



CANADA

# **Integrating Policy: Implementing Organizational Change**

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# Integrating Policy: Implementing Organizational Change

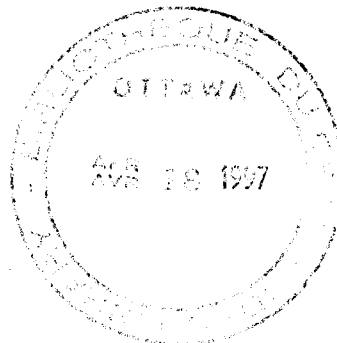
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# INTEGRATING POLICY: IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

## INTRODUCTION

In May 1995, the International Development Research Centre convened a workshop in Ottawa on the topic "INTESEP: a Matter of Learning." Practitioners active in multiparty negotiation of integrated social, economic and environmental policies (INTESEP) from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada examined their own experiences and considered how a learning paradigm could be used to make the process of negotiating integrated policies more effective. The results of that workshop are reported elsewhere <sup>1</sup>

This paper grows out of the INTESEP learning workshop, and investigates how research on the complex process of policy implementation can be applied to the building of organizations which will be charged with the task of negotiating and sustaining integrated policies. This paper reviews research on policy implementation and institutional change, and draws on the experiences of specific integrative activities to explore some of the concepts suggested by the implementation literature.

## POLICY COMMUNITIES

Theorists working on implementation research are slowly coming to a conclusion reached long ago by field practitioners - that the state is not, in practice, a unitary actor in either the negotiation or the implementation of complex, overlapping or integrated policies.

"Even though they may provide a useful framework at the international level, concepts such as *state willingness, national concern, or governmental capacity* have limited, and only the most general, utility at the domestic and especially the local level by which time the state has already disintegrated into myriad organizations, agencies

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<sup>1</sup> See Greg Armstrong, *Integrating Policy: A Matter of Learning*, IDRC Manuscript Report, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1995.

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and actors pursuing different, often conflicting, interests and strategies.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that processes of policy formation and negotiation involve communities or systems of actors both within and outside of the formal structures of government. These policy communities iteratively and interactively formulate and reformulate policy as they consider how disparate interests of state and private organizations and groups will be affected by policy innovations. Policy communities have been described as networks of groups engaged in discussion or debate on a given policy issue, or on a constellation of related issues. The members of any policy community may engage each other in discussion, but the community itself can be comprised of policy coalitions with sharply contrasting viewpoints.<sup>3</sup>

It has been suggested by some writers that democratic structures of government which give the general population a vote provide a legitimizing function for the negotiations of much smaller policy communities, but do not in fact ensure that the average citizen has a significant role in the formulation of policy. To be sure, the citizen in a democracy, through exercise of the franchise, can affect which elected officials will play a role in the communities which negotiate policy. But these elected officials, while occasionally playing the dominant role, usually do not, alone, determine what policies will be formulated or adopted. It is the "minorities that care" who organize themselves to fight for their own interests in the policy debate, and, in the most constructive of policy processes, to learn from each other.<sup>4</sup> What practitioners negotiating integrated policies and programmes agree,<sup>5</sup> is that this

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<sup>2</sup> Adil Najam, **Learning from the Literature on Policy Implementation: A Synthesis Perspective**. Working Paper. Luxembourg: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. July 1995.

<sup>3</sup> See Evert A. Lindquist, *Public managers and policy communities: learning to meet new challenges*. Canadian Public Administration, vol. 35, #2. p 127-159; and Kai N. Lee, Compass and Gyroscope: Integrating Science and Politics for the Environment. Queenston, Ontario: Marvyn Melnyk Associates. 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Lee, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong, 1995.

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type of constructive learning is essential (but not inevitable) in building sustainable integration.

It is important to distinguish the "client groups" targeted for a policy purpose from the coalitions of interest groups, people who may or may not be targeted, but who have an interest in what and how policy is formulated. While the policy coalitions may affect how policy is formulated, the client groups will determine how it is received.

It is these actors who, to a large extent, make policy systems or policy communities intrinsically unpredictable. Policy systems constitute:

...an amorphous region inhabited by people united by common interest in an issue without boundaries. The issues are often sticky, complicated, tangled and conflicted affairs. They reflect the coalescing of many ongoing social, technical and political dilemmas that cut across organizations, nations and communities.<sup>6</sup>

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The earliest classical, primarily prescriptive, studies of bureaucratic behaviour by Max Weber and others suggested there should be a separation between policy and implementation. They also suggested that in the rationally structured organization, with established mechanisms for accountability and monitoring, and with the right training, faithful implementation of policy was both desirable and achievable.

Empirical research on implementation as it occurs in the field, however, presents another view. Recent studies<sup>7</sup> reiterate what the earliest case-studies of real-life

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<sup>6</sup> Marvin Weisbord [Ed], Discovering Common Ground, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler, 1992, p 157.

<sup>7</sup> See United States Agency for International Development, Implementing Policy Change: Lessons Learned. Washington: USAID, 1992; and Najam, 1995.

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implementation suggested a quarter of a century ago: that both policy makers and implementers tend to underestimate the complexity and uncertainty of the implementation process. One consequence of this is that policy makers often attempt to control a process which is both unlikely to be effectively controlled, and which quite probably should not be. It is difficult enough negotiating the formulation of integrated policies. Implementing them, and sustaining the integration during prolonged implementation, is inevitably even more complex.

The predictable variables affecting implementation -- the content of the policy, the institutional and the organizational contexts within which it is implemented, the commitment (or lack of it) by the people charged with implementation, the organizational and human capacity to effectively or faithfully implement [these two are not necessarily the same thing] and the clients or coalitions who are affected -- are themselves immensely complicated. But there are also the "unanticipated participants"<sup>8</sup> whose appearance on the scene can drastically affect the implementation process.

This unpredictability has been documented in hundreds of studies of the implementation of innovation and of policy conducted over the past twenty-five years.<sup>9</sup> It is a useful heuristic approach to treat policy, particularly policy designed to foster integration of environmental, social and economic interests, as a political innovation. It is clear, with the sector-specific organization of most government ministries, and of the policies which they formulate, that integrating these concepts is at least *perceived* to be an innovation by most people engaged in both fostering the concept of integration, and affected by it.

Just as important as the documented complexity of implementation, is the clear and consistent finding from

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<sup>8</sup> See Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, for one of the earliest detailed and systematic descriptions of implementation processes.

<sup>9</sup> This review draws upon two primary streams of implementation research: that concerned with the implementation of innovations in educational institutions, and that concerned with policy. A careful review of both streams of research indicates many points of convergence.



field research that policies are effectively reformulated during the implementation process, that innovations are, in the process of application, redesigned. Research on the formulation, diffusion, adoption and the subsequent implementation of innovations shows that the adoption of an innovation, including the adoption of policy, is not the end of a process. Adoption is just one stage in a continuous cycle of innovation, adaptation, implementation, reformulation and reinvention.

One of the principal researchers in this field has described the implementation process as having three stages: mobilization of support for the innovation, implementation, and institutionalization.<sup>10</sup> Implementation research indicates clearly that it is very unlikely that any innovation or policy will be implemented as a complete and faithful replication of the announced policy, given the variables involved. The chances of institutionalizing, regularizing and sustaining the implementation of a policy innovation over a long period of time will necessarily be even more subject to variability. Each stage will be complex, and at each stage some variation will be introduced and incorporated in the policy if it is to be sustained.

For a minority of implementation theorists, this is essentially a threat to democracy.

If one accepts fully the descriptive generalization about implementation being determined largely by the lower echelons in organizations also as a prescriptive statement ... then many ideas about policy control in democratic political systems must be questioned ....The fundamental point remains: governance is not about negotiation, it is about the use of legitimate authority ....[To] place goal definition in the hands of that element of the public sector...is to admit defeat and the inability of the policy making hierarchies in

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<sup>10</sup> See Paul Berman, *The Study of Macro and Micro Implementation, Public Policy*, Vol 26, 2, 1978, p. 157-84.

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government to function effectively to produce governance.<sup>11</sup>

All of this is predicated upon the assumption that policy itself is formulated democratically. But other researchers maintain that most policy communities, the groups which form policy, are not large enough to encompass broad public participation, in any case:

Learning occurs, ideas matter, citizens and democracy in a direct sense do not. That the society is democratic in its political culture is important, however, because democratic idealism maintains the openness of the policy subsystems both to newcomers and to occasional scrutiny.<sup>12</sup>

Variation of policy during implementation is seen, in fact, by most researchers as a rational response to an essentially unpredictable operating environment. Even technical innovations, introduced into apparently controlled and limited organizational contexts such as schools, come up against the immense variability of human behaviour. Social and economic behaviour, and the functioning of the physical environment may have patterns, but as chaos theory suggests, these are only occasionally visible to even the most careful observers, and such systems are therefore, for practical short- and medium-term purposes of policy and implementation, essentially unpredictable.

Where social, economic and environmental issues overlap, as they do in real life every day, and occasionally also in policy discussions, the complexity of response, and the inherent unpredictability of outcomes, are reinforced. "Complexity, dynamism and unpredictability ...are not merely things that get in the way," as Michael Fullan observes. "They are normal."<sup>13</sup> This "dynamic

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<sup>11</sup> Linder and Peters, cited in Najam, 1995, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, p. 100-101.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Fullan, Change Forces. London: The Fulmer Press, 1993, p. 20.

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complexity", where "cause and effect are subtle"<sup>14</sup> is a factor which policy makers cannot ignore, because, essentially, they do not know what they do not know, as even the occasional economist will admit:

In a world of uncertainty, no one knows the correct answer to the problems we confront ....The society that permits the maximum generation of trials will be most likely to solve problems through time.... Adaptive efficiency, therefore, provides the incentives to encourage the development of decentralized decision-making processes that will allow societies to maximize the efforts required to explore alternate ways of solving problems.<sup>15</sup>

The rational response to unpredictability, which is manifest most clearly at the local level of operation where variability of behaviour takes on human shape, is to adapt an innovation (whether it is a technology, a new behaviour or a policy) to the reality of the field. This is not a prescriptive statement. It is a description of what happens every day as policies are put into practice, and why it happens.

New ideas of any worth, to be effective require an in-depth understanding and the development of skill and commitment to make them work. You cannot mandate these things....The more that mandates are used the more that fads prevail, the more that change is seen as superficial and marginal....Mandates alter some things, but they don't affect what matters. When complex change is involved, people do not and cannot change by being told to so.<sup>16</sup>

The motivation for adoption of a policy or innovation by those charged with implementing it is critical to the chances of policy sustainability. Research shows that an "opportunistic" adoption motivation, one which is compelled

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<sup>14</sup> P. Senge, The Fifth Discipline, New York: Doubleday, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Fullan, p. 23-24.

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by authoritative decree, or induced by the promise of material reward alone, will not lead to sustainable implementation. Conversely, a "problem-solving" adoption motivation, derived from a genuine appreciation of the necessity for change, is more likely to lead to a sustained, even if altered, implementation of the policy.<sup>17</sup>

The study of implementation requires understanding that apparently simple sequences of events depend on a complex chain of reciprocal interactions. Hence, each part of the chain must be built with the others in view. The separation of policy design from implementation is fatal.<sup>18</sup>

If this is true of simple policies or innovations, how much more complicated the process must be for policies which are obviously complex, such as the attempt to integrate social, economic and environmental policy. Integration is so obviously complicated that the complexity itself may be an advantage in linking policy to implementation; no policy maker would be easily inclined to take the implementation of such an obviously complex policy for granted. This may be a rather tenuous hope, however, and it may be more often true that policy makers faced with the complexity of integration will either oversimplify the process, dealing only at the level of rhetoric, or recognizing the complexity, give up on the process.

What the broad spectrum of implementation research tells us is that the best chance for the sustained implementation of a policy innovation is "mutual adaptation" between the policy or innovation on the one hand, and the established behaviour of those charged with field-level implementation, on the other. Without adaptation, the innovation is most likely to be either coopted, superficially adopted but buried in established practice, or just ignored. Even worse, where faithful implementation or replication of a policy innovation is attempted in the face of local cultural, economic or environmental conditions which would suggest adaptation or reformulation, the policy may be rejected completely, and

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<sup>17</sup> See Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin, *Implementation of Educational Innovations*, in Educational Forum, March 1976.

<sup>18</sup> Pressman and Wildavsky, p. xvii.

end up dysfunctionally promoting behaviour inimical to the original intentions.

Research suggests that to have the best chance of mutually adaptive implementation, one which meets some or most of the objectives of the policy makers, while at the same time facing the reality of the field, uncertain or non-technical innovations (such as the introduction of new population control practices, for example) must be compatible with dominant local cultural traditions; must support, or at least not interfere with local culturally-adapted forms of implementation; and must not play into local ethnic conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

Two schools of implementation research, those studying implementation from a macro point of view from the top down, as policy is followed through the implementation process, and those studying implementation from the bottom up, as case studies of field level operations reveal the policy in practice as it is perceived by those implementing it, are now converging on at least one point: policy must be seen as a "moving target" which changes with context.<sup>20</sup>

### PLANNING FOR UNPREDICTABILITY

Planning centralizes thinking and policy development. On the other hand, "[an] adaptive search for sustainability learns from implementation, and implementation decentralizes power....The tension between planning and implementation needs to be managed in the pursuit of sustainable development because implementation supplies the signals of what does not work, what needs to be modified in a centrally developed plan."<sup>21</sup> Or, as Fullan says: "Another reason that you can't mandate what matters, is that you don't know what is going to matter until you are

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<sup>19</sup> Donald P. Warwick, Bitter Pills: Population Policies and their Implementation in Eight Developing Countries, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982, p. 186.

<sup>20</sup> Najam, 1995; also Tom Peters, Liberation Management, New York: A. Knopf, 1992; and Henry Mintzberg, Mintzberg on Management, New York: The Free Press, 1989.

<sup>21</sup> Lee, p. 112.

into the journey."<sup>22</sup> Programme environments are, as Warwick says, multiple, shifting, and difficult to predict in detail before implementation takes place.<sup>23</sup> This is a view shared by almost all implementation researchers, whether they focus on public sector implementation or private, whether the focus is academic, or popular.<sup>24</sup> Mintzberg, in developing management theory, concurs. It is, he says, necessary to "cherish anomalies".<sup>25</sup> The vast preponderance of implementation research makes it clear that it is the implementers in the field who tell policy makers what the anomalies are.

Policy, as Pressman and Wildavsky<sup>26</sup> pointed out in one of the earliest detailed studies of implementation, is essentially an hypothesis which is tested during implementation against the realities of everyday life, in the implementing institution, on the street and in the field. For those with a serious interest in how policy affects life, there is no point in abandoning the process after the theory has been formulated, but before it has been tested. Legislation is just the first step in the process of bargaining between the competing policy coalitions in a policy community. Implementation is an interactive process which refines the bargain, adapting it to local situations. Policy is significant, "not because it sets the exact course of implementation, but because it shapes the potential for action."<sup>27</sup>

The response to the view that policy is essentially a theory remaining to be tested, as Lee suggests twenty years after the Pressman and Wildavsky study, is to treat

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<sup>22</sup> Fullan, ?

<sup>23</sup> Warwick, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> See Peter Drucker, Henry Mintzberg and Tom Peters latest works, for confirmation.

<sup>25</sup> Mintzberg, p. 253.

<sup>26</sup> Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, xv-xvi.

<sup>27</sup> Downey and Hanf cited in Najam, 1995, p. 22

implementation as an experiment; to try out different approaches in different locales, to learn what works.<sup>28</sup>

The important conclusion from all of this research is that policy and implementation are part of the same process; that policy formulation cannot, or at least should not, be segregated from implementation; and that policy will inevitably be reformulated, whether the policy makers like it or not, during the implementation process. The people who deliver, interpret and act upon policy inevitably change it as they put it into action and as it affects client groups. If all of this can be accepted, if surprise can be seen as unexceptional, it has, as Lee says, an important consequence, because "surprising results [will be seen as] legitimate, rather than signs of failure, in an experimental framework."<sup>29</sup>

This significant focus on policy and implementation as an *iterative learning process*, rather than a process of compliance, is one with which North agrees:

We must also learn from failures, so that change will consist of the generation of organizational trials and the elimination of organization errors. There is nothing simple about this process, because organizational errors may be not only probabilistic, but also systematic, due to ideologies that may give people preferences for the kinds of solutions that are not oriented to adaptive efficiency.<sup>30</sup>

If many people dismiss the "policy sciences" for their failure to explain the complexities of society, the conclusion that some draw is that policy analysts should be concentrating not on devising detailed policy prescriptions, but on devising rules for the negotiation of complexities at the implementation level.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Lee, p. 9, 101-102.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> North, 1990 p. 81.

<sup>31</sup> Richard D French, *Postmodern Government: The John L. Manion Lecture, 1992*. In Optimum, *The Journal of Public Sector Management*, vol 23, #1. 1992. p. 43-51.

Imposed vision, derived from strategic planning yields compliance, but not commitment. To be effective, organizational vision must be generated internally, not imposed. There is a big difference, as Senge points out, between a genuine shared vision, and glib "vision statements".<sup>32</sup> If "ownership" of an innovation or policy is as important to committed implementation as research indicates, then it is important also to realize what learning theory tells us: that this ownership grows out of experience, experimentation, and problem-solving. That is why "mutual adaptation" is important to sustained implementation -- because it is an indicator that implementers are taking ownership of a policy.<sup>33</sup>

### STAKEHOLDERS, CONFLICT AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

#### *Stakeholder involvement*

There is no shortage of anecdotal evidence to demonstrate how policies rigidly controlled during the implementation process and perceived to be successes by those who formulate them are often perceived as failures by those at the implementation end of the policy chain, whether these people are field-level implementation agents or programme clients. Yet there are also examples of policies so changed in implementation that they bear no resemblance to the original objectives, and which are perceived to be a success by clients and field operatives precisely because adaptation revealed new needs and new meaning to the policy.<sup>34</sup>

Because policies are full of symbolic intent, they are subject to multiple interpretations, including the interpretation of the client groups or stakeholders affected by implementation. If local conditions within which policies are implemented are often full of

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<sup>32</sup> Senge, p. 9, 205-232.

<sup>33</sup> See Fullan, and Mintzberg, for more detailed discussion.

<sup>34</sup> See Dvora Yanow, *The Communication of policy meanings: Implementation as Interpretation*, Policy Sciences, vol 26. 1993. p. 41-61.



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unpredictable variables, and if moving the policy process close to the field is one way of determining what works, then stakeholders, as well as local implementing agents, should be involved in the discussion of policy alternatives, means of implementation, and evaluation of process and results.

This is even more important when the subject of the policy innovation is integration of social, economic and environmental operations. The average citizen needs no convincing of the integrated nature of these issues because he or she lives with the indivisibility of these factors on a day-to-day basis. Bureaucracies are not organized along integrative lines, however, and will require feedback from the general population to determine what works. "Every person is a change agent" because change is too complex for any individual to comprehend.<sup>35</sup>

The dynamic complexity of the world requires constant feedback to policy makers from the people closest to the field, and in fact their involvement in the policy review process. Stakeholders and clients as well as implementers should, therefore, be directly involved in the policy process, because they are the people closest to the reality of implementation. As Warwick observes in his study of the implementation of population policy in eight countries:

...clients have a potent influence on the outcomes of implementation. Far from being receptacles into which services are dropped...they, like the implementers, have substantial discretion. They can reject a service entirely, accept it but not use it, accept it and use only those parts that suit their interest, strike deals with implementers, organize others to accept the service or mobilize opposition against the service or the entire program.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Fullan, p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Warwick, p. 183.

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The implication of all of this is that both policy formation and implementation processes, to effectively take advantage of the situation-specific knowledge of clients and implementers, should actively incorporate both of these groups in policy formation, and into policy implementation reviews.

It is important to identify not only the clients recognized by the...policy but also those not recognized. Very often, it is the [latter] who, by virtue of not being recognized or catered for, have the greatest incentive to disrupt implementation; moreover, they can often do so with success since implementers are not expecting resistance from them.<sup>37</sup>

When line staff suggest changes to policy, their suggestions should receive serious attention. Their interest alone may be an indication both of the beginnings of a problem-solving adoption motivation for the implementers and also that the process of mutual adaptation which is necessary for sustained implementation, is at work. To feel the sense of "ownership" of a policy which is necessary for committed implementation, a process of "reinventing the wheel", no matter how apparently redundant it may appear to impatient policy makers, is necessary.<sup>38</sup>

### *Functions of conflict*

If the self-correcting feedback loop between implementation and policy is to work, conflict is more or less inevitable. In the formation of environmental policy, and in attempts to integrate social, economic and environmental concerns in policy, conflict is often the most visible dimension of the policy process. Practitioners of integrated policy development from diverse political, cultural and economic contexts have agreed that, properly

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<sup>37</sup> Najam, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> See Denis De Pape, **Case Study of Environmental Integration at Manitoba Hydro: Process, Contributing Factors and Information Used**, Paper prepared for the International Development Research Centre, June 1995, p. 23, for a practical example. Implementation research abounds with other examples.

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managed, conflict can be a productive force in the learning which is essential to agreement between groups during the negotiation of integrated policy, despite apparently opposed interests.

Conflict is not an uncomfortable coincidence of these changes, ...it is central...You should be thinking of conflict, planning for it, because it is fundamentally important to these changes, and if it is not there we would not be dealing with integrated policy and fundamental change. Trying to think of conflict proactively or in a positive sense as something we are trying to find, accommodate, deal with and manage constructively...is really crucial to the idea of integrated policy.<sup>39</sup>

Implementation theorists agree:

Because conflict (properly managed) is essential for productive change...the group that perceives conflict as an opportunity to learn something, instead of something to be avoided, or as an occasion to entrench one's position, is the group that will prosper. You can't have organizational learning without individual learning and you can't have learning in groups without processing conflict.<sup>40</sup>

Conflict which breaks down into violence will not be productive. "Bounded conflict" in the social sphere, what is essentially politics, is a fact of life in every organization. The process of learning from conflict is one which may require the transformation of institutions which once were productive, but have become with time obstructive to common goals.<sup>41</sup> Some of these institutions may be a society's existing political practices. Certainly the increasing move to multiparty negotiation of integrated

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<sup>39</sup> Practitioner quoted in Armstrong, 1995, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Fullan, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel P. Keating, **The Learning Society in the Information Age**, draft article, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1995, p. 26.

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policy development around the world is a sign that learning is under way. "The task of these negotiations,

...is to work out 'rules of the road', ways to continue disputes within a process that all parties regard as workable. The negotiations are not aimed at ending conflict or politics, but at restructuring it...."<sup>42</sup>

Whether that learning will be productive depends on how the negotiation processes are implemented.

### *Institutional change*

Any consideration of how negotiation of differences can change implementation of policy must deal with how institutions function. Institutions, as Douglas North defines them, include "any form of constraint that human beings devise to shape human interaction." These constraints may be formal or informal; may take the form of custom and belief or written rules; or may be manifested in specific organizational arrangements. They both prohibit and permit behaviour and "they therefore are the framework within which human interaction takes place." The important point of all of this, of course, is that institutions are not organizations, although organizations, which are essentially a "social technology",<sup>43</sup> may be the most visible manifestation of an institution.<sup>44</sup> Institutions are a consequence of learning.<sup>45</sup>

Organizations are created with purposive intent in consequence of the opportunity set resulting from the existing set of constraints (institutional ones as well as the traditional ones of economic theory) and in the course of

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<sup>42</sup> Lee, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *The Age of Social Transformation*. The Atlantic Monthly. November 1994 p. 72.

<sup>44</sup> North, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas North, *Economic Performance through Time*, American Economic Review, Vol. 84, #3, 1994, p. 360.

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attempts to accomplish their objectives are a major agent of institutional change.<sup>46</sup>

As organizations regularize their activities and the behaviour of the people working in them, "actions become informed with value"<sup>47</sup>, organizational myths are created, precedents form meaning, and organizations may evolve from being an instrument for the achievement of specific tasks to becoming institutions themselves.

Institutions are the rules we establish as a society, to manage and diminish uncertainty. The argument that many implementation theorists, management gurus and economists are making now is that the institutions and their organizational manifestations which are the most functional in dealing with complex and variable policy environments, are those which foster maximum interaction between people with different points of view; which promote learning from these interactions; and which support experimentation with policy variation in response to diversity.

What is important here is that if we view implementation not simply as the mechanical followthrough from policy, but as the negotiation of interests and the accommodation of multiple points of view, then we also change social, economic and political institutions as we negotiate and as we implement policy. The interactions between implementers and their physical, social and political environments change the rules by which people operate, even if these changes take place incrementally. The popular perception of Western democratic political institutions, and for that matter virtually all political institutions whether parliamentary or not, whether democratic or authoritarian, is that policy is established by those with visible political power, and subsequently transmitted and implemented by field agents. This is also one view of other institutions, such as hierarchically structured religions. The fact, however, is that our institutions -- political, religious or economic -- in practice permit, through organizational arrangements, the renegotiation of policy during implementation. That may be why these institutions have lasted as long as they have.

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<sup>46</sup> North, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Mintzberg, p. 225

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Revolutions are a visible indicator that institutions are changing. Revolutionary leaders often attempt to establish new institutions through the creation of organizations to regularize valued revolutionary behaviours.

But incremental organizational change is the more common path to institutional change. Organizations do not change easily, and there may be good reason why they do not. "The reluctance to tamper with...standards, practices and procedures", De Pape says, reflecting on the behaviour of people in a large public utility, "should not be construed as narrow-mindedness but rather as a preference for maintaining a successful formula."<sup>48</sup> In particular, the size and complexity of many organizations implicated in environmental change resulting in social and economic impacts, suggests that change is unlikely to occur quickly.

The standards, practices and procedures which have evolved over time serve implementers' needs, perhaps also those of clients and policy makers. If these practices are to change it will have to be, in part, because the innovations being proposed are seen to serve clients and implementers (as well as policy-makers) better than did the old behaviours. It is when (or if) the implementers and clients see this improvement that their motivation for adoption can become problem-solving, and sustained change will be more likely. But to reach this end, the innovation must be susceptible to adaptation at the local level.

New organizational arrangements have been tested over the past decade in a number of political jurisdictions, as political leaders try to find new methods of coping with variable and problematic policy environments where economic, social and environmental interests conflict. These organizational innovations, such as the Commission on Resources and Environment in British Columbia, Canada, various Round Tables established throughout the world, and a number of community-based attempts at integration by nongovernment organizations, are experiments with multiparty negotiation of interests as a method of developing integrated policy.

The new political institutions which are undertaking multiparty negotiation processes are apparently not

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<sup>48</sup> De Pape, p. 6.

supplanting existing political structures, but rather appear to be growing up beside them. One characteristic of many of these new institutions is that they provide in many cases a forum where people form alliances and networks, to consolidate interests and to negotiate with others. It is through the negotiation of differences that individuals and organizations learn to accommodate diversity, and it is this accommodation of diversity which provides policy makers and implementers with the information and the variability necessary to support effective implementation in the field.

The interesting question which this raises for cross-cultural transferability of these institutions is whether an institution which uses conflict as a basis for learning can work in societies where avoidance of overt conflict is the norm. It is important in this connection, however, to distinguish between the search for consensus and the mere avoidance or denial of conflict. In some societies where conflict avoidance is the norm, there is not necessarily a search for consensus on anything except who has power. Examples abound of superficially consensus-based alignments falling into extreme violence when underlying disagreements come to the surface. The issue, then, is not whether institutions which learn from conflict can function in these societies, but in what cultural context, in what organizational form, against what backdrop of values and by which groups they must be reinvented, in order to function. The principles of mutual adaptation, of variability, of ownership and reinvention which apply to policy implementation, apply also to the intercultural transfer of institutions.

### **CREATING INTEGRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

While creating institutions which foster integration is a long-term task, we do know that creating *organizations* around compelling ideas is one achievable step in the process of institutionalization. Organizational change is easier than institutional change, but has its own complexity -- as the vast array of popular literature on management attests. What is useful, however, is to apply what is known about implementation to organizational learning and change. As Fullan, Mintzberg, Drucker, Peters and others have observed, the organization which learns to cope with diversity is not one which looks for clarity. It is flexible enough to deal with ambiguity, ready to

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decentralize operational decision-making to the people for whom local events are not ambiguous, while at the same time able to maintain a central core function to sustain and monitor the development and adaptation of important organizational themes. **The resolution of ambiguity takes place, therefore, at the operational level.**

Such organizations use strategic vision, or purpose, as a "screening device", as Fullan says, not as a rigid tool for control. Such organizations, Mintzberg concurs, allow new strategic visions to grow from the successes of local variation and experimentation.

As organizations seek to change, to learn how to cope with the growing complexity of continuously changing situational challenges, they encounter the same facilitators and inhibitors of change which are encountered in all attempts to implement innovations. Change, to be sustained, must be the product of learning by all members of the organization, not simply those at the top, and it must be more than the articulation of a few easy buzz-words. There must be a clear congruence between the "espoused theory" of the leadership in support of innovation, and the "theory in practice".<sup>49</sup> The process must, for the most part, be incremental; and the commitment of leadership to fostering diversity and learning within the organization will be tested over time:

The fact is that there are no techniques for building ideologies, no five steps to a better culture. These are built slowly and patiently by committed leaders who have found interesting missions for their organizations and care deeply about the people who perform them...workers, customers, everyone involved with management, no matter how physically distant, can tell when it is genuine in its beliefs and when it just mouthing the right words.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Chris Argyris and D.A. Schon, Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective, Don Mills: Addison Wesley. 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Mintzberg, p. 275.



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The commitment of leaders alone to the ideal of creating a learning organization will be insufficient to make or sustain the change. Ownership of an innovation is essential, and ownership does not occur without experience, experiment, adaptation and learning. People throughout the organization must agree on the goal, work with the idea of creating a new organization, and learn to make it work for their own benefit, before the goal will become a sustainable fact. Leaders must accept that the rhetoric of flexibility must be accompanied by freedom for implementers to develop the operational systems which work for them.

Creating an organization which can integrate social, economic and environmental policy formation and implementation is, therefore, likely to be an immense, time-consuming and complex undertaking, both conceptually and practically. Before it can become even remotely possible, the motivation for attempting it must be compelling.

As societies become more pluralistic, the political institutions which generate organizational structures such as legislatures, appear to be having progressively less success in integrating diverse viewpoints. As social mobilization raises both awareness of inequities and at the same time the potential for change through confrontation, a legislature can become a forum for airing regional or sectoral grievances and mobilizing self-serving partisan political support, rather than the locus of interest aggregation and integration. Drucker goes so far as to say: "There is thus in the society of organizations no one integrating force that pulls individual organization in society and community into coalitions."<sup>51</sup> It is clear, however, that most governments see themselves as playing, or potentially playing, this integrative role even if, as one practitioner of integrated policy development reflected, "until recent years such negotiations were rare and regarded by government as largely incidental to the decision-making process."<sup>52</sup> The question remains: what will

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<sup>51</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *The Age of Social Transformation*, The Atlantic Monthly, November 1994. p. 80.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Owen, Former Commissioner on Resources and Environment, British Columbia, commenting during an IDRC workshop on integration of policy, May 8-9, 1995.

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motivate government, quite aside from myriad less powerful groups which need also to be motivated, to undertake the risky and substantial changes implied by integrative policy development?

IDRC's May 1995 workshop of practitioners of integrated policy making from Canada, Asia, Africa, and Latin America revealed general agreement that it is typically crises that force governments to recognize their inability to cope with complexity. Only when the risks of not finding new approaches to mounting problems are manifestly greater than the discomfort associated with giving up control will governments be motivated to experiment. What learning theory tells us is that for experimentation and learning to occur, learners must have a "margin" for risk-taking, some room to experiment and fail without threat to basic interests. It may be that the powerful, including political and economic elites, always have this margin for experimentation, but only recognize it when crisis forces them to see that *failure* to innovate may pose a serious threat to their position. Under these circumstances, the motivation to adopt policy innovations, including experiments with integrative institutions, will be a problem-solving one, and this is what is needed to begin and to sustain change.<sup>53</sup>

When there is a clear crisis, the status quo cannot be maintained, and there is a need to manage change, the incentive to take the risk may bring all parties to the negotiating table. This will only occur, however, if government makes it clear that that is where the action is, and that a failure to take part will give rise to the greater risk of not having an opportunity to influence the outcome....In particular, the motivation for those with traditional political and economic power can only come from a clear message from government that the rules are changing and from a realization that they need the support of others to get what they want.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Armstrong, 1995, p. 17 - 21, for further discussion of "margin".

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Owen, commenting at the IDRC workshop on integrative policy development, May 8-9, 1995.

The Commission on Resources and Environment in British Columbia and the experience of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy provide useful comparisons of how the creation of integrative processes can proceed. Two American researchers have called CORE "the most extensive use of shared decision-making by a governmental body to date."<sup>55</sup> Created by government mandate in 1992, with a small professional staff, it was told to resolve disputes and develop integrated land-use plans in a resource-dependent province. It has remained small over the three years it has been in existence, and it has proceeded in an incremental fashion, activity by activity, to negotiate agreements. The Pakistan National Conservation Strategy began with the assistance of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and received considerable international as well as domestic support.<sup>56</sup>

Experience in British Columbia and in Pakistan indicates that government can respond to perceived crises by creating new organizations (and eventually perhaps new institutions) to promote integration. In British Columbia the crisis was brought home to government largely by public demonstrations. In Pakistan, perception of the crisis was led by academics, and brought home to government and other groups through search conferences. In both situations, government leadership and a strong organizational and resource commitment led to different, but integrative policy making activities which diverged substantially from prevailing practice.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Robert A. Kelly and Donald K. Alper, **Transforming British Columbia's War in the Woods: An Assessment of the Vancouver Island Regional Negotiation Process of the Commission on Resources and Environment**, Victoria: UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution 1995, p 1.

<sup>56</sup> See Roger Schwass, **A Case Study of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy**, Paper prepared for the IDRC Roundtable Workshop on Policy Integration. Ottawa, May 8-9, 1995.

<sup>57</sup> See Stephen Owen, **Managing for Sustainability: The Integration of Economic, Social and Environmental Policy - the Experienced of the British Columbia Commission on Resources and Environment**, Paper presented at the IDRC Round Table Workshop on Policy Integration. Ottawa: May 8-9, 1995 and Roger. A Schwass, **Case Study of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy**, Paper prepared for the IDRC Roundtable Workshop on Policy Integration, Ottawa, May 8-9, 1995.

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In both cases new organizational units were formed to promote integration. In British Columbia it was a small organization specifically mandated to promote negotiated integrated policy development with a broad spectrum of interests, including government. In Pakistan, a series of *ad hoc* organizational groups from the Ministerial down to village level were formed to promote integration, but implementation strength appeared to come from a team formed outside of normal bureaucratic structures to work with the existing bureaucracy.

In both British Columbia and Pakistan implementation depended on widespread involvement of stakeholders and of the policy community: labour unions, business, environmental activists and community groups. The lessons learned from studies of implementation of innovations suggest that this approach is necessary for success.

...alliances are the bread and butter of learning organizations in dynamically complex societies. There are two reasons for this inevitable conclusion (and starting point for action). First, the problems are too difficult to solve by any one group; moreover, things that any agency does have consequences for all other relevant institutions so agencies affect each other in any case (usually negatively or arbitrarily). Second...a variety of stakeholders insist on having a voice in what is happening. The choice is whether such involvement will occur as mutually isolated influences working randomly or at cross purposes or will be developed through joint initiatives.<sup>58</sup>

The risk to government in initiating these new institutional approaches to governance is, of course, that it will lose control of the process. It is a risk which will be undertaken, therefore, only when government perceives that it may in any case be losing control of policy, and that a wider involvement of the public in decision-making will bring with it a spreading of the risk for failure.

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<sup>58</sup> Fullan, p. 93.

Under conditions of uncertainty, learning, anxiety, difficulties and fear of the unknown are *intrinsic* to all change processes, especially the early stages. One can see why a risk-taking mentality and climate are so critical. People will not venture into uncertainty unless they or others appreciate that difficulties are a natural part of any change scenario. And if people do not venture into uncertainty, no significant change will occur.<sup>59</sup>

The "margin" for experimentation was provided in Pakistan, where resources were limited, by international donors. In British Columbia, by providing financial and organizational support to CORE, the government in effect provided the social margin for experimentation, and the Commission itself, by providing a forum for discussion and research and financial support to participants, gave them in turn the margin to risk participation in an unknown and untested process.

Legitimation of the process for nongovernment actors will come only with the commitment of government to the process, and the expectation growing out of this commitment that consensus, if achieved, will be implemented. The evident risk which government takes in endorsing the process and providing resource supports to it may allow other stakeholders to take equally visible risks. The motivation for all groups, including government, private sector, labour, environmentalists and community activists to adopt this innovation in policy-making practices is the expectation that results emerging from the process will be more satisfactory than those arising from other approaches -- lobbying, political bargaining, boycotts, strikes or litigation -- and at the same preferable to the *status quo*.

Experience from various efforts to mobilize such change suggests that it is essential for government not to commit just to acceptance of the results of the consultative process, but to being part of that process, represented at the negotiation table as a corporate entity, with its own interests, responsibility and expertise exposed along with those of all other parties.

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<sup>59</sup> Fullan, p. 25

In shared decision-making there must be a clear understanding from the outset as to the roles and responsibilities of all parties, including government and non-government participants. This includes the recognition that the role of the participants is advisory to the lawful government decision-makers but that a consensus decision will be implemented to the greatest extent possible by government. This assumes that government is represented corporately as one of the parties to the negotiation and that it is forthrightly informing the other participants of policy and fiscal constraints. Where no consensus is reached the default procedure to the decision maker...must be clearly understood from the outset.<sup>60</sup>

Where government is not involved in the evolution of what are usually very lengthy decision-making processes, it will not have bought into the process, will not have shared group learning and will not, therefore, have acquired an understanding of the reasoning behind decisions. It will have insufficient stake in the process, in consequence, to guarantee sustained implementation of the decisions emanating from negotiations.<sup>61</sup> The result will be disillusionment with the process, by all parties.

Government's commitment to the process will be severely tested as public participation grows. If it tolerates individual interest groups bypassing the process and returning to lobbying, it can expect other groups to follow suit. While consensus may not be always or completely reached in the consultation process, at the very least government will have access to information generated close to the implementation level, something from which policy formation can only benefit.

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<sup>60</sup> Owen, p. 19-20.

<sup>61</sup> See George Penfold, Planning Act Reforms and Initiatives in Ontario: A Case Study in Integrated Policy Development, Paper presented to the IDRC Roundtable workshop on Integrating Social, Economic and Environmental Policy, Ottawa, May 8-89, 1995, and Armstrong, p. 32-33.

### MANAGING INTEGRATIVE PROCESSES

This brings us back to the conditions and kinds of leadership which prove effective in the management of implementation activities in situations of dynamic change. If leadership in these conditions should not impose strategies, what should it do? Mintzberg, Peters and Fullan agree that it should manage the *process* of strategy development, not the content. It should establish "umbrella strategies" which define the boundaries for experimentation, permit local experiments to generate operational strategies which may eventually be applied on a broader scale, and eventually shift the boundaries for experimentation.<sup>62</sup> It should, in other words, creating an organizational environment which enables adaptation.

Analysis of large-scale change efforts shows that leadership does count. Leadership's actions must be congruent with its espoused theory. Follow-through, and provision of resources to support creative experimentations with policy development and implementation are the necessary manifestation of management's commitment.

In a large organization like Manitoba Hydro, general commitments made by senior management tend to have limited impact unless they are accompanied by tangible actions. Such actions confirm that the commitment is serious, providing leverage for groups in the organization such as environment staff, who are pushing for the introduction of measure that advance the commitment.<sup>63</sup>

Management effectiveness has traditionally been defined as "optimizing within constraints". As Metcalfe points out, however, it might better be seen in the public sector, in a situation of dynamic complexity, as a "pluralistic process of interorganizational learning".<sup>64</sup> Redefining "effective" management in a situation of multistakeholder bargaining of interests, in terms of organizational learning, means that effectiveness may be

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<sup>62</sup> Mintzberg, p. 213; Fullan, p. 38-39; Peters, 1992, p. 13.

<sup>63</sup> De Pape, p. 18

<sup>64</sup> Metcalfe, p. 187.

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measured by the reconceptualization of where boundaries and standards should be, rather than in mechanical achievement of existing standards. It means that management takes responsibility for the overall performance of a system of policy negotiation, rather than for the success of individual activities. Failure is less of a risk for government if policy making is seen as a series of experiments, where occasional failures are an acceptable fact if they are accompanied by reflective learning.

We know that both policy development and implementation involving integration of social, economic and environmental interests, are non-routine, complex, and unpredictable processes. We know that in these situations, flexibility is desirable:

Rationalist prescriptions usually assume the feasibility of hierarchical control as the precondition of shouldering responsibility. Although management and control are often used as synonyms, there is a vital distinction between them: to manage is not to control . . . .control in a strict sense presumes an ability to determine outcomes; control is possible if objectives are well-defined, well-ordered and stable, and the techniques needed to achieve them are proven and reliable. Predictability is the condition of control. Routine is the servant of control. It is when non-routine responses are needed that control breaks down and . . .ingenuity, creativity, risk-taking, conflict-resolution; come into their own.<sup>65</sup>

In both British Columbia and Pakistan, small and separate organizations were created to shepherd the process of integration by line ministries and departments, and to bring into the decision-making process groups outside of government. Integrative enclaves have also been used within government ministries in Pakistan, for example; also in Manitoba Hydro, a large public utility in Canada which is attempting to integrate social, economic and environmental factors in its policy development. The massive inertia of large government organizations suggests

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<sup>65</sup> Metcalfe, p. 178.



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that it may be easier to mobilize change by creating new, small and flexible organizations, some independent of and others integrated in ministries, than by changing the basic structure of existing organizations. Changing the structure of an organization, as with any fundamental innovation, is more effectively done in catalytic and incremental stages. A lot of time is wasted in restructuring, time better spent fostering attitudinal change.

This approach is consistent with what we know about the diffusion, adoption and implementation of innovations. Incremental, adaptive and variable introduction of integrative principles is more likely to result in sustainable implementation, than is forced integration and restructuring.

The role of government in the process in British Columbia was to provide a legislative framework legitimizing the negotiation process and guaranteeing enforcement of agreements reached at local or regional negotiating centres. This differs from the case in Pakistan, where integration started at the top of the policy process with national workshops, but were subsequently extended to state and local levels to obtain locally-relevant information and to guide implementation at state and local levels. What these two activities have in common, however, is that both are innovative, flexible and responsive organizations which manage complex processes of multiparty negotiation and integration, and both are in Peters' phrase and market terminology "pure knowledge plays."

Learning theory suggests that incremental approaches to acquiring new behaviours provide the best option for sustained change because they provide people with margin for experimentation without immediately threatening core values. The Commission on Resources and Environment in British Columbia uses pilot projects to test the impact of suggestions made during multi-party negotiations. In Pakistan, during the process of developing integrated policies, 40 local pilot projects were undertaken to test and adapt policy.

What we end up with, then, is a mixture of top-down and bottom-up participation in decision-making. This is consistent with what implementation theory suggests: that neither complete centralization nor decentralization works.

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Like everything else in social change, a pragmatic, flexible and iterative approach is necessary.

Centralization errs on the side of overcontrol, decentralization errs towards chaos...the centre and local units need each other. You can't get anywhere by swinging from one dominance to another. What is required is a different two-way relationship of pressure, support and continuous negotiation. It amounts to top-down, bottom-up influence. Individuals and groups who cannot manage this paradox become whipsawed by the cross-cutting forces of change.<sup>66</sup>

If crisis provides the motivation for innovation, there will be no time, in any case, for neatly ordered procedures, as the former manager of the British Columbia negotiation processes points out:

Notwithstanding the superficial attractiveness of logical, sequential, strategic planning commencing with the top-down development of principles and goals, followed by the development of a clear and comprehensive policy framework and detailed inventories and technical support mechanisms, to be combined then with broad-based and balanced public participation processes, this is not the way the political world works, nor is it likely the way that learning most effectively takes place. The CORE [Commission on Resources and Environment] experience with the development and implementation of integrated and sustainable, social, economic and environmental policy is that the urgency of the situation demands that everything proceed at once - principle and goal development, policy framework, information and technical support and public participation. While it can produce frustration, continuing conflict and threats to political resolve, it also allows each aspect to inform and learn from all others, resulting

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<sup>66</sup> Fullan, p. 37-38.

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in a more resilient, comprehensive and often unexpected result.<sup>67</sup>

Tom Peters' analysis of private sector change suggests that slow, sequentially organized and painstakingly-researched decision-making is unlikely to be any more productive than the kind of gestalt process forced upon decision-makers by crisis. Strategic planning advocates "...examined strategic decisions in a vacuum, delaying grubby operational considerations until the "big choices" were made; as a result despite their painstakingly big-picture analyses, they were more likely to trip over details of implementation."<sup>68</sup>

Research on implementation, integration and innovation tells us, therefore, that perhaps the best approach to the creation of an organization which can facilitate integration, is a) to create a new office with its own mandate; supplemented by new organizational units in existing line agencies; b) to keep the new organization small; c) to keep management structures simple; and d) to encourage an organizational culture which values and rewards experimentation and which works within a framework of generally accepted principles to derive operating strategies from the experiences of implementation. Mintzberg calls such an organization, an "adhocracy".<sup>69</sup>

Programme evaluations indicate that British Columbia's CORE meets these criteria. The question is, can the work of such an organization, of a "pure knowledge play", be sustained over time? Is there any prospect for institutionalization of the new decision-making processes?

Interest groups are part of the institutional fabric of society. We accept that, within culturally-defined parameters, interest groups will fight for what they want. When an organization such as the Commission on Resources and Environment asks interest groups to realign themselves, to learn from each other, to form new coalitions of sectoral interests, and to participate in extra-

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<sup>67</sup> Owen, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Peters, 1992, p. 42-43.

<sup>69</sup> Mintzberg, p. 196-220.

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parliamentary negotiations of policy, it is working at the development of new institutions. When government is represented corporately at a negotiating table as one among many stakeholders in policy development, the rules of how we look at decision-making, and what we expect of government's role, change.

There is no doubt that leadership of a change agency such as CORE, both from the elected officials and from the internal management of the agency, is important to any long-term sustainability of the process. But leadership changes. The premier who provided the mandate to legitimize CORE's activities has resigned. The first Commissioner, who built a strong and creative team committed to flexible implementation of its mandate, has moved on, as have many of the original staff. What remains to suggest that nascent political institutions, the patterns of negotiated policy which have begun over the past three years, will remain when a new government takes office?

The Commission has a legislative mandate, with multiparty support. That mandate can be changed, and might be, if the land development decisions arrived at by the consultative process become issues in an election campaign. Will the attitudes supporting consultation and integration which have been developed in line agencies be maintained, or will there be a return to more sectoral, technocratic concerns?

Institutionalization is under way. Six "shared decision-making processes" were conducted and 17 public reports produced under the new system between 1992 and 1995. Acclaim for the work of the Commission has been strong, but far from universal, as large public demonstrations against reports of the Commission attest. People do have expectations today, however, about how to get what they want; expectations that they did not have three years ago. The Commission reports to the legislature but also, as it is mandated to do, directly to the people through the news media. This may also have created expectations about how government should work.

In an effort to make this activity sustainable, to institutionalize it, CORE has proposed a "Sustainability Act". The Act would formalize procedures, confirm the status of negotiation as a continuing process for stakeholders and, most importantly, build in a role for

CORE not as the initiator of policy negotiation, but as the monitor of implementation and as the facilitator of implementation negotiations. It would also place the commitment of the province "in plain statutory view of a critically watchful international community."<sup>70</sup> This is all consistent with what we know about how implementation is sustained. But it does not tell us, cannot tell us, whether the Act will be passed, and whether, if a new government is elected, a new administration will maintain the commitment to this new process. The bottom line, then, is that we do not know if this innovation will be sustained, if new institutions will grow out of the organizations which have functioned since 1992.

### **CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS**

Cultural differences affect how people approach the kind of group decision-making, interest negotiation or dispute resolution which make up a large part of integrative planning. These differences need not cross national boundaries. Differences of ethnic background, age, gender and socioeconomic status, among other factors, can affect how individuals or groups within a society perceive the validity of programming approaches. Among the most important differences in how cultures approach decision-making are those between collectivist (strong group identification) and individualist decision-making orientations. Attempts to redress imbalances of power between parties in negotiation may work well in one culture, but not in another.

Similarly, where loss of face is a significant cultural concept, disputants may not wish to meet in person. Where role definition is diffuse, as in some Asian societies, an approach to negotiation which involves criticism of ideas may be seen as a criticism of the worth of the individual expressing them, and combined with "face" could prove dysfunctional to negotiation approaches which themselves are derived from the more specific role definitions found in Western societies. People coming from a diffuse-role society may reach formal agreements without ever buying into the negotiation process; motivation for

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<sup>70</sup> Commission on Resources and Environment. A Sustainability Act for British Columbia. (Draft), September 16, 1994, p. 1.

adopting an agreement may be expedient rather than problem-solving, and the subsequent inability to sustain agreements may lead to a generalized lack of faith in the negotiation process.<sup>71</sup>

Research on cultural factors affecting dispute resolution suggests, however, that like impediments to the diffusion and implementation of any other innovation, cultural factors need not mean abandonment of attempts to introduce multiparty negotiation. **Readiness** is an issue. Just as a crisis appears necessary to motivate large-scale integration activities in Canada, the perception of crisis may be necessary to overcome cultural reluctance to negotiate formally in places like Asia. Crises are occurring in even the most apparently consensus-oriented societies as they face spreading and violent confrontation over issues related to land use and the environment. Multiparty negotiation may only work in these societies when more private approaches to conflict resolution, (avoidance, forbearance, in-group mediation) cease to have utility.

Multiparty negotiation for integrative policy making, like any other innovation, must be adapted to local conditions if it is to work and be sustained. Incremental experimentation allowing adaptation in different sites on different issues is likely to produce variations which build on local social practices for dispute resolution, produce results and can, therefore, be sustained. This will take time to work, will require of external intervenors patience and a tolerance for both ambiguity and variability in the process outcomes. The survival of parliamentary government as an institution in a variety of very different societies demonstrates that with suitable variation, cross-cultural transfer of institutions and concepts can take place. Case studies presented at a recent workshop on integration derived from experiences in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Canada indicate that

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<sup>71</sup> See Michelle LeBaron Duryea, **Conflict and Culture: A Literature Review and Bibliography**, Victoria: UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1993; and Michelle LeBaron Duryea and J. Bruce Grundison, **Conflict and Culture: Research in Five Communities in Vancouver, British Columbia**, Victoria: UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1993.

incremental development of integrated programmes is possible.<sup>72</sup> They do not all look alike, but they do appear to work.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

So, what role can international donor agencies play in promoting the creation of new organizations and institutions to facilitate integration of policy? A recent USAID study<sup>73</sup> of factors facilitating implementation in aid programmes suggests that "champions", or what earlier researchers referred to in more nuanced terminology as "bureaucratic entrepreneurs",<sup>74</sup> should be identified by donors to mobilize the resources needed to sustain the implementation of innovation. Like all implementation, this strategy needs to be applied flexibly, however, with room for change.

The role of technical experts in integrative programming is interesting. Economists, sociologists, environmental scientists all have technical information to bring to bear on the knotty problems of integrative programming. But field experience indicates that the critical issues driving the integration process will be motivation, ownership and adaptability. Technical experts will be most useful when they are called upon to provide data in answer to questions posed by others, and after political agreements have been reached that technical information is necessary. Research on one large Canadian utility attempting the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations in the formulation of its own programmes indicated that under pressure of time and events, the organization tended to trust its own personnel over outside technical experts. These were the people who understood the implementation issues in the actual

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<sup>72</sup> Armstrong, 1995.

<sup>73</sup> United States Agency for International Development, **Implementing Policy Change: Lessons Learned**, Washington: USAID, 1992.

<sup>74</sup> D.L. Dresang, *Entrepreneurialism and Development Administration*, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 18, #1, March 1973 p. 76-83.

organizational context. Charged with managing the integration process, they wanted only that technical information which was specific to the subject at hand and pertained immediately to the organization or to the general industry; information which was current and succinct.<sup>75</sup> In short, they trusted people they knew had experience relevant to the problem at hand, and with that experience, a working appreciation of the risks, difficulties and entry points for the introduction of change.

Outside expertise can be provided to mobilize attention to a general issue. In Pakistan, for example, expertise was mobilized at the beginning of the integrative process to reveal an impending crisis. In general, experience suggests that if international technical assistance is provided, in addition to financial support, that it should, first, be expertise which can help guide general facilitative processes; second, should only be provided if local experts are not available; and third, when provided, should be overtly responsive to the political processes involved in negotiation. It is important that facilitators and technical experts themselves participate in those long and painful processes of learning which multiparty negotiations require. It is only through this process that they will learn what they do **not** know, and come to appreciate the relevance of local knowledge to the resolution of problems. Research unfortunately demonstrates that technical experts in any field are often among the most resistant to learning outside of their specialties,<sup>76</sup> particularly where the process requires them to play a different, less authoritative, role.

What we know from research on learning and on implementation is that the processes involved in bringing an innovation to life, and sustaining it in practice, are not easy. The implications for international assistance are clear. Patience, in addition to adaptability, is a

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<sup>75</sup> De Pape, p. 27-30.

<sup>76</sup> Chris Argyris, *Teaching Smart People How to Learn*. In Robert Howard (Ed), *The Learning Imperative*, Cambridge: Harvard Business Review. ND. p. 177-184. Also Frank Fischer, *Citizen participation and the democratization of policy expertise: From theoretical inquiry to practical cases*, *Policy Sciences*, vol. 265. 1993 p. 165-187, and Armstrong, p. 24-26.



major prerequisite for sustaining effective implementation. Adaptation and experimentation both take time. There are no shortcuts to sustainability. Sponsors of integration have to be prepared to provide leadership, legitimation and resource support over the long term. International donors, similarly, have to be prepared for the long haul; what the USAID researchers refer to as "concerted attention over time". The USAID study confirms other implementation research as it is extended into cross-cultural contexts: that flexibility of timing and focus are necessary, that technical competence must be established during the process of intervention if participants are to have confidence. Warwick's study of aid interventions for population programmes found that sustained commitment of leadership, mobilization of local support groups and continuity of programme inputs were important.<sup>77</sup>

If failures are to be seen as learning opportunities, then the **evaluations** applied to these complicated processes by domestic and international sponsors must recognize this in the way they are structured. This is an easy concept to espouse, but, like everything else, apparently a difficult one to put into use. Practitioners of integrated policy development express clear frustration with evaluations which focus only on controversy and case-by-case setbacks. What they want from governments and international aid donors are evaluations which focus on whether and how they are learning from problems; how, over time, decision-making processes adapt and perform; and how they compare to *status quo* alternatives.<sup>78</sup>

If change in the organizational cultures of groups participating in integrated policy development is necessary as part of the learning process, then the culture of aid organizations will also have to change, to accept the evolutionary nature of integrative policy negotiation. Just as government must be an active participant in that process, so too must aid agencies participate actively in

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<sup>77</sup> Warwick, p. 185.

<sup>78</sup> Armstrong, p. 28 - 30. See also Robert A Kelly and Donald K. Alper, **Transforming British Columbia's War in the Woods: An Assessment of the Vancouver Island Regional Negotiation Process of the Commission on Resources and Environment**, Victoria: UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution 1995, p. 10-12.

the discussion of programme design. Experimentation is risky. A transparent commitment to the process is necessary if all participants are to make the substantial commitments necessary to make integration work. The other participants need to know how much, what kind and over what period margin for experimentation will be provided by donors. It is only then they will be willing to take the risks involved in overturning the established procedures of hierarchical policy development.

### **CONCLUSION: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Following are some critical research issues implied by the previous discussion which need to be addressed if cross-cultural attempts to proceed with integrated policy development and implementation are to proceed:

*1. What is the role of democratic political institutions in supporting the development of integrated policy?*

*a) Is it possible to proceed effectively with the development of integrated policy in the absence of formal democratic electoral processes?*

*b) Does public participation in planning processes undermine legislative authority or legislative democracy?*

*c) What is the effect of shared decision-making on those who do not participate?*

Are democratic political institutions a prerequisite for the implementation of integrative programmes? Not necessarily. It remains to be seen whether democratic systems have the patience to sustain experiments which incorporate failure. Certainly democratic institutions will encourage participation, but they may at the same time undermine continuity.

It is likely that a range of factors are involved in determining how feasible it will be to establish a participatory, integrative process, and how likely it is that the process will be sustained long enough to become institutionalized. Levels of conflict in the

society, attitudes towards bringing conflict into the open, the existence of formal democratic processes, expertise and financial resources available to support the process, and the culture of government institutions, in addition to the general culture of the society, will all play a role. It is quite possible that societies without democratic political institutions, once motivated by crisis to undertake participatory integrative policy development, will find less problem in sustaining the innovation over a long period, than will democratic governments which face electoral challenges.

2. *What cultural factors will affect formulation and implementation of integrated policies?*

a) *In any society in which integrated programming is being undertaken, what are the values likely to support or undermine attempts to integrate planning among groups with opposing interests?*

b) *What indigenous institutions and organizations affect the way in which conflict and negotiation of interests are handled?*

c) *What indicators exist to tell intervenors how much flexibility there is in values and institutions?*

d) *Will existing institutions and organizations provide a framework for adaptation of approaches to integrated programming? What will make these approaches acceptable and effective?*

e) *"Is the commonly used mediation model [for dispute resolution] flexible enough to accommodate the values of diverse peoples...?"<sup>79</sup>*

f) *What are the cultural limitations of third-party neutrality in negotiation?*

g) *What obstacles exist to the incorporation of minority-group values in integration processes?*

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<sup>79</sup> Duryea, 1992, p. 1

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Most institutions are susceptible to evolutionary, and at times revolutionary, change. It is important to go beneath superficial understandings of culture or the "espoused theory" of how cultures and institutions function, to learn what the "theory in use" is. It is important to know how indigenous organizations and institutions affect decision-making, how they can be replicated or built upon to function in new problem areas, before foreign institutions are imported.

Minority group values and strategies for integration and negotiation are relevant to all cultures. It is likely that ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority groups will be implicated in or affected by any negotiations over integrated policy development. Certainly this is true in many disputes over agricultural techniques, resource-extraction, irrigation and industrial pollution. The problem for those who are interested in cross-cultural application of integrated programming approaches is not just finding a model of dispute resolution or interest negotiation which differs from North American models and accommodates national differences, but finding models which, within any given society, can be modified to accommodate the needs of indigenous groups and national minorities.

3. *What accountability systems can be established to functionally assess integrated programming, particularly those approaches to integration which are process, and not outcome, based?*
4. *What models of interorganizational networking are appropriate as integrative policy development tools, in the context of different bureaucratic cultures?*
5. *What are the most effective forms of assistance which external donors can provide in the creation of "margin" for experimentation with integrated programming?*
6. *What is the most effective method of integrating technical expertise in multiparty negotiations, and of educating experts themselves to play a responsive, rather than a directive role?*

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