, which is continuous and based on self-organization at team/group level to take account of the challenges of real workflow complexity. This implies that organizations will have to change considerably their management style and the way power is distributed (Burnes, 2004: p. 321).

Following the perspective of dialectical analysis adopted in his article, Gagnon (2000) suggests that OD should adopt a critical stance towards the ideologies of our time (understood as utopias, as specified later in the article’s discussion section). Dialectical thinking in work organization, he explains, postulates that change is only possible if the *real* and the *prescribed* remain in a dialectical relationship (p. 16).

How do these OD principles work in practice?

3.2. The OD Process in the Field

OD, whose specialists are referred to as “doctors of organizations” (Lorsh and Lawrence, 1969b; Morgan, 1989), is a process that takes place within an organization and involves data collection, diagnosis, action planning, interventions and evaluation (Autissier et al., 2018; Beer, 1980; Gagnon, 2000).

To enable a holistic understanding of the organization and the operationalization of change action by taking into account the contributions of complexity theory, OD uses contributions from other organizational and management theories and concepts (Autissier et al., 2018; Mintzberg, 1989; Morgan, 1989; Rondeau, 1999, 2008; Rondeaux, 2008). The deployment of the approach’s activities mobilizes language acts in the organization, and these acts fall under the heading of *pragmatics*, in the sense of the possibility of “doing things” with words. This is a managerial mode of regulation “which replaces the mode of regulation through the planned coordination of activities whose content is clearly identified” (Gramaccia, 2001: p. 185). This pragmatic component of the approach enables the development of networks in administrative reform projects, through the use of language procedures that ensure the cohesion of cooperative processes (Gramaccia, 2001; Robbins et al., 2006).

As Bélanger (1972: p. 650) observes, all strategies for operationalizing OD in the field “follow the process of action research in the sense of Kurt Lewin, i.e. they incorporate a diagnosis, provide for feedback meetings and seek to identify actions to be taken or avenues for change”. This approach applies in all cases, even if there are marked differences in the nature of the helping relationship that is established between the client-system (the organization hosting the intervention) and the change agent during the course of the intervention, depending, for example, on whether it is of the planned type or evolves at each organization’s own rhythm (e.g., David, 2000; Hatchuel, 1994; Kamdem et al. (Dir.), 2020; Ngouo, 2000). The support relationship between the client-system and the consultant is based on the following main assumptions: a) managers can’t always properly identify what’s going wrong and need help to define the real problems; b) organizations need to learn to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses; c) the consultant needs to make a comprehensive study of the organization and work together with the organization’s members to suggest new actions in a meaningful way; d) the client needs to perceive the problems himself, endorse the diagnosis and be involved in working out the solutions. It should also be noted that a change agent is “any individual or group who acts as a trigger, takes responsibility for changing processes and behaviours, and assumes process management responsibilities” (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 832; Robbins et al., 2006: p. 621). Although the role is played by the organization’s internal managers, external players (consultants or academics for example) are often called in to help fulfill this role (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 832). For example, as Birkinshaw et al. (2008: p. 832) point out, these external change agents “can give credibility to the original idea that sparks off the experiment inside the company, they can act as sounding boards or action researchers alongside the internal team during the implementation phase, and they can play a role in theorizing about and labeling the innovation”. In the “invention” phase of the model they propose (see **Figure A4, Appendix A**), the role of external agents of change can be broken down into three often-linked activities: *idea contextualization*, *idea refining*, and *idea linking*. Taken together, these authors note (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 836):

These three activities can be viewed as alternative but complementary approaches to theory development: idea contextualizing is about developing new solutions to existing problems, idea refining is about working through the consequences of an idea through a series of “thought trials” (Weick, 1989), and idea linking is an inductive-deductive loop through which concepts are reconciled with empirical evidence.

Based on a review of the literature, Bélanger (1972: pp. 634-649) classifies OD operationalization strategies into six main types of approach, depending on the nature of the approach, the underlying theoretical background, the level of intervention and the objective pursued. These are: 1) *Action Research*; 2) *Process-Consultation*; 3) *Socio-Technical Systems*; 4) *Relational or Transaction-*

al Approach; 5) *Socio-Analysis*⁴; 6) *Non-Directive Orientation*. There are other typologies, he points out (p. 649), such as Warren Bennis's categories: socio-therapeutic, organic and "developmental"; or H.S. Leavitt's: a) (Leavitt, 1964) structure-centered change; b) technology-centered change; c) people-centered change.

In terms of similarities, all these strategies aim to increase the effectiveness and health of organizations by seeking to establish a greater capacity to resolve operational problems and adapt to the demands of a more or less changing environment. OD then focuses on the search for levers to improve individual and organizational performance, giving priority to those that help anchor the values of humanism, progress, synergy and anticipation. In terms of differences, some focus on individuals (e.g., transactional object theory and group theory), while others address change at the level of the organization as a whole. Transitional object theory explains another aspect of how we engage and construct organizational reality (Morgan, 1989: p. 258).

The "situated" perspective on understanding change that we adopt in this article has led us to adopt, in addition to these six approaches, a seventh, the *in situ* observation approach to a management "situation". The concept of "situation" thus mobilized refers to the context in which the activity is *anchored*. For Journé and Raulet-Croset (2008: p. 44), this concept "refers to the analysis of the manager's actual activity, and does not follow a temporal logic of sequentiality. It's about looking at the activity of constructing meaning in the face of ambiguous and indeterminate situations". In the "situation" defined in this way, "the actors would be engaged in writing the text at the same time as creating its meaning" (Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008: p. 33). This sense-making intrinsically combines knowledge and action. It relies on communication between actors, and makes extensive use of narrative processes (Gramaccia, 2001; Journé & Raulet-Croset, 2008).

These seven strategies are summarized in **Table B1** in **Appendix B**. For each strategy, this table specifies the objective pursued, the operationalization approach, the assumptions about the client system and the role played by the researcher-intervener-consultant.

3.3. In What Way Is the OD Approach Appropriate for Introducing Administrative Reforms?

From the point of view of administrative reforms, as we define them in this ar-

⁴When providing assistance using the Socio-Analysis approach, the Consultant must adopt a *non-interpretive* attitude. This non-interpretive attitude has the following characteristics: a) paying attention to the problem itself, trying to discover its meaning for the individual or group, trying to make them aware of the way they approach the problem; b) monitoring the range of solutions that emerge spontaneously from the individual or group, and helping them to clarify each of them; c) identify the principles, beliefs and prejudices behind words and actions, and communicate them back to the individual or group (cf., non-evaluative feedback); d) re-establish individual discussion, in private, when it has deteriorated, rather than with groups whose constitution and evolution have taken on an artificial character; e) always practice private discussion within a socio-analytical framework.

ticle, the essence of this approach is to *help* the organization hosting the reforms to *identify and solve itself* the problems that are hindering its increased performance, and in so doing, to help the staff concerned *learn how to effectively solve* other problems in the future (cf., OD operationalization objectives, **Table B1** in **Appendix B**). In this respect, OD is concerned with change in the organizational system as a whole, and in the individuals and groups that make it up. Based on the idea that the way in which a problem is solved is more important than the solution itself, the OD approach, unlike other approaches to organizational change, pays particular attention to *developing the ability* of organizational members to improve their *own performance*. To achieve this, OD relies on the levers of improved functioning, group dynamics and organizational processes (participative management, culture change to improve organizational functioning, socio-technical aspects of work, structures and coherence of the various organizational components, etc.).

Taken as a knowledge-based approach, as we do in this article, OD allows us to take into account, among other things, the paradoxical effects of management tools and the rationales underlying the reforms undertaken. This open OD perspective naturally leads to an interest in, and consideration of, the evolution of the conceptualization of organizational change. As things stand, this conceptualization has shifted from the paradigm of “*change management*” to that of “*managing the organizational capacity to change*”, as we saw when presenting the theoretical framework of this article. The “*managing the organizational capacity to change*” approach emphasizes the creation of a continuous evolutionary process (see our conceptual framework). This approach is rooted in the dialectic between intentional action and the creation of conditions conducive to change, i.e., the performativity of related plans, discourses and injunctions (Soparnot, 2003; cf., Aggeri, 2017; Berkowitz and Dumez, 2015; Denis, 2006).

Describing OD’s current contribution as a model for organizational change, Pesqueux (2015: p. 22) concludes that “the methodology implemented by OD, enriched by K. Lewin’s action research (Lewin, 1951), enables a ‘true actualization of possibilities’, and ‘changes take place in real life and not in the restricted, decontextualized perimeter of a laboratory’ (David, 2000: p. 197)”.

Thus, by meeting all these challenges, OD is positioned as a suitable approach for introducing administrative reforms. However, on one condition, which we set out below, by exploring the possibilities for OD to reconcile utopia and dystopia.

3.4. OD: Reconciling Utopia and Dystopia

OD, as we understand it in this article, must take into account the dynamics of the real workflow of the reforms being implemented, i.e. the level of “utopia realized” (level 3 in **Table 1**). We’ll start by clarifying the contours of these real-work issues. Based on these clarifications of our understanding of the “new” role of the OD, in relation to utopia and dystopia, we first re-interrogate its ontological hypothesis, then the epistemological stance of the researcher-consultant. We

continue conclude with an analysis of the implications of these elements for the development of the dialectical or paradoxical thinking needed to make this reconciliation of utopia and dystopia effective. We conclude by explaining the theoretical and practical implications of the OD approach.

3.4.1. The Challenges of Real Intervention Work According to the OD Approach

The change models in our conceptual framework (**Appendix A**) explicitly support the relevance of the dialectical change model to take into account the complexity of the reality of organizational change work. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) describe the situations and conditions in which this model can be applied (cf., **Figure A3** in **Appendix A**). Birkinshaw et al. (2008) highlight the micro-processes characteristic of the implementation phase of an “innovation”-type change. For his part, Gagnon (2000: p. 35) stresses the need to “develop diagnostic models, as well as intervention strategies and techniques, based on dialectical thinking”. In his words, it’s a question of “refocusing the goals of OD in such a way as to encourage the development of people’s full potential for autonomy, critical thinking and organizational effectiveness” (p. 35).

The theory of change following this dialectical perspective implies taking into account the pluralism and diversity of confrontations between actors and conflict in the real context of work (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: p. 836; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995: p. 524). Real work is work “in the process of being done” within the administration hosting the reform (Musselin, 2005). This is the work that faces up to the “*observed effects*” on the ground, in comparison with the description and comments at the level of “utopia realized” in **Table 1**. It is this work that produces the “necessary” change in the sector or within the organization when it comes to public policies (Muller, 2015: p. 413). Following the performativity perspective, for Féral (2013: p. 241), real work is the opportunity offered to “real performance” to “make itself seen”. Real work is based on knowledge and consideration of the realities of what actually happens when tasks defined in political prescriptions or managerial injunctions are carried out (Brown et al., 2015; Currie & Spyridonidis, 2016; Gilbert, 2008; Manning & McCourt, 2013; Watzlawick, 1978). This is the actualization, in the field, of prescribed work, with very specific objectives (Gramaccia, 2001: p. 202). This work of actualization, which is the source of the effectiveness of “*performance implementation*”, provides an opportunity to express the ontological characteristics of managerial “activity” in MOS (Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008). As an illustration of the characteristic activities of this “real” work, we summarize in **Box 2** the micro-practices involved in the implementation phase of an innovation-type change, as described by Birkinshaw et al. (2008: pp. 836-837).

From the point of view of intervention to introduce administrative reforms, and in the face of the extreme complexity of real work, Morin (2008: p. 38) addresses the problem of *method* by contrasting the approach of systematic analysis, which tends towards linearity, with the approach of systemic analysis, which

Box 2. Examples of micro-processes in the implementation phase of a reform: *the case of an innovation* (see **Appendix A, Figure A4**).

The implementation phase consists of all the activity on the “technical” side of the innovation after the initial experiment up to the point where the new management innovation is first fully operational. [The] description of this phase involves making sense of the actions of internal and external change agents in implementing an *in vivo new practice*, as well as understanding the ways existing employees react to it and influence its implementation (Lewin, 1951).

Internal change agents. **Figure A4 (Appendix A)** indicates two primary activities that internal change agents engage in as they attempt to implement an *in vivo* new practice. One is *trial and error*, in which progress is achieved by monitoring and making adjustments against the original concept. The other activity is *reflective experimenting*, in which internal change agents evaluate progress against their broader body of experience. For example, Stjernberg and Philips made the following observation about how such individuals can be most effective:

As the [innovation] attempt proceeds, he [the internal change agent] needs to be able to learn from the consequences of his own actions and to alter these actions accordingly. He will be more capable of seeing and learning how to manage the change and the learning dilemmas if he has a well-developed capacity for reflection (Stjernberg and Philips, 1993: p. 1199).

Organizational context also plays an important role in facilitating or inhibiting the implementation of new ideas. Zbaracki (1998) observed that the reaction of employees to implementing new management practices is generally negative: they are likely to be intimidated by innovations, particularly if the innovations have a significant technical component and the employees are mostly ignorant of their potential benefits. But the cultural perspective on management innovation suggests employees’ reactions will also vary according to their personal circumstances and the immediate work environment in which they are placed. *The implementation process is therefore likely to involve careful maneuvering by internal change agents as they focus their efforts on those parts of the organization that are more amenable to change* [Emphasis added]. As the literature on technological innovation describes, such tactics include pursuing corridors of indifference through the organization, building coalitions of senior executives to support their ideas, framing innovation as an opportunity and not a threat, accessing resources beyond the individual’s control, and maintaining a generally tenacious and persistent attitude.

Taken as a whole, the literature suggests that implementation transpires through a dialectical process (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Internal change agents try out the proposed new practice, and they evaluate its progress against the original idea (*trial and error*), its conceptual validity (*reflective experimenting*), and the reactions of other employees (i.e., the organizational context). Some aspects of the new practice may prove to be unworkable, and the reactions of employees may in some cases be directly opposed to what is being pursued. But after several iterations, an outcome will often emerge that is a synthesis of the opposing forces. In other cases, the internal resistance generated by various aspects of the organizational context may be sufficiently strong that the experimental new practice does not get taken forward at all.

External change agents. The role played by external change agents in the implementation phase is less clear-cut than in other phases. External change agents lack deep contextual knowledge of the focal organization, as well as the accountability for results that most internal change agents face, so they rarely play an active role in actually implementing new ideas *in vivo*. However, we suggest they potentially play a critical indirect role in making management innovation happen.

The essence of the external change agent’s role is to create a *thought experiment* (analogous to an *in vitro* experiment performed by a biologist before a new molecule is tried out *in vivo* in a live body). External change agents draw from their prior experience (*reflective theorizing*) and their deep knowledge of a particular conceptual domain (e.g., an academic discipline or a functional competency) to sharpen their new idea (*idea refining*), and on the basis of the insights gained, they attempt to influence and direct the implementation efforts of the internal change agents (*idea testing*). There is some evidence of what this set of activities looks like in practice. For example, Stjernberg and Philips (1993) highlight the roles external change agents play as facilitators and sounding boards, and Kaplan (1998) provides a thoughtful account of his own experiences in this area.

These activities can be thought of as a form of **action research**—where the aim is to “build theories within the practice context itself, and test them there through intervention experiments” (Argyris & Schön, 1991: p. 86). In terms of our framing [see **Figure A4, Appendix A**], the external change agent therefore plays a dual role, oscillating back and forth between his or her thought experiment about what might make sense in the world of management ideas and the *in vivo* implementation of what actually works in the world of practice. This dual role potentially offers great insights to both worlds.

Source: From Birkinshaw et al. (2008).

tends towards holism. In other words, denying the contradiction, the dialectic, the reality of dystopian effects, is not the way forward. He proposes not to “*systematize* the experiences that spring up everywhere to regenerate the social fabric and everyday life, but to *systemize* them, i.e. to *link* them so that they constitute a whole, where solidarity, conviviality, ecology and quality of life, ceasing to be perceived separately, are conceived together” (Morin, 2008: p. 38). Complementing this systemic perspective, the management “situation” perspective raises awareness of the problems posed by decision-making and the construction of meaning in real time, under the pressure of uncertainty. This perspective brings to the fore another type of complexity—the complexity of “sense” according to Journé and Raulet-Crost (2008: p. 47), quoting Riveline, 1991—which emphasizes the subjective perception of each actor (i.e., a perception that differs from one actor to another). This type of complexity, no longer confined to the limits of a system, is potentially infinite in character, as individual and collective actors constantly construct and modify the spatial and temporal perimeter of the situation in which they are engaged. Discussing the conditions under which the results of administrative reforms take root, we would point out that this dimension is one of the “weakest” points of bureaucratic systems, held together by their obsession with linearity and predictability.

3.4.2. Questioning the Ontological Hypothesis of OD?

The ontological assumption of “planned change” in the OD approach has attracted, and continues to attract, much criticism (Barnabé, 2010; Burnes, 2004; Cismigeanu, 2018; Vas, 2005). As noted in the motivation for this article, the literature highlights a diversity of change “process” models, not all of which are “planned processes” (Autissier, Bensebaa, & Moutot, 2012; Durieux, 2001; Hamel & Prahalad, 1990; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Pettigrew, 1987). Moreover, according to Bootz (2013), organizational change, synonymous with the possibility of evolution for the organization, lies at the boundary between the action of learning and forward thinking. Rondeaux (2008) speaks of the emergent dimension of unplanned change. Stace (1996: p. 1) observes, with regard to dominant rational utopias, that “best practices” adopted without adequate reference to the organization’s changing environment, or to the cultural specificity of their theories, can turn out to be the “worst practice”.

Faced with the two groups of authors who support this hypothesis for some, or reject it for others, Burnes (2004: pp. 316-320) shows that there is a field of conciliation between the theories of planned change and the theories of complexity that underpin the arguments of those who reject it. In this way, it is no longer necessary to postulate, in the definition of any intervention approach to organizational change, the prior planned nature of said change by emphasizing the order and linearity of the underlying processes. In the real workflow of organizations seen as dynamic systems, in fact, “order manifests itself in a largely unpredictable way, in which patterns of behavior emerge in irregular but similar forms through a process of self-organization, which is governed by a small

number of simple order-generating rules” (Burnes, 2004: p. 310). From this point of view, and according to Rouleau (2005: p. 2), “complex change is an amalgam of various types of simultaneous change requiring distinct and sometimes even contradictory strategies”. For Thietart and Forgues (1993), organizational change is rooted in the dialectical processes of convergence and divergence, stability and instability, evolution and revolution that are inherent in the very structure of organizations, and which are hidden in programmed actions (prescribed work) and revealed in real work. Organization, they argue, “is not just about experimenting with disorder. If it were, it would be impossible for it to capitalize on the phases of equilibrium it successively reaches” (Thietart and Forgues, 1993: p. 12). In describing their model of “management innovation”, Birkinshaw et al. (2008: p. 831) make it clear that while they accept that the process of management innovation is primarily the result of the conscious and deliberate actions of key individuals, they recognize that *the involuntary actions of individuals and random changes within the organization also play a determining role*. In comparing planned change and complexity theories, one of the points highlighted by Burnes (2004: p. 321) is “the similarity between Lewin’s vision of stability within organizations based on a quasi-stationary ‘equilibrium’, and the ‘order-disorder (or chaos)’ perspective of complexity theories” (cf., Birkinshaw et al., 2008; Thietart and Forgues, 1993). Birkinshaw et al. (2008: p. 836; cf. Box 2), referring to Lewin’s model, point out that in their model, the implementation phase, “involves making sense of the actions of internal and external change agents in implementing an *in vivo new practice*, as well as understanding the ways existing employees react to it and influence its implementation (Lewin, 1951)”.

3.5. The Consequent Epistemological Stance of the Researcher-Intervener

With regard to this evolution in the way organizations are transformed by administrative reforms, three major orientations emerge from a review of the literature on the subject (Brassard, 2003: p. 270). Firstly, it should be noted that authors are cautious about recommending an approach to major change that would take place abruptly and rapidly (Beer, Eisentat and Spector, 1990; Hafsi, 1999; Mintzberg, 1979; Rondeau, 1999, 2008). Secondly, in contrast to the ideas of the organizational development (OD) movement of the 1960s, attention is now focused on the need for organizations to develop the capacity to change (Brassard, 1996; Demers, 1999; Rondeau, 2008). The theoretical underpinnings of the “capacity to change” concept, as Autissier et al. (2010: p. 3) point out, are based on *resource theory* and *dynamic capability theory*, two theories that involve the combination of several methods. Finally, change is increasingly approached from a situational point of view, taking into account the complexity of real workflows and the challenges of the management concept of “situation” (Brassard, 1996, 1999; Hafsi, 1999; Mintzberg, Ahlstand and Lampel, 1999; Stace, 1996). As Rondeau (2008: p. 11) points out, it’s in “the organizational fabric that we will observe the evolution of practices that bring about real transformation”.

Any management “situation” is a source of fertile ground for epistemological debate (Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008: p. 53). In the field, the role of “researcher-intervenor” involves areas of ambiguity. **Table B1** shows that this role can change during the course of a single intervention, depending on the problem or the stages in the development of the strategy adopted. Birkinshaw et al. (2008: p. 840) observe, for example, that an external change agent may be called upon to play a hybrid role of “internal agent” and “external agent” of change, either temporarily or as part of a specific project (i.e. action researcher), and for some even over the course of their career (i.e. ethnographic researcher). They conclude that “these differences in positioning can potentially have deleterious consequences for the individuals involved, as well as for the long-term success of the innovation”.

Today’s OD researcher-intervenor must therefore inscribe his or her intervention within an epistemological paradigm. The paradigm chosen must not only postulate the ontological hypothesis of “planned change”, but must also enable the researcher to work with it, and with all the emerging hypotheses and consequent methodologies that take into account the epistemological question of the nature of the work reality of managers and organizations, as well as the evolution of their role during the course of the intervention. The pragmatic constructivist epistemological paradigm⁵ (PCEP) responds precisely to this ontological and methodological requirement (Avenier, 2011; Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012; Rousseau et al., 2008; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Gagnon (2000: p. 27) reminds us that “the constructivist paradigm postulates, in a dualistic logic, that action determines structure”. In their model of change, Van de Ven and Poole (1995: p. 523) characterize the constructivist mode of change as a “phylogenetic process, leading to the generation of originals and the emergence of new species”. It should be noted here that constructivist epistemologies define the elaboration of knowledge as an act of “constructing intelligible representations, forged by humans to make sense of the situations in which they find themselves” (Avenier, 2011: p. 376; cf., Emery and Giauque, 2005: pp. 22-35).

On the ontological level, the PCEP, within which we situate ourselves in this article, does not formulate a hypothesis to apprehend the *reality* of a phenomenon. At the epistemic level, the PCEP adopts the criteria of *functional adaptation and viability* of knowledge to think and act in the direction of the goals pursued, and as a criterion for defining truth, the “verum/factum” principle, according to which “truth is identical to fact” (von Glasersfeld, 1988/1981: p. 30; cited by Avenier, 2011: p. 376). Methodologically speaking, any method, including hermeneutic and dialectical methods, is eligible for the PCEP, provided that the three criteria of *ethics, critical rigor, and detailed explanation of the hypotheses* of the epistemic and empirical work carried out are met (Avenier, 2011: pp. 378-380).

⁵There is another type of constructivist epistemological paradigm, the *constructivist epistemological paradigm according to Guba and Lincoln* (1998), the CEGLP. Avenier (2011) defines this paradigm by comparing it to the PECP.

Thus, with the PCEP, the researcher-intervener can call on any type of triangulation (theories, methods, types of data) to conduct his intervention (see the crossed matrix of change issues according to the logics of organized action, [Rondeau, 2008: p. 8](#)). For example, both “hypothetico-deductive” and “hypothetico-inductive” methods can be combined to collect and process quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the formulation of the rational utopias underlying a political administrative reform project, as well as to the prospective analysis of the project’s dystopic effects, and to the interpretation of these effects (cf., [Aguilera and Chevalier, 2021](#); [McNabb, 2020](#)). It also fits in epistemically with the OD approach, since this approach emphasizes the search for the mechanism (mediation or theory) that makes it possible to understand a given behavior in the discovery of the characteristics (material and immaterial, formal and informal) of the immediate context of action ([Friedberg, 1997: p. 229](#)). The actors concerned must be able to recognize themselves in the results of the intervention, “their cognitive and reflexive capacities regarding their situation and the interdependencies in which they are inserted must be stimulated, and they must be able to draw lessons from it at their own level” ([Friedberg, 1997: p. 327](#)).

The researcher-intervener who chooses the OD approach must specify the epistemological framework in which he situates the application of this approach. This clarification will enable the reader, firstly, to see how the questions of OD’s ontological hypothesis and the consideration of the complexity of real work have been addressed; secondly, to easily discern how the researcher-consultant has moved from the data collected to the emergent theory he proposes ([Gioia et al., 2012](#)).

3.6. Implications for the Reconciliation of Utopia and Dystopia

There are two essential characteristics of social utopias. First, their *performativity*, i.e. their ability to make what is stated actually happen, “when to say is to do” ([Austin, 1970](#); cf., [Aggeri, 2017](#); [Berkowitz and Dumez, 2015](#); [Féral, 2013](#)). This performativity makes it possible to move from a culture of individualism to one of collective action, as illustrated by the elements of reform culture presented by [Metzger \(2000, 2001\)](#) or the paradoxical effects of management tools. Secondly, their *pedagogical effectiveness*, which helps to broaden systems of representation of organizational realities and bring out creative managers to anticipate the dystopian effects of the reforms introduced (cf. step 7 in [Box 1](#)). [Bootz \(2013\)](#) illustrates this last characteristic of utopias in the dynamics of change by situating himself at the frontier between the action of learning and prospective thinking.

In this respect, in contrast to Taylor’s project of technicist rationality, which underpins Weber’s ideal model of the administrative bureaucracy, Kurt Lewin’s conception of OD is fundamentally humanistic. Indeed, one of Lewin’s central beliefs was that “the key to resolving social conflict was to facilitate planned change through learning, and thereby enable individuals to understand and restructure their perception of the world around them” ([Burnes, 2004: p. 311](#)).

From an anticipatory perspective, the four key elements of Lewin's model of change described above focus on the dystopian effects of the changes introduced. Indeed, the first stage of any change, that of "decrystallization" in this model, means "explaining why the current mode of operation is unsatisfactory and why the proposed solutions are superior, so as to raise the awareness of those affected and manage their commitment to the objectives pursued by the change" (Rondeau, 2008: p. 9). From the outset, therefore, OD has taken into account the structuring nature of any change project or administrative reform, as much as that of any approach aimed at improving the performance of public policies and organizations, while valuing the contribution of the people who work within them.

The performative turning point in reconciling "modernizing utopia" and "the consequent dystopia of this modernization" lies in the ability of those involved to integrate Kurt Lewin's fundamentals with the characteristics of the complexity of social phenomena. These include the managerial skills and professionalism of the researchers and interveners, as well as the skills needed to effectively involve the stakeholders in the reforms. We have already emphasized the need for "researcher-interveners" to clarify their epistemological stance when engaging in an OD approach. Here, the performative turn relies on the adoption of a definition of administrative reform that is in line with continuity and based on the principle of self-organization at project-team level.

This perspective of ongoing change thus emphasizes the decisions, actions and day-to-day interactions that are constantly being made or taking place, imperceptibly modifying what the organization is doing in a management situation (cf., Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008; Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron, 2001). Adopting this perspective implies, according to Burnes (2004: p. 321; cf., Bootz, 2013; Brassard, 2003), that "organizations will have to significantly change the way they manage and the way power is distributed". To put it another way, and following a *contextualist logic* (Pichault, 2009), it is not the tool or method that determines the reform to be introduced, but rather the type of change that guides the choice of method and the tools to be adopted (cf., the examples of change models illustrated in **Appendix A**). If the change is of an incremental or radical type, or of any other type that cannot be envisaged from a utopian perspective (Burnes, 2004; Picard and Lanuza, 2016), approached under the PCEP for example, OD, as an intervention approach, could, through triangulation, be mobilized at certain stages of the process, always bearing in mind the need to shift from the paradigm of "change management" to that of "managing organizational capacity to change".

We conclude, therefore, that OD can indeed help reconcile "utopia" and "dystopia", but only on two conditions: 1) that its ontological assumption of the "planned change" model as defined by Kurt Lewin is not removed, and that the researcher-intervener instead adopts a pragmatic constructivist epistemological stance, 2) that practitioners develop skills enabling them to integrate the charac-

teristics of the complexity of social phenomena with Kurt Lewin's fundamentals.

3.7. Implications for Theory and Practice

As regards the performance of a reform, we define it by focusing on its impact on the human factor, along the lines of the concept of "performance implementation" conceptualized by [Fixsen and colleagues \(2005\)](#). Referring to the epistemic work relating to this concept, [Fixsen et al. \(2005: p. 74\)](#) conclude that "research that focuses specifically on implementation will be useful insofar as it improves practice and advances our conceptual and theoretical understanding of the important factors involved". Among these factors are those that have an impact on staff appraisal with a view to improving individual and organizational performance. This evaluation consists of a combination of context measures, compliance measures and competence measures ([Fixsen et al., 2005: pp. 47-53](#)).

Along the workflow involved in this "implementation" activity, we have shown that the theoretical challenge is first and foremost that of understanding the ontological "reality" of this work, which the OD supports. From the perspective of "situated" analysis, we have seen that the situation characteristic of the Manager's activity "substitutes intrigue for strategic rationality". This underlines, on the one hand, the importance for the researcher-intervener-consultant to clearly specify his epistemological posture, and on the other hand, the awareness of the Manager (or project-team leader) concerned by the reforms, of the stakes and problems posed by *decision-making* and *the "real-time" sensemaking and sensegiving* in the course of activity, under the pressure of uncertainty, unpredictability and singularity (e.g., [Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: p. 442](#); [Ngouo, 2022: pp. 706-720](#)).

Analyzing the prerequisites for OD to play the role of reconciling "utopia" and "dystopia", we have discussed in depth the consequent epistemological posture of the researcher. Here, we will focus on the theoretical and empirical implications of the issues and problems facing the Manager from the perspective of "situated" analysis. Following this perspective, the literature distinguishes two types of complexity faced by managerial activity, with reference to the systemic analysis of decision-making processes with a view to optimizing them, and to the activity of sensemaking and sensegiving by actors in a management "situation" ([Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991](#); [Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008](#)). These are, as we have already noted, the complexity of "abundance", which is an attribute of the system with which stakeholders have to contend ([Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008: p. 47](#)), and the complexity of "sense". The "sense" that is constructed (sensemaking) or given (sensegiving) by stakeholders through the work of actualization and interpretation that they carry out—here and now—under the fire of action, to act with a view to achieving the objectives they are pursuing ([Birkinshaw et al., 2008](#); [Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008](#)). This type of complexity takes into account the subjectivity of the human-actor, and therefore does not impose itself on actors from outside. It refers to the actors' collective construction of the

phenomenon they are seeking to master, by focusing on organizational micro-practices (Rouleau, 2005).

On a practical level, managers are confronted with the complexity of sense in many of their activities. Every utopian work is, in essence, a subjective project, through the beliefs of the ideal model it proposes. Other examples are at the heart of activities such as *decision-making* (see **Box 1**, for example, the steps involved in weighting desirable criteria and assessing the degree of threat posed by the provisional option); *managing dysfunctional organizational conflicts*, and mapping the stakeholders involved in an activity or reform. This *mapping* approach focuses on how stakeholders are affected, by assessing their degree of interest in contributing to the pursuit of set objectives, and their level of influence or power to promote or thwart the achievement of expected results. OD practitioners also need to be aware of this, to avoid falling into the trap of being locked into formal systems or the bias of technocratic modernizing ideology (in the sense of an error or irrational phenomenon, as noted below in the “discussion” section). In **Table 1**, a comment at the level of the practice plane (realized utopia) points out that implementation would be severely compromised if this dimension of subjectivity is not taken into account at the time of implementation, for example, if the injunctions of the imaginary plane are taken literally.

This type of complexity distinction, which emphasizes the subjective viewpoint of the players involved in the management “situation”, stresses the often-neglected dimension of individual behavior (expectations, personality, values, intrinsic motivation, emotion, etc.). For managers, this means no longer focusing solely on an objective approach to the organizational systems they are seeking to optimize. From a pragmatic perspective, it means appropriating and integrating into analyses the fact that the situation and the organization co-emerge through the processes of structuring the organization (“organizing”) (Brown, Coville and Pye, 2015; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Pye, 1993; Weick, 1988, 2022). It should be pointed out that the concept of “organizing” is understood in the sense of the action of organizing oneself, taking into account the agility of people, in order to accompany change in its sense of continuous change, and *highlighting the temporal dimension that administrative organization charts do not incorporate*.

4. Research Limitation, Prospects, Discussion and Conclusion

As described above, OD draws on various social science disciplines to support the introduction of change in organizations. The approach is subject to methodological biases, which we analyze as examples of the method’s limitations. We then outline a number of avenues for further research. We conclude with a discussion of the results of the study and the conclusion of the article.

4.1. Limits

The study’s bias factors can be grouped here into three categories: those relating

to the literature review approach, those relating to the operationalization of the OD approach, and those relating to the documentary analysis approach. We focus here on the second category, that of the operationalization of the OD approach.

The limits of OD operationalization strategies in the field are generally related to the mastery of qualitative/interpretive techniques. We analyze them here in relation to the epistemic work carried out during the elaboration of knowledge on the basis of information gathered by combining various techniques, as illustrated in **Table B1 (Appendix B)**. These include: 1) immersion in the organization hosting a rational utopia project (practiced utopia versus dreamed or written utopia); 2) techniques mobilized for *in situ* observation of management “situations”; 3) techniques mobilized for “restitution” of results; 4) techniques mobilized for managing conflicts within the organization as a whole or within the project group(s) (Brown et al., 2015; Currie and Spyridonidis, 2016; Gioia et al., 2012; Tracy, 2010; Wooten, 2008). In this vein, Friedberg (1997: p. 398) emphasizes a critical source of bias, namely the difficulty of all actors, researchers/interveners and stakeholders in the reforms undertaken, to *change their reasoning* in the face of organizational (dys)functioning. Similarly, Boudon (1986) points to situational effects, and in particular the bias he describes as the “epistemological effect (*E-Effet*)”. On this subject, Crozier and Friedberg (1977: pp. 419-431) draw attention to a bias that applies specifically to OD specialists and interveners, who are often prisoners of a normative model or locked into formal, *a priori* organizational management systems by pragmatism. The consequence of this bias is to prevent the researchers concerned from taking account of the power issues underlying organizational functioning, as well as the significance of the choices they propose. Journé (2005: pp. 66-69) describes the biases of “*a posteriori* reconstruction” and “decontextualization” of data collected or constructed by the researcher as part of real-time, *in situ* observations of management situations. Certain instruments for observing and analyzing a project-team or a group at work, such as method Bales’ (1950), provide a good explanation of how the group functions, based on its interaction profile. However, being quantitative in nature, Bales’ categories do not take qualitative variables into account (Gorse, Emmit, Lewis and Howarth, 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). As Gramaccia (2001: pp. 102-104) points out, by postulating that these groups are primarily governed by a communicative rationality for pooling resources, knowledge and know-how in the context of the strong interdependencies that characterize them, this instrument positions itself as an explicit *a priori* filter. This is an important source of bias to consider. In this posture, in fact, the instrument cannot account for unconscious processes, the implicit strategies of actors, the influence of the social environment, the dialectics of institutional roles, the symbolic force of status. From the angle of interpersonal communication within workgroups, Gramaccia (2001: pp.194-195) describes an effect that can be observed in project teams operating in a context of risk, complexity and uncertain-

ty. This is the “polarization effect”. In such a context, during meetings, team members immediately and thoughtlessly adhere to minority, deviant and extreme positions. “It’s worth a try”, “it’s risky, but it can work” are the trigger statements.

4.2. Avenues for Future Research

Following on from the pleas to rethink approaches, methods and tools for modernizing public services, we propose to appeal to the concept of “prognostic markets”, which is in the realm of collective intelligence. Made possible by the contributions of digital economics applied to the fields of politics, economics and management, collective intelligence, writes Surowiecki (2008: p. 21), is an essential scientific tool, “which can [...] profoundly change the way companies do business”, and which takes into account the complexity of the problems tackled.

The concept of “prognostic markets”, a kind of digital platform, focuses, among other things, on decision-making in a context of uncertainty concerning the future of organizations. In the case of our article, the concept is based on the collective intelligence of stakeholders in an administrative reform, for example, or in a decision-making process (cf. the examples and case studies, some of which relate to technological developments, described by Surowiecki, 2008: pp. 50-56, 343-347). As defined by Surowiecki (2008), a “prognostic market” is based on three fundamental characteristics that are guarantees for obtaining good group decisions, namely: 1) *conceptual and cognitive diversity* in the opinions of members (internal and external change agents) who are stakeholders in the reform; 2) *independence* of members in the sense of methodological individualism (autonomy of members, their relative freedom from the influence of others, people’s opinions are not determined by the opinions of those around them); 3) *decentralization* of sources in the sense of the diffusion of decision-making power throughout the organizational system (people are able to specialize and draw on local knowledge). Diversity, combined with better communication, encourages confrontation and innovation. Better still, and in so doing, it enables players to accept contradiction and protects them from the effect of linear, partial thinking, based on the idea that a single determinant would explain a complex phenomenon. The application of the concept of prognostic markets is based on the premise that “deliberations within a group are more successful when they focus on a clear agenda, and when those leading the group are committed to involving everyone” (Surowiecki, 2008: p. 239).

In the context of this article, this concept can be explored by drawing on the knowledge of a group (cf., the four elements of Kurt Lewin’s model of planned change) to guide the operationalization of the OD approach to reconciling “rational utopia” and “consequential dystopia”. The approach could consider the three characteristics of a prognostic market as key factors in the success of the intervention approach. From this angle, within the dynamics of OD reflexive

processes, future research could explore answers to the following four questions:

a How can we manage each group's own identity, given that the influence of individuals on the group and on each other's judgments is undeniable (see, for example, the effects of identity paradox, [Bollecker and Nobre, 2016](#))?

b At local level, how can we limit the effects of "confirmation bias", which leads those involved to unconsciously seek out any information likely to support their initial intuition?

c How can we limit the effects of the tendency for small groups (coordination meetings, boards of directors, project teams, etc.) to "dumb down" ([Surowiecki, 2008: p. 232](#)) their members (instead of making them more intelligent) by making decisions by consensus instead of by debate, which makes everyone "work harder, think harder and come to better conclusions" ([Surowiecki, 2008: pp. 233, 236](#))? (e.g., the polarization effect bias in technology development project teams ([Gramaccia, 2001](#))).

d Since there is no point in integrating groups into the governance structure of an organization or a reform project if they are not equipped with a method for aggregating the opinions of its members (mechanisms put in place to transform private judgments into collective decisions; see, for example, the mechanism of "scientific committees" experimented with by certain administrations), how can we capitalize on the contributions of digital economy technologies, while managing their dystopian effects, to set up such a system?

4.3. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this article, we have argued that the introduction of a reform in a public administration contributes, on a theoretical level, to the construction and management of knowledge in the field of organizational change. However, while the perspective is interesting, its implementation is not free of difficulties, both in terms of mastering the concepts used, and of the need for public services to learn from these experiences in order to rethink their vision of development and their mode of operation. As far as concepts are concerned, in the literature, "utopia", which we have mobilized in this article, rubs shoulders with "*ideology*", without any clarification being given to the reader to help him grasp their respective meanings. However, it turns out that in the literature, the use of the word ideology is characterized by inextricable confusion ([Boudon, 1986: pp. 20, 29, 34, 295](#); see also, [Fagerholm, 2016](#); [Fine and Kent, 1993](#); [Gerring, 1997](#)). [Fagerholm \(2016\)](#) observes that nearly thirty attributes are associated with the concept of ideology in the literature. With regard to the actions to be taken to improve the operation of public services by learning from experience, the adoption of a *flexibility* attitude in the conduct of reforms proves to be a critical condition for success.

In this section, devoted to discussing the results of our research, we explore

these two themes of “ideology” in relation to “utopia”, and “flexibility” in the conduct of administrative reforms. We conclude by suggesting an appropriate fulcrum for OD to effectively play its role of reconciling “utopia” and “dystopia”.

4.3.1. Utopia or Ideology?

The concept of ideology is often used in literature in a way that threatens the interlocutor. This can be seen, for example, in the intolerant nature of its prescriptions or the passion with which it is promulgated; in the requirement for the interlocutor to adhere to it; in its symbolic, affective, behavioral and relational character; and in its closure to critical thought and innovation. In addition to confusions of meaning, Boudon (1986: p. 17) observes that in classical philosophical thought, ideology is seen as a kind of “human error” that needs to be exorcised. These confusions have enormous consequences for the way in which communication about administrative reform projects is conceived and used. Hence the need, in this article, to provide the necessary clarifications within the framework of our knowledge development project. The intrinsic interest of this clarification stems from the fact that the literature we have exploited has not made our task any easier. By way of illustration, Gagnon (2000), on the basis of dialectical thinking, uses in his article only the word ideology (neo-productive, neo-liberal, humanist individualizing, modernizing technocratic, socio-historically situated, critical democratic) considered as an error to be corrected. Metzger (2001: pp. 249-250) observes that in the imaginary space of level 2 (Table 1), utopias present a risk of ideological drift or recuperation, if we admit, according to him, “that what characterizes ideological discourse is that it is ‘non-congruent’ with social reality”. According to Metzger (2000: p. 250), who quotes Ricoeur (1986) here, “utopia cannot be understood without taking ideology into account”. But none of Metzger’s texts defines the concept of ideology. Analyzing the relationship between utopia and languages, Kentron (2010: pp. 119-146), mobilizes the three concepts of “utopia”, “ideology” and “propaganda”. These analyses conclude that in dystopias, the question of language is central to the narrative device, with utopian space both contiguous with the known world and situated beyond its limits (pp. 133-135). From this perspective, “the language of dystopia makes a major contribution to manipulation” (p. 137), to propaganda, for example, in reference to the political discourses of totalitarian regimes (ideology of progress and the City, socialist ideologies, collective ideology, National Socialist ideology, etc.). In these discourses, the political project, which has obvious affinities with utopia, uses linguistic distortions (propaganda) to radically alter people’s way of thinking.

What can we conclude from these examples? Are Utopia and Ideology identical or interchangeable, as Gagnon’s article might suggest? If not, what distinguishes them from one another, given that the other authors cited in our article use them extensively in their texts?

In the literature, the two words “utopia” and “ideology” each propose an “ideal-type” of social reality that is represented by evocative images by means of

which political reality could be sensitively grasped and thus made possible. However, while the interpretation and use of the definition of “utopia” we have retained in this article raises no objections, the status of the word “ideology” is more confused. Some authors propose a rational theory of ideology, while others see ideology as an irrational phenomenon in which the behavior of actors is influenced by forces beyond their control. Thus, following the rationalist perspective, for Geertz (1964); cited by Boudon, 1986: p. 79, ideology is “a roadmap for orientation in a complex world”, and for Marx (1953); cited by Boudon, 1986: p. 79, ideology is seen as “an effect of perspective or as conscious adherence to useful beliefs”. For authors of the irrational theory current, ideology “is a product of fanaticism, of passions” (Aron, 1968, or Shils, 1968; cited by Boudon, 1986: p. 79) or “an inverted image of reality under the influence of class interests” (Marx and Engels, 1953; cited by Boudon, 1986: p. 79).

To avoid the confusion that arises from these different definitions, and taking into account the meaning commonly attributed to it today, Boudon (1986) shows that it is relevant not to define ideology by the notion of symbolic acts, for example the symbolic actions linked to political games. Instead, it should be defined in terms of scientific argumentation. This orientation has the advantage of taking into account the criterion of truth and error in the appreciation of a social phenomenon, on the one hand, and is compatible with other types of arguments that are not clearly or closely dependent on this criterion, on the other. On this basis, in his sketch of a restricted theory of ideology (Boudon, 1986: pp. 4, 49, 52, 101-102, 105-135), he proposes the following definition of ideology: “*Ideology is a doctrine or belief based on a scientific theory, and endowed with excessive or unfounded credibility. A theory that is false, or dubious, or unduly interpreted*”. We have adopted this definition in this article, in particular by applying it to Gagnon’s (2000) article. We note that this definition underlines the scientific character of ideology, as is the case for the rational utopia defined above with Metzger (2000, 2001).

Based on this definition, what can we say about the difference or similarity between the two concepts?

Considering this definition of ideology, and to answer the question of the distinction-relationship between “utopia” and “ideology”, Boudon (1986: pp. 72-79) shows that there is no need to distinguish the two concepts. His demonstration is based on the assumption of the “situated rationality of the social actor: *his good reasons*” and the criterion of “comprehensibility” of the ideal-type of society under consideration. In reference to Geertz’s (1964) definition of ideology, the ideas of this ideal-type, formulated in terms of propositions or systems of descriptive as well as prescriptive propositions, maintain a relationship with social reality similar to that which road maps maintain with geographical reality (Boudon, 1986: p. 74). These propositions must be considered comprehensible if we take into account the situation of the actors who support, promote or endorse them. So, for example, considering his social situation, Taylor had good

reasons, in this case technical (see Note #2), for building his model of technicist utopia. This line of reasoning allows us, on the basis of the definition of ideology adopted, to make no distinction between ideology and utopia. This is our position in this article. This position is supported by our PCEP-type epistemological posture, which takes into account the complexity of an administrative reform and the resulting paradoxes, and accepts the assumption of situated rationality.

4.3.2. Flexibility Is a Must

One of the critical dimensions of the “performative turn” we have outlined is the adoption of an attitude of *flexibility*. This will enable managers to break down some barriers in the face of uncertainty, and the organization to strengthen its ability to respond to new conditions, as well as to creativity and innovation. As Gramaccia (2001: p. 265) points out, this is an approach to organizational change in which pragmatic interaction plays a central, problematic role. It also strengthens the organization’s capacity to learn, by using additional information to quickly and accurately meet the expectations of citizens-users of the provided services (Birkinshaw et al., 2008; Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Reix, 1997, cited by Pesqueux, 2015: p. 62; Surowiecki, 2008). It is a necessary condition for deploying the capacity for paradoxical thinking or defining the conditions for performativity by overflow (Berkowitz & Dumez, 2015; Denis, 2006). To generate change, *we need to be flexible enough* to proceed by combining differences and contradictory poles, by associating dissimilarities, by hybridizing⁶ the heteroclit (Halpen, 2019: pp. 141-147). In Table 1, on the subject of “utopia realized”, we observed that the institutionalization of the ideal model is not without consequences; the risks of rigidifying hierarchical structures and organizational functioning are very great if, at the time of implementation, the injunctions of the ideal model are taken literally, with zeal, as is often the case in bureaucracies that know only the linear, simplistic mode of reasoning. For de Rosnay (2007: p. 66), “it is the over-specialization of our worldview that has rendered invisible the great natural forces that act on social systems as much as on nature”.

In a constantly changing professional world, we are talking about “employment flexibility”, which is socio-economic; “labor flexibility”, which is socio-organizational; “functional flexibility”, which refers to the application of the principles of mobility and the development of worker versatility; and “wage flexibility”, which measures the sensitivity of wages to effort and performance (Brunhes, 2004; cited by Pesqueux, 2015). Employment flexibility refers to three essential criteria: 1) the adaptability of skills, working conditions and working hours; 2) the variability of the volume of work within the organization or the economy, job mobility; and 3) the adaptability of qualifications, contracts, status and attached rights. “Labor flexibility” refers to the criteria of: 1) the flexibility of organization and hierarchical structures; 2) the ability to learn, anticipate and

⁶According to Halpen (2019: pp. 149-166), this is not innovation for innovation’s sake. Nor is hybridization fracturing or vain realism. “Hybridization creates reference points. It encompasses without erasing, it connects without distorting. It induces an inclusive society, made up of common referents that give sense to everyone’s differences” (p. 166).

coordinate the changing requirements of the beneficiaries of the services provided, thus coordinating through demand and no longer solely through supply; 3) the variability of wages and labor costs; 4) the adaptability of productive activity, both individual and collective; 5) employability (Barbier and Nadel, 2003; Bareil and Aubé (Dir.), 2012; Pesqueux, 2015). These different areas of flexibility are all avenues of reform that can be explored or developed further, taking into account the requirements of the “*performance implementation*”.

This dimension is critical for administrative bureaucracies because the word “flexibility” is not in their “genes”. Indeed, as Mintzberg (1989: p. 198) points out, the fundamental principle of any bureaucracy is to “create a path and stick to it, making sure that whatever may result has been intended. Bureaucracy is the absence of surprises”, i.e. the impossibility of anticipating and coordinating citizen-user demand. Yet, as Gramaccia (2001: p. 189) observes, “event risk always introduces the probability of complexity, of re-evaluation of choices, and sometimes of undecidability, aporia or, at worst, rupture”. Public service, *to be effective anywhere in the world*, has to pay a price. Flexibility, which we count among the principles that make societies governable, is a central component of the structure of this price. It is a necessary condition for the effective exercise of individual and collective responsibility by state agents. By mobilizing various modes of regulation that correspond to the realities on the ground, stakeholders adopt a logic of flexibility and innovation that tackles the root causes of bureaucratic vicious circles (Halpen, 2019: pp. 149-166; Ngouo, 2017: pp. 556-557). For, in the “real” context of organizational management, prescribed work and all the plans adopted beforehand are no more than resources among many others. The manager and all the other actors involved must constantly adjust their behavior to the updated parameters of the situation (Birkinshaw et al., 2008: pp. 839-842; Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2008: p. 33; Ngouo, 2017: p. 557). Indeed, in this actualization activity, “action” and “context” are “mutually elaborative and mutually determinative elements in a simultaneous equation that the actors are continually solving and re-solving to determine the nature of events in which they are placed” (Brown et al., 2015: p. 268). As illustrated by the hybridization mode of regulation as analyzed by Halpen (2019: see Note #6), flexibility does not mean “laissez-aller” or “laissez-faire” within the organization. For the organization’s manager, it means “simply” adopting a polyphonic style of leadership (Pichault, 2013).

4.3.3. Leverage and Fulcrum

The main question of this article is whether the OD approach mobilized to introduce administrative reforms can make a judicious contribution to reconciling rational utopia and dystopia? To answer this question, we have considered the rational utopia underlying each administrative reform project as an ideal-type of society where life would be very good, and the dystopia as the ideal-type of society reflected by the perverse effects of the delightful dream of the utopian project of the reform under consideration. In the field, the convictions of reform

managers are often met with stubborn resistance to these dystopian effects. As Gramaccia (2001: p. 195) points out, there's a long way to go between the communitarian vision of theoretical management and real, concrete, often highly conflictual situations. As noted in Table 1, level 2, utopia can inspire enthusiasm among stakeholders, just as it can create dissatisfaction.

In the case of administrative reform projects, utopias and dystopias share a number of common elements concerning people, humanization and dehumanization. For example, and in the case of the reforms introduced, people, who are not free to make their own choices in life, are forced to be very similar and to conform to prescribed rules or expectations. In the modernization reforms of public services currently underway, the idea that it is possible to help these services transform, to become more efficient while valuing the contribution of the people who work in them, is more relevant than ever, argues Audet (2009). This latter evolution is amplified by the contemporary challenges of modernizing public services, and particularly by the widespread adoption of networked working, which takes advantage of the digital economy (Bareil and Aubé (Dir.), 2012; Dertouzos, 1999; de Rosnay, 2007; Surowiecki, 2008). In this evolutionary movement, which undeniably brings progress for mankind, the enthusiasm of the dream must not blind us to the perverse effects of this progress, which undermine the daily lives of the beneficiaries of the reforms. This is the etymological meaning of the concept of "performance", which is measured not only in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, but also in terms of *relevance* to the expectations of beneficiaries, and *ethics*. As Morin (2008: p. 43) points out, we need to "envisage and encourage a new age of technology, in which it overcomes its current barbaric age (mechanical, deterministic, hyperspecialized, timed), which, by allowing it to be humanized, would make it possible, via the rehumanization of administrations and enterprises, to rehumanize everyday life". Fixsen and his colleagues emphasize this point when they draw a clear distinction between "*paper implementation*", "*process implementation*" and "*performance implementation*". As we have seen, "performance implementation" consists in putting in place a change that is put to good use for users. "Paper implementation", on the other hand, focuses on compliance with the initial prescriptions or injunctions of decision-makers, without considering the advantages and disadvantages of the innovations introduced for users. The same problem arises with "process implementation", whose sole *raison d'être* is the introduction of new work procedures, without any attention being paid to their undesirable effects on employees. Fixsen et al. (2005: p. 6) argue that performance implementation requires "more cautious and thoughtful efforts".

The purpose of OD is not to solve problems, but rather to identify the specific qualities and strengths of the organization that will serve as a fulcrum for improving performance (Robbins et al., 2006). "Give me a lever arm long enough and a fulcrum and I will lift the earth" implored the physicist, mathematician and engineer Archimedes (287 BC/212 BC). We have shown that OD can legiti-

mately be considered as a lever arm long enough to reconcile “rational utopia” and “consequential dystopia” in the context of administrative reform. However, in the complexity of the real work involved in this reform, we need to find the right fulcrum to enable this lever to play its conciliatory role effectively. It’s a *challenge of knowledge management*, of managing the biases of data collection and analysis in a “real” context, of managing the capacity to change, and above all of *organizational learning* that could serve as the point of support we’re looking for. Considered from the perspective of the *heterotopia* concept, organizational learning is understood here in the sense of “a *place* where people continually discover how they create their reality. And how they can change it” (Senge, 1990: p. 35). Heterotopias, Picard and Lanuza (2016: p. 76) remind us, are “places outside all places, interstices governed by rules different from the real model, or without rules absolutely, whose very presence suspends without reversing the rules or dynamics of their environment”. From the perspective of situated analysis, Journé and Raulet-Croset (2008: pp. 49-52) identify three types of tension consubstantial with the notion of situation, which could also serve as levers in the logic of organizational learning, drawing on the paradox-based approach to analysis. These are tensions between: 1) *Singularity and regularity*; 2) *Ephemerality and permanence*; 3) *Individual and collective*. As an example of the “singularity and regularity” tension seen as a lever, Manger’s aim is “not to deny the singularity specific to each situation, but to take advantage of certain regularities found between different situations, to use his experience and learning with regard to situations that may be relatively recurrent” (p. 50). By anchoring themselves in the two theories of “resources” and “dynamic capacities” on which the concept of “capacity to change” is based, Managers of public organizations will find the elements they need to exercise their leadership and retain within the paradigm of organizational learning the right “fulcrum” to drive the reforms necessary for the development of their administrations. The responsibility of professionals working within the OD approach is also strongly challenged, as we have outlined in this article (see also in Bariel and Aubé (Dir.), 2012 and Birkinshaw et al., 2008, the challenges specifically facing OD professionals; or in Xavier, 2013, the debate devoted to the World Bank’s approach to public sector management). Indeed, they are not immune to the dystopian effects of scientific advances in, for example, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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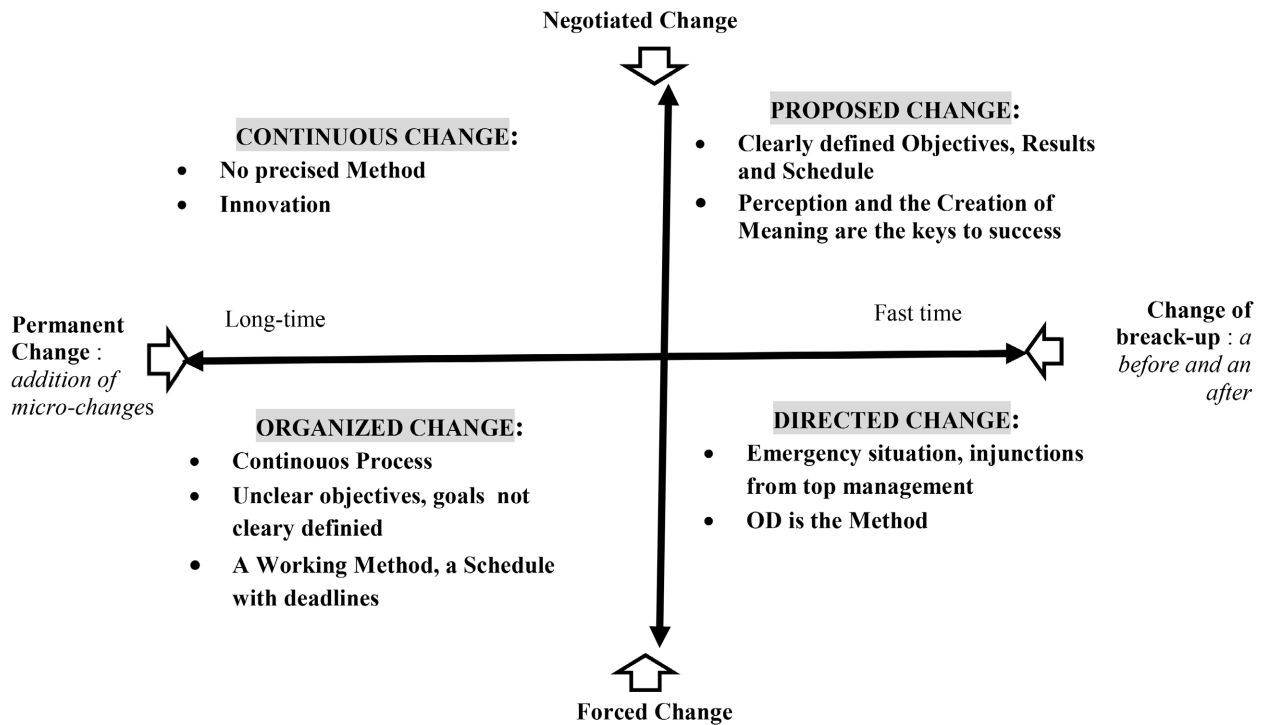
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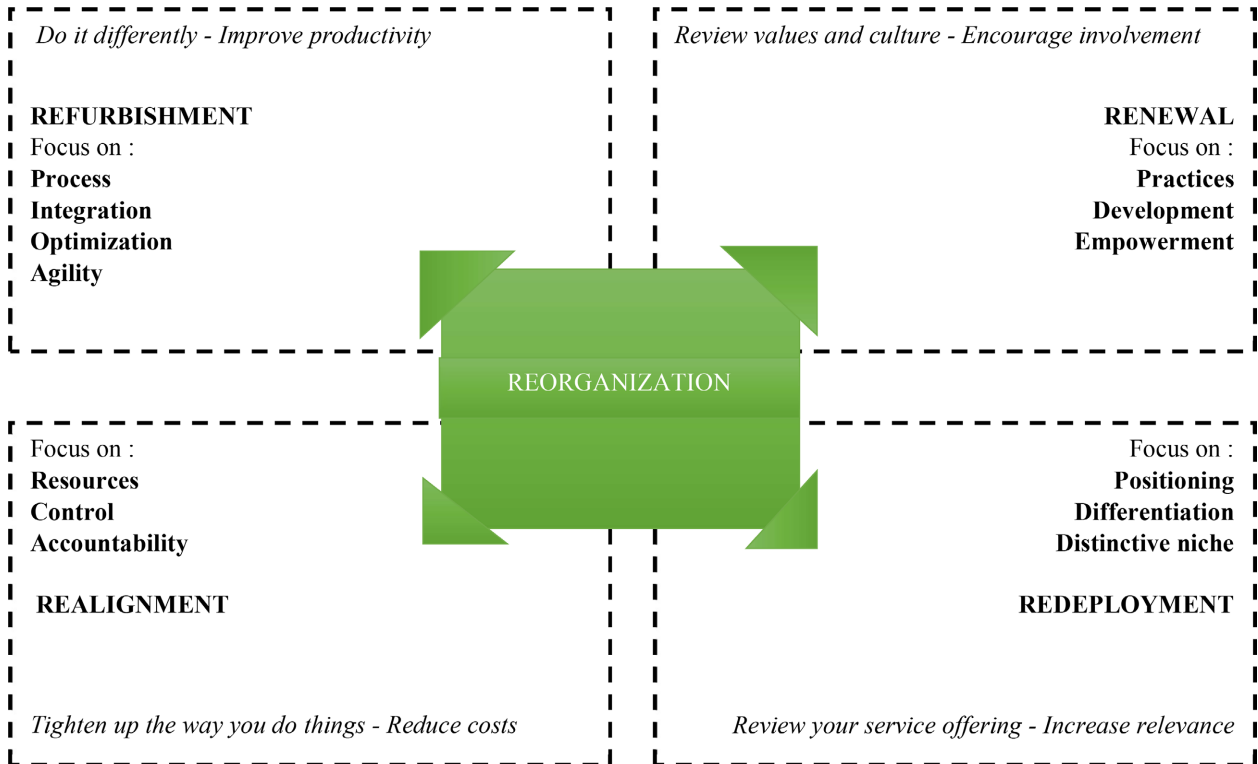
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Appendix A



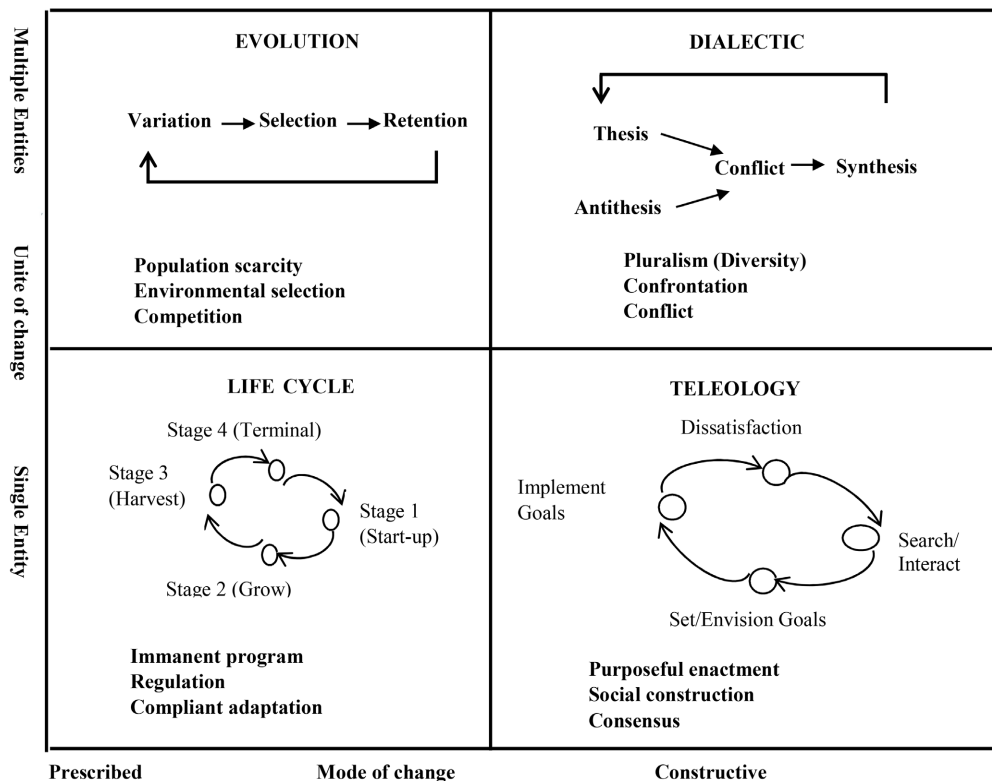
Source: Culled from Autissier et al. (2018).

Figure A1. Autissier et al.'s change matrix.



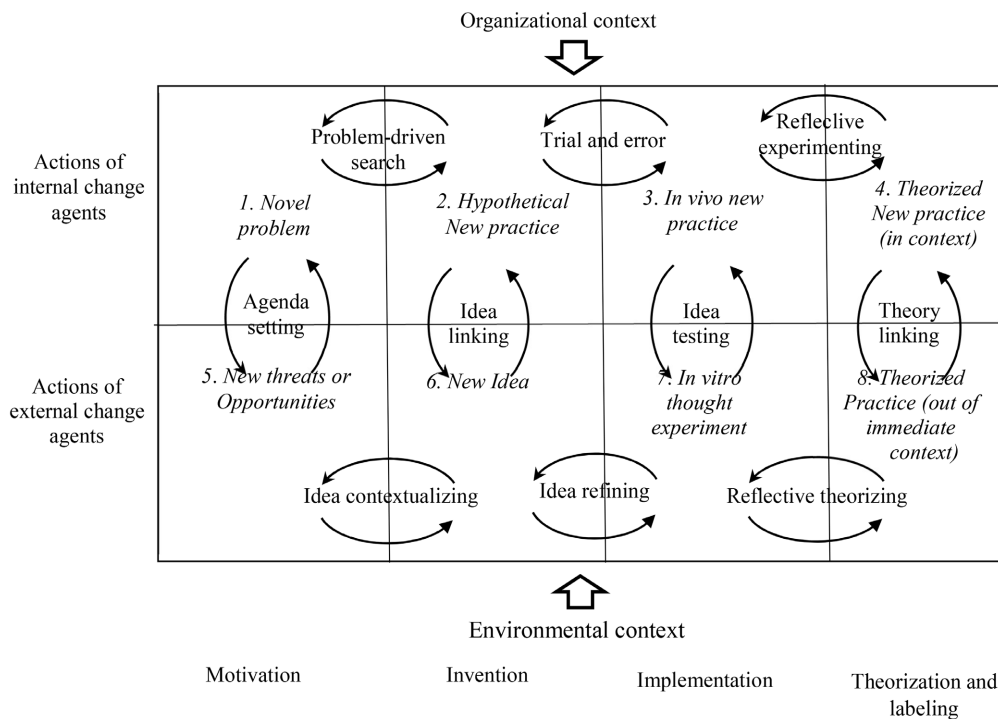
Source: Culled from Rondeau (2008).

Figure A2. Rondeau's transformation types.



Arrows on lines represent likely sequences among events, not causation between events. Source: Culled from Van de Ven & Poole (1995).

Figure A3. Van de Ven and Poole’s Process Theories of Organizational Development and Change.



Source: Culled from Birkinshaw et al. (2008).

Figure A4. Management innovation process framework from Birkinshaw et al. (2008).

Appendix B

Table B1. Examples of strategies used to apply the organizational development approach.

Objective	Operationalization approach: OD activities	Client-system assumption	Role of the researcher-intervenor-consultant
Action Research (Lewin, 1951)			
OD aims to change the organization's culture by constantly questioning its structure and functioning.	1) diagnosis of the situation; 2) development and implementation of corrective actions; 3) providing feedback.	The intervention base unit is the "work team", comprising a line manager and his or her staff.	He or she must participate in the evolution of the phenomenon under study and step back to better grasp its nature and direction (see Bales, 1950) method for analyzing interactions within work teams).
Process-Consultation (Schein, 1969)			
Help the client-system to better understand and solve its operating problems, by enabling individuals and groups to carry out a lucid diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, and to make the appropriate changes.	A seven-step process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial contact between consultant and customer system; • Definition of the relationship, the formal contract and the psychological contract; • Choice of working environment and method • Diagnosis: data collection and interpretation; • Intervention; • Decreased commitment on the part of the advisor; • End of relationship 	The customer needs to perceive the problems for himself, to take on the diagnosis and to be involved in developing the solutions (cf. the assumptions of the helping relationship).	The Consultant must make an exhaustive study of the organization, and work together with the members of the organization to suggest new actions in a meaningful way. Drawing on the sciences of organizational behavior, the Consultant's help can focus on human processes where interpersonal relationships play a key role, such as: decision-making; communications; leadership; conflict management; inter-group relations.
Socio-Technical Systems (Emery & Trist, 1960)			
Aims for better harmonization of the major variables that influence individual and group behavior, so as to create a work environment that enables individual growth and the achievement of organizational performance objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global diagnosis of the organization, taking into account its socio-cultural and technological context. • The diagnosis must take into account the transactions taking place between the organization and its external environment, in line with the notion of an open system in a systemic perspective. • Designing a change strategy • <i>Such an approach will necessarily combine different models of organizational change, such as those in Appendix A.</i> 	The entire organization is involved (line managers and staff), with the overall diagnosis focusing on variables such as: organizational culture; organizational structure; workgroup functioning; and the introduction of new technology.	Examine the impact of the social system, technology and the external environment on the behavior of individuals and groups within the organization, using for example a model based on Kurt Lewin's principle that all behavior of individuals and groups within an organization is a function of the individual's personality and the characteristics of the organization's internal environment.
Relational or transactional approach (Lorsh & Lawrence, 1969a, 1969b)			
Following a logic that borrows from the metaphor of	- Diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses and development of corrective measures based on an	By responding to and balancing basic human needs, according to the	Reflect on four areas: a) the overall organization and its interaction with the environment;

Continued

<p>“organizational health”, we could speak of the “global resolution of organizational development problems”. This approach has two objectives:</p> <p>a) To harmonize the organization’s structures with the requirements of the environment (see, for example, Mintzberg’s structural configurations, Mintzberg, 1989).</p> <p>b) To ensure greater compatibility between the organization’s objectives and the goals pursued by individuals and groups within the organization.</p>	<p>in-depth study of the degree of stability/certainty or instability/uncertainty of the technological and economic environment.</p> <p>- Understand the nature of the transactions taking place between the organization and the environment, on the one hand, and between a component of the organization and the segment of the environment with which it transacts, on the other.</p> <p>- Elaborate a strategy for change, taking into account the fact that: a) a mechanical or bureaucratic type of structure is more appropriate to the requirements of a certain, stable environment; b) a matrix-type structure (task force, project team) is more appropriate to the requirements of an uncertain, unstable environment (see Mintzberg’s structural configurations, Mintzberg, 1989).</p>	<p>sociotechnical approach, strategic management can create a much more harmonious and productive environment within the organization (Morgan, 1989: p. 74).</p> <p>This approach is based on two principles:</p> <p>- The organization is a socio-technical system endowed with the capacity to modify its own structures (<i>morphogenics</i>);</p> <p>- There is no ideal way to design an organization’s structures. The organization must adopt structures and operating modes that enable it to successfully conduct exchanges or transactions with the environment in which it operates.</p>	<p>b) relations between the groups that make up the organization;</p> <p>c) relations between individuals and the organization that employs them;</p> <p>d) the compatibility between the organization’s objectives and the goals pursued by individuals and groups within the organization (see, for example, Morgan, 1989: pp. 37-39, 73-74 for the sociotechnical approach; see also the contribution of the analysis of language acts in the organization from the performativity perspective, Aggeri, 2017; Denis, 2006; Féral, 2013; Gramaccia, 2001).</p>
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Socio-analysis ([Elliot, 1951, 1964, 1968](#))

<p>a) Studies the psychological and social forces affecting the performance of individuals and groups within an organization, with a view to identifying ways of improving adaptation.</p> <p>b) Aims, at the organizational level, to help the organization better grasp the existing situation, discover the desired situation and motivate people in the pursuit of this situation.</p>	<p>The process can be broken down into four phases:</p> <p>- Preparation: Establishing initial contact. Reconstitution of the history of the structure and current operation of the organization employing the individuals who have requested the help of a consultant;</p> <p>- Extensive use of group discussions, with the aim of involving as many individuals as possible in the process, gathering information on the nature of the problems to be solved and defining the frequency and content of subsequent meetings;</p> <p>- Exploratory individual discussions: this phase guides the socio-analyst in analyzing the problems encountered by individuals in carrying out their role;</p> <p>- Individual and group discussions using a conceptual framework or organizational theory to identify the current situation, discover the desired situation, and specify the steps to be taken to reach it.</p>	<p>An individual or a group within an organization seeks the help of an analyst when faced with a problem that concerns both their personal effectiveness and that of the organization that employs them.</p> <p>The organization itself, faced with the problem of motivating its staff.</p> <p>The same approach is applied as in Action-Research</p>	<p>- To help, in a non-interpretive way, one or more individuals to gain a better understanding of their personal problems related to the performance of their duties in an organization.</p> <p>- Maintain complete independence from the organization, and not become involved in the problems it is asked to solve.</p> <p>- In providing assistance, the Consultant must adopt a non-interpretive attitude (See note #4)</p>
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Non-directive orientation (Lapassade, 1961; cf., Pagès, 1961, 1962)

<p>Aims to elucidate communication problems within groups and organizations.</p> <p>Promotes personal growth by creating a climate of authentic interpersonal relationships.</p>	<p>The non-directive approach takes on a different character depending on whether or not a prior frame of reference is used, and on the different phases of an organizational development activity. It can be “structuring” or “informing”. Pagès (1961) focuses on self-regulation phenomena within groups and between interdependent groups within organizations (see Bélanger, 1972: p. 648).</p>	<p>The approach is mainly applied at group level. However, since groups interact within social organizations, the structures and modes of operation of these organizations are called into question.</p>	<p>Non-directiveness is defined as an orientation and a set of techniques that characterize the help a change agent intends to provide to a client-system in the search for the latter’s enhancement or better adaptation to its environment.</p>
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Direct *in situ* observation approach (Journé, 2005)

<p>The approach is used as an investigative or diagnostic strategy that avoids, in part, the <i>a posteriori</i> reconstruction and decontextualization biases that affect analyses of data relating to <i>decision-making</i> and <i>sensemaking</i> in management “situations”.</p> <p>It can be used to analyze the cognitive dimensions of expert activities (technostructure), execution tasks (operational center), as well as communication within work teams, or in highly computerized situation.</p>	<p>This method is applied in <i>real time</i>, from a managerial perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can be used as a “case study” in the sense of grounded theory. - It proposes a dynamic observation system to collect data and make them usable. This system is built around four observation strategies (see Journé, 2005: p. 76). - The proposed system has four characteristics: a) it is centered on the direct and “situated” observation of actors’ actions and verbalizations; b) it is a system in the sense that it organizes the <i>interaction</i> between observation strategies with different and complementary objectives and characteristics, with the aim of articulating methodological opportunism (openness to surprise, acceptance of a certain degree of indeterminacy) and rigor; c) each strategy is defined according to the physical constraints of observation; d) the system favors rapid mobilization, flexibility and adaptability of the observation device. 	<p>The basic unit of intervention is the “work team” in a work “situation”. This refers to the analysis of the manager’s <i>real activity</i>, focusing on <i>sensemaking</i> and <i>sensegiving</i> in the face of ambiguity and indeterminacy.</p> <p>Journé (2005: p. 71) speaks of a “normally disturbed situation”. Everything being “normal”, it is sufficiently disturbed to call for a reaction from the actors involved.</p> <p>To define the <i>observable traces</i> of the cognitive aspects of situational activity, the method draws on the theories of “situated action” and “cognition”, recognizing that the relevant unit for analyzing cognitive processes is the <i>socio-technical</i> system within which the individual acts.</p>	<p>He (or She) plays the same role as in an <i>action-research approach</i> using the case method. However, He (or She) must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt an opportunistic approach to evolving situations, being able to spot and seize opportunities as they arise. - Develop an obsession with the relevance of observations that focus on how actors respond in <i>real time</i> to unforeseen situations. - Use systematic observation strategies, of actors and their context of action and interpretation (adopt a <i>non-directive attitude</i> here). - Monitor biases in a <i>posteriori</i> reconstruction of situational data: <i>attention</i> bias and <i>interpretation</i> bias.
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Source: Author’s summary based on Bélanger (1972), Journé (2005), Journé and Raulet-Croset (2008), Morgan (1989).