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**Understanding ambivalence as an emotional response to organisational  
change under New Public Management: A study of  
English housing associations**

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A Thesis Submitted  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The Open University Business School  
Department of People and Organisation

## **Abstract**

This thesis uses the concept of ‘emotional ambivalence’, understood as a dynamic emotional response to change that unfolds over time, to explore the complex emotions experienced by employees and managers under New Public Management (NPM). The qualitative empirical study is based on two in-depth case studies of English housing associations. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted across hierarchical levels and organisational documents and research fieldnotes were analysed using thematic and narrative methods. The analysis demonstrates that NPM involves a cultural change from a traditional public sector to a more ‘business-like’ organisational culture. This thesis critiques dualistic representations of emotion, as either positive or negative, and the use of ‘mixed emotion’ to explore the complex emotions experienced by organisational members during change. It argues that the emotions experienced by organisational members during NPM-related change are inherently ambivalent. Emotional ambivalence arises from multiple sources and has contradictory emotional elements. A key conclusion of this study is that engaging with organisational members who experience ambivalent emotions in response to change offers an important resource which can be utilised by change managers.

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## **List of abbreviations**

ALMO - Arm's Length Management Organisation

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

CPA - Comprehensive Performance Assessment

DP - Direct Payment

DHP - Decent Home Programme

DEG - Digital-Era-Government

EM - East Midlands Housing Association

HB – Housing Benefit

HR - Human Resource

ICT - Information Communication Technology

IMD - Index of Multiple Deprivation

IT - Information Technology

NG - Networking Government

NHS – National Health Service

NPM - New Public Management

PDA - Personal Digital Assistant

UC - Universal Credit

WM - West Midlands Housing Association

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Previous studies have found that emotions such as frustration, anger, fear and excitement are often embedded in organisational member's experience of organisational change (Liu and Perrewe, 2005; Kiefer, 2005). Driven by increasingly rapid changes in the technological and economic environment, it is common for an individual to experience simultaneous, yet contradictory orientations toward a person, an idea, a task or a goal in the workplace, due to inconsistent empowerment and economic insecurity (Piderit, 2000). However, previous research tends to adopt a dualistic logic when studying emotions in response to organisational change (e.g. Eriksson, 2004; Kiefer, 2005; Kirsch, Parry and Peake, 2010). The *dualistic representation of emotions* refers to studies that treat emotions in an undifferentiated manner, placing them into positive or negative groups. These studies often examine specific types of emotion (either positive or negative) in relation to the sources, consequences and impacts they have on an organisation. While these studies adopt a similar approach to emotions, the purpose of these studies varies. They address the following topics: the impact of emotions on the individual decision-making process during change (Friedrich and Wustenhagen, 2017); sources and impacts of negative emotions on employee organisational commitment (Kelliher *et al.*, 2012; Kiefer, 2005); relationships between emotions; different approaches to the study of emotions; behavioural consequences of negative emotions and how these behavioural responses influence talent retention (Kiefer, 2005; Liu and Perrewe, 2005). Although studies of emotions have advanced understanding by looking at emotions as a process and comparing them with certain factors (e.g. organisational commitment and talent retention) associated with organisational performance, they are problematic because they overlook the complexity of emotions during change (Klarner, By and Diefenbach, 2011). In addition, such bifurcation of emotions is highly problematic because it provokes positive and negative value judgements about organisational members' response to change; it reflects a managerial perspective that assumes there is one right way to manage change and that emotions need to be managed in order to ensure change is not obstructed (Collins, 1998; Fineman, 2006).

Over the last two decades, organisational scholarship has drawn attention to the idea of ambivalence as an alternative to the concept of ‘resistance’, which is often seen as a negative reaction to change (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Piderit, 2000; Randall and Procter, 2008). The concept of ambivalence to change offers a possibility to overcome the dualistic logic associated with studies of emotion and organisational change. Instead of looking at organisational members’ emotions to change as positive or negative, these studies analyse and evaluate the responses of employees and managers through the concept of ambivalence. *Ambivalence* refers to a simultaneous positive and negative orientation toward a person, object or event (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). Ambivalence is multi-dimensional, dealing with cognitive, emotional and intentional responses to change (Piderit, 2000). However, these studies see ambivalence as an attitudinal rather than an emotional response to change.

More recently, a number of studies have provided an alternative way of addressing the bifurcation in the literature through the idea of mixed emotion (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori, Vuori and Huy, 2017). *Mixed emotion* is commonly referred to a combination of different emotions experienced by a person (Larson, 2014). In Giaever and Smollan’s (2015) and Vuori *et al.*’s (2017) studies, mixed emotion is associated with the change of emotions from positive to negative emotions (or vice versa) throughout the whole-time span of the organisational change. In a real-time study of organisational change, Giaever and Smollan (2015) evidence the conflicting emotional responses of nurses at different times during organisational change. These types of studies address emotional complexity by looking at conflicting emotions as an evolving process rather than as a single and consistent response to organisational change. Here, *emotional complexity* refers to “an affective state involving the simultaneous or sequential ...experience of at least two different emotions during the same emotional episode” (Rothman and Melwani, 2017, p. 261). Whilst previous studies of emotional complexity in organisational change have drawn attention to the conflicting nature of sequential emotional experiences, they tend to overlook the possibility of simultaneous conflicting emotional experiences of change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). Studies on mixed emotion treat conflicting emotions during change in sequential time order, we know little about simultaneous conflicting emotions (hereafter referred to as emotional ambivalence) experienced during organisational change. By reviewing the literature on emotion and organisational change, this thesis argues that there is a need for alternative approaches to overcome the dualistic representation of emotions in studies of

organisational change. More importantly, it identifies a need to focus on emotional ambivalence in order to advance understanding of employees' responses to organisational change.

Housing associations provide the empirical site on which this study of emotional responses to organisational change is based for two reasons. First, the culture shifts away from local authority housing towards privatisation, and the stigmatization of social housing organisations as part of NPM, provides fertile ground for emotional responses. In this thesis, housing associations are understood as having been affected by NPM (Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd and Walker, 2005). This is because the changes experienced in housing associations are similar to other public sector organisations, such as the UK National Health Service (NHS) or universities that have experienced cultural change under NPM. These changes are driven by financial pressures and policy changes led by the central government. They are often experienced as imposed from above, which makes it particularly likely that they will provoke emotional responses among employees and managers in these organisations (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011).

Second, the concept of NPM and its impact on policy making and organisational productivity has been well documented by previous studies (e.g. Alonso, Clifton and Diaz-Fuentes, 2015a; Andrews *et al.*, 2005; Dan and Pollitt, 2015; Dunn and Miller, 2007; Hood, 1991). However, studies of employees and managers' responses to NPM in public sector organisations are limited. Exceptions can be found that focus on emotional responses and consequences of change among healthcare managers (Kelliher and Parry, 2015) academics in higher education institutions (Clarke, C. A., Knight, D. and Jarvis, 2012), and the impact of budget cuts on employees' wellbeing in public sector organisations (Kiefer *et al.*, 2014). However, there is limited research on employees' and managers' emotional responses to change in housing associations under NPM.

In contrast to my argument above, which sees housing associations as public sector organisations that are subject to NPM change, it is worth noting that many scholars see housing associations as third sector organisations; this positions housing associations at "somewhere between the state, the market and civil society" (Brandsen and Helderma, 2013, p. 170). However, since the housing stock transfer between the late 1990s to early 2000s in the UK, a large amount of social housing stock has been transferred from local council housing departments to housing

associations (see Chapter Four). Housing associations have thereby become the main public housing provider. It is possible to argue that such housing stock movement has enabled English housing associations to move toward co-production within third sector social services as a way “to involve their citizens in the provision and governance of public financed social services” (Pestoff, 2013, p. 13). This is suggested not only to help central government and local authorities reduce the cost of running social services but also to empower the voice of the public in social services by involving members of housing associations in the decision-making of social housing services. However, while acknowledging the potential differences between public sector organisations and housing associations as suggested by scholars above, the central driving force of change in housing associations is to provide social housing services with limited resources under the semipermanent austerity in public finances, which is aligned with the central idea of NPM. In addition, Sprigings (2002) has provided evidence on how housing policy changes promote NPM in housing associations. This supports the claim that housing associations are influenced by NPM by matching the central ideas of NPM such as managerialism, performance measurement with the types of changes experienced in housing association at a sector level. Whilst Sprigings (2002) analysis generated insight into how housing associations are affected by NPM at sector level through policy change, little known about how these NPM-related changes affect housing associations at the organisational level, and how members within these organisations are affected by these change, which is the focus of this study.

### Research questions

This study critically explores ambivalent emotion in response to organisational change in English housing associations under NPM. My investigation addresses the following research questions:

- How do housing associations manage organisational change under NPM?
- How do housing association managers and employees experience these organisational changes? What emotions are associated with these experiences?
- How do housing association managers and employees experience emotional ambivalence? What are the reasons for emotional ambivalence to change and how do individuals cope with this?

To investigate these research questions, I take a qualitative, interpretivist approach which allows for in-depth exploration. Methodologically, I employ a case study design that focuses on two housing associations in the UK. Non-participant observation of employees and managers in different departments of the two organisations and documents provided an understanding of their structure and daily operations. Interviews with participants provided an understanding of organisational change under NPM; and this was used to generate insight into their emotional responses to the changes.

Through this analysis, I examine NPM using the cultural dimensions identified by Alvesson (2002). These dimensions are: organisational values and beliefs, organisational structure and operation, and professional language. I also analyse the emotions experienced by employees and managers under NPM: positive, negative and ambivalent. My research findings are consistent with previous literature which suggests that emotional ambivalence is commonly experienced by organisation members during organisational change. This literature suggests that emotional ambivalence enables organisation members to critically evaluate the different perspectives of change, which might be seen as a benefit to the organisation, particularly for those who are involved in managing and facilitating organisational change. A separation of negative and positive emotions present in the findings are used to highlight that conflicting emotions to change occur simultaneously, rather than within a dichotomous system of positive or negative emotions.

### Overview of the thesis

Chapters Two and Three are based on reviews of two sets of literature: organisational change in public sector organisations and emotional responses to organisational change. Chapter Two establishes the background of my research in public sector organisational change and reviews the literature on NPM as the main form of change experienced in public sector organisations. I begin by examining concepts such as managerialism, value for money, efficiency, effectiveness, results-driven orientation and customer orientation, that are associated with NPM in these organisations (Andrews *et al.*, 2005; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Walker and Boynes, 2006; Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). These concepts are often divided into two categories of NPM: privatisation and marketisation (Ferlie and Geraghty, 2007). Whilst some studies attempt to

address the connections between the two-central concepts of NPM (privatisation and marketisation), I note that these are often discussed separately in the literature (Alonso, Clifton and Diaz-Fiemtes, 2015b; Walker *et al.*, 2011; Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). Such separation may overlook the potential connections between these concepts of NPM and how they influence each other.

I use the literature on cultural change to look at how culture and cultural change are situated in the current literature on NPM (Alvesson, 2002; Smircich, 1985). I argue that NPM involves a change from traditional public sector organisation to a more ‘business-like’ organisational culture. I also discuss the approaches to change commonly adopted in public sector organisations (e.g. Burnes, 2009b; Simonet, 2015). These include planned, emergent, and contingency theory approaches. I critically evaluate the usefulness of these approaches in managing change in public sector organisations. Whilst the planned approach is widely used to deal with NPM-related change, it is often top-down and driven by policy changes and budget reduction imposed by central government (Currie, 1999; Currie and Procter, 2005). Previous studies suggest that this approach lacks a participatory element and is based on a linear, top-down approach to change (e.g. Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992). However, it is argued that such claims do not take into account the “ethical and democratic principles” that underlie the planned approach to change and assume that it is based on mechanistic models (Burnes, 2009b, p. 117). Here, *top-down* implies that the initiatives of change are coming from central government or top management.

Finally, I respond to the critique of NPM as no longer relevant by drawing on recent studies (Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010; Gualmini, 2008; Lindsay *et al.*, 2017), which argue against “the death of NPM”. I provide evidence to counter the critique of the lack of evaluation of NPM-related change (Fattore, Iacovone and Steccolini, 2018; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010; Glennon *et al.*, 2017). I note that NPM as a form of public sector organisational change involves deep cultural change which potentially involves employees and managers’ being engaged in intense emotional responses (Sayers and Smollan, 2009).

In Chapter Three I review the literature on emotion and organisational change and show that this relies on a false separation of emotional states as either positive or negative (e.g. Kiefer, 2005; Smollan, 2012). I argue that such separation overlooks the complexity of emotions experienced



by employees and managers involved in organisational change by examining concepts of ambivalence, mixed emotion and emotional dissonance (Klarner *et al.*, 2011). I suggest that emotional ambivalence offers a way to overcome the dualistic representation of emotion in this literature, which is related to its origins in psychological rather than organisational theory. I argue that many studies see ambivalence as an attitude rather than an emotion (Piderit, 2000; Randall and Procter, 2008). A further limitation of this literature stems from its performative orientation which uncritically concentrates on how to improve the organisation (e.g. Plambeck and Weber, 2010; Fong, 2002, 2006). This “develop[s] and celebrate[s] knowledge which contributes to the production of maximum output for minimum input; it involves inscribing knowledge with means-end calculation” (Fournier and Grey, 2000, p. 17). This is problematic because it assumes that there is one best managerial practice that serves as an antidote to all problems in organisations. In addition, it focuses attention to the impact of emotion on organisational efficiency during organisational change and neglects the importance of those who are involved in organisational change and how they make sense of it emotionally.

The concept of mixed emotion is used to address the dualistic representation of emotion in recent studies (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). While mixed emotion is often used interchangeably with other terms, such as ‘conflicting emotions’ and ‘emotional ambivalence’, I argue that there is a need to distinguish between them “to give order to our experiences and convey a sense of meaning when communicating with other people” (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2007, p. 6). By utilizing Koch’s (1989) definition of mixed emotion which suggests that mixed emotion does not necessarily need to be conflictual, I argue that there are two types of mixed emotion: non-conflicting and conflicting emotions. By taking into account the time dimension in relation to emotional complexity, I differentiate between two types of conflicting emotion: mixed emotion and emotional ambivalence. While previous studies attempt to address the complex emotions by looking at them as changing process throughout organisational change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017), they only partially address the complex emotions experienced by organisational members during change because they neglect the possibility of simultaneous conflicting emotions. In these studies, the experience of different emotions across a time span is defined as mixed emotion (Giaever and Smollan, 2015). Consequently, it is argued that the literature on complex emotions and organisational change has limitations. I argue that in order to better understand complex emotional responses to

organisational change, there is a need to further explore how employees and managers' experience emotional ambivalence during organisational change. Chapter Three concludes by discussing similarities and differences between emotional ambivalence and dissonance. While the concepts of emotional ambivalence and dissonance are related to conflicting emotions, emotional dissonance refers to the inconsistency that results from having a combination of one's "true" feelings and displayed feelings required as part of the job. Thus, some studies describe emotional labour as one of the sources of emotional ambivalence (Adelman, 1989; Pratt and Doucet, 2000).

Chapter Four sets the empirical background for this research in housing associations where I provide a historical overview of changes in the social housing sector, including how these organisations have been affected by NPM-related changes (Pawson, 2006; Walker, 2000). I outline the consequences of policy-related NPM changes on society and on organisational asset management (Cain, 2016; Hickman et al., 2017; Morrison, 2016). Although the consequences of NPM are of interest in the present study, the primary focus here is on how employees and managers in these organisations experience change emotionally.

Chapter Five details the research methodology used to address the research questions that are the basis of the thesis. I outline the ontological and epistemological position that frames the research, which assumes that organisations and change are constructed by their members, and the meanings of emotions are shared and interpreted through social interactions (Gergen, 2015). I also reflect on my own emotional subjectivity in the interpretive process of organisational change in these organisations. After explaining the research design in terms of data gathering and analytical approaches, I discuss issues encountered in negotiating access and ethics issues related to the research. The chapter finishes by reflecting on my journey from a positivist to a social constructivist/interpretivist position, and how this influenced my research design, writing and research identity formation.

Chapter Six and Seven present the empirical findings with each chapter corresponding to the two literature review chapters. Chapter six provides insight into how the two housing associations manage NPM-related organisational change. This includes stories of major change events in both organisations, including housing stock transfer, restructuring and technological changes, where I

highlight that a cultural shift from a traditional public sector organisation to a more ‘business-like’ organisational culture is deeply embedded within NPM-related organisational change. I also note that employees and managers in both organisations are aware that NPM changes are imposed by the central government and authorities, and therefore it requires a heavy element of top-down planning.

In Chapter Seven I discuss the specific negative and positive emotions experienced by employees and managers during organisational change. I discuss how employees and managers make sense of conflicting emotions experienced during organisational change. Through inductive analysis, I suggest employees often experience emotional ambivalence in response to organisational change. This is particularly true in public sector organisations under NPM that involves a deep cultural change. By examining employees’ interpretation of change, I reflect on the reasons for emotional ambivalence and the coping strategies used. I argue that there is an undue emphasis in the literature on the negative aspects of emotional ambivalence, which needs to be overcome. However, through analysing experiences of emotional ambivalence, my findings suggest that emotional ambivalence can be beneficial to the organisation because it allows organisational members to critically evaluate change, including how it affects them and the organisation.

Chapter Eight brings the findings together into an overarching discussion of emotional ambivalence in relation to organisational change. I argue that we need to go beyond the idea of ‘mixed emotion’ as a way of overcoming the dualism, sequential representation of emotions in organisational change. I propose that there is a need to understand emotions experienced during organisational change as inherently ambivalent; these experiences need to be seen as an unfolding process that changes over time. Crucially, we need to transcend the positive/negative dualism that positions negative emotions as a barrier to organisational change and to find ways of working productively with emotional ambivalence rather than seeking to resolve or eradicate it. I conclude the thesis by considering the theoretical and empirical contributions, practical implications and limitations of the research.

## Contributions

This study makes theoretical and empirical contributions to research in different domains. The first contribution lies in the literature on our understanding of emotional response to organisational change. While previous studies have focused on the mixed emotion in order to address the dualistic representation of emotions during organisational change (e.g. Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017), I extend the work of a small number of organisational psychologists and management scholars who have applied the idea of mixed emotion as a way of addressing the limitations of a dualistic approach and thereby investigating the emotional ambivalence experienced by employees and managers involved in organisational change. In doing so, the study advances our understanding of complex emotions experience during change by expanding understanding of emotional ambivalence in the same context.

My research contributes to the mixed emotion and emotional ambivalence literature by distinguishing between ‘mixed emotion’, ‘conflicting emotions’ and ‘emotional ambivalence’, which are often used interchangeably in the literature. Based on previous studies of mixed emotion, it is suggested that mixed emotion is conflicting emotions experienced across a time span (e.g. Giaever and Smollan, 2015). However, Koch (1987) suggest that mixed emotion does not necessarily need to be conflicting emotions. It can also be non-conflicting emotions. Taking account of both studies, I argue that there are two types of mixed emotion: simultaneous, conflicting emotions and non-conflicting emotions, whereas emotional ambivalence refers to simultaneous, conflicting emotions toward the same person or event. The time dimension of emotional complexity and Koch’s suggestion about mixed emotion contribute to understanding emotional ambivalence by differentiating similar phenomena in terms of their features.

Third, this study contributes to understanding of emotional ambivalence by transcending the dualistic approach of emotions that often see negative emotions involved in the experience of emotional ambivalence as barriers to organisational change. Emotional ambivalence arises from multiple sources and has contradictory emotional elements (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Pratt and Doucet, 2000). By evaluating the interpretation of organisational change, the thesis suggests that prior to simultaneous, conflicting emotional experience, employees and managers often engage in critical interpretation of change in which they compare previous experiences with the current

organisational situation. Such critical interpretation allows them to further interpret change by contrasting perceived consequences of change against personal, organisational and public interests. As an unfolding process, emotional ambivalence is a dynamic rather than a static response to change; it can change over time. The experience of emotional ambivalence enables organisational members to seek alternative ways of addressing change by re-interpreting it in order to resolve their ambivalent emotions (Rees *et al.*, 2013). Hence organisation members who experience emotional ambivalence during change are valuable to managers who are responsible for planning and implementing change.

The fourth contribution lies with the expansion of understanding of emotional ambivalence in the context of organisational change that emotional ambivalence is inherent in organisational change, particularly in NPM-related change. This is because organisational change is seen a source of emotional ambivalence (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). Emotional ambivalence also brings dualities to the organisation as well as those who work in the organisation. As pointed out above that NPM involves a cultural change from a traditional public organisation to a 'business-like' organisation, and such change does not happen overnight. Employees and managers who experience such change often engage with values of both cultures that sometimes contradict each other. Specifically, employees and managers who work in these organisations often deeply engage with the value of the public sector organisation; they value their identity as public servants. The change to a 'business-like' culture brings the values of private organisations which seek to maximise profits by improving efficiency in order to reduce the costs of operation. Whilst the purpose of such change in public sector organisation is not to maximise profits as in private organisations, it is aimed at enabling funding reduction from central government through downsizing and restructuring in order to reduce the cost of organisational operation. These cultural dualities and identities are seen as sources of emotional ambivalence (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000; Pratt and Doucet, 2000).

Fifth, this study contributes to the literature on NPM by utilising the existing literature on culture theory (Alvesson, 2002) as way of reconceptualising NPM. Whilst strongly informed by Diefenbach's (2009) ideology of NPM, this study contributes to NPM literature by applying three core conceptual categories of change in public sector organisations: value and beliefs, organisational structure and operations, and professional language. In addition, previous studies

of change in housing associations have concentrated on housing policy change at society, sector and asset management levels (Christie, Smith and Munro, 2008; McDermont 2007), they often neglect how changes influence members within these organisations and what might be the potential consequences of their experiences. This study also makes an empirical contribution to understanding organisational change in English housing associations by concentrating on employees and managers experiences of change. In doing so, it not only provides empirical evidence of how housing associations manage NPM-related change (through planned cultural changes from local council to business-like organisations) but also reveals that employees and managers in housing associations who are involved in organisational change often have ambivalent emotional experiences.

## Chapter 2

### Understanding change in public sector organisations: returning to NPM

#### Introduction

“[NPM] is a set of explicit and implicit assumptions about...changing an organization’s main objectives, structures, processes, as well as the organizational culture and, most importantly, people’s minds and attitudes. It is about changing how people do business, what they value, believe in and aim for, even how they think and act” (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 59-60).

Change in public services has become a priority for many governments worldwide since the 1970s (Cresswell, Moizer and Lean, 2014; Kelliher and Parry, 2015). This is mainly because public services have faced rising operational costs and claims of bureaucratic inefficiency (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). As a way to resolve this, the public sector started to be driven by the belief that the private sector is motivated by competition which is seen as leading to “better service and less costly service than the public service” (Burnes, 2009a, p. 113). The idea that better public service can be led by competition is sometimes labelled as “marketisation”. Marketisation encourages outsourcing public services to the private sector and promotes competition within the public sector in order to promote greater efficiency by making it more customer responsive (Burnes, 2009a). The purpose of these changes was to make welfare services more ‘business-like’ in order to increase efficiency, improve service quality and reduce service costs (Diefenbach, 2009). These changes are commonly referred to as NPM. In order to understand change in housing associations, there is a need to take a closer look at the concepts of NPM and what they mean for public sector organisations.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on organisational change in public sector organisations with a specific focus on NPM, and to highlight its connections with theories of organisational change. The literature review was conducted in three stages. First, a search was conducted in the Web of Science database using the search term ‘New Public Management’ between 2000 and 2018. 1656 articles were identified in the field of ‘business, economic and management’ and ‘political science’. The numbers of articles were then narrowed by top-ranking

journals (mainly Chartered Association of Business School (ABS) 4\* and 3\* journals, with few exceptions in ABS 2\* journals in the field of public administration and education) and relevance to the thesis (see **Table 2.1**). In the final stage, a number of frequently appearing articles, books and book chapters published prior to 1990 were identified by going through the references in articles published between 2000 and 2018 (see **Table 2.2**).

**Table 2.1** *Articles by Journals*



	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-20
<b>Public administration</b>				
Public Management Review			Boyne, Martin and Walker, 2004; Fernandez and Rainey, 2006;	Alonso, Clifton and Diaz-Fuentes, 2015b; Aoki, 2015; Brunetto <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Fattore <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Lindsay <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Kinder, 2012; Groeneveld, 2016; Van der Voet and Kuipers, 2016;
Public Administration		Hood, 1991	Andrews <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Gualmini, 2007; Learmonth, 2005; Reichard, 2003;	Bezes and Jeannot, 2018; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010; Jarl, Fredriksson and Persson, 2012; Kuipers <i>et al.</i> , 2014;
Journal of Public Administration Theory and Research			Battaglio and Condrey, 2009; Boyne and Chen, 2006; Dunleavy <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hood and Peters, 2004; Walker and Enticott, 2004;	
Public Administration Review	Hart, 1984		Andrews, Boyne and Walker, 2006; Bohte and Meier, 2000; Riccucci, 2001; Brewer, Selden and Facer II, 2000; Stewart and Kringas, 2003;	Dan and Pollitt, 2015; Walker <i>et al.</i> , 2011;
International Journal of Public Sector Management		Cope, Leishman, and Starie, 1997; Lawler and Hearn, 1995;	Coram and Burnes, 2001	Colon and Guerin-Schneider, 2015; Ferlie, 2017; Hughes, 2017; Kisner and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Laffin, 2016;
Public Organizational Review			Dunn and Miller, 2007	
American Review of Public Administration		Box, 1999		Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011; Kickert, 2014
International Review of Administration Science				Liguori, Steccolini and Rota 2018;
Review of Public Personnel Administration			Fernandez and Smith, 2005;	Wynen and Verhoest, 2015
Public Organization Review			Vann, 2004;	

Public Administration Quarterly	Bate, Khan and Pyle, 2000;	
Australian Journal of Public Administration	O'Flynn, 2007	Glennon <i>et al.</i> ,2017;
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management	Walker and Boyne, 2006	
European Political Science Review		Oberg and Bringselius, 2015
Administration & Society		Simonet, 2015
Policy & Politics	Wollmann, 2001	
Public Money & Management	Boyne, 2002	
Local Government Studies		Cresswell <i>et al.</i> , 2014;
Health Policy		Alonso <i>et al.</i> , 2015a
International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences		Karlsson <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Ferlie, 2017;

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## Management

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Organization Studies		Courpasson, 2000; McNulty and Ferlie, 2004;	Kirkpatrick, 2017; O'Reilly and Reed, 2011; Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015;
Journal of Management Studies		Currie and Procter, 2005; Hickson, Miller and Wilson, 2003;	
The Academy of Management Review	Van de Ven and Poole, 1995;		
British Journal of Management	Currie, 1999	Ferlie, Hartley and Martin, 2003;	
Journal of Change Management		Sminia and Van Nistelrooij, 2006;	

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Journal of Organizational Change Management	Bryant and Cox, 2004; White, 2000;	Buick <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Dasborough, Lamb and Suseno, 2015; Kelliher and Parry, 2015; Van der Voet, Kuipers and Groeneveld, 2015;
Management	Hookana, 2008;	
Management Learning		Rhodes and Price, 2010;
Human Relations	Chandler, Barry and Clark 2002;	
Personnel Review	Mather, Worrall and Selfert, 2007;	
Financial Accountability & Management		Christopher and Leung, 2015
Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal	Boden <i>et al.</i> , 1998	Van der Kolk, Ter Bogt and van Veen-Dirks, 2015
<b>Education</b>		
Oxford Review of Education	Deem and Brehony, 2005;	
Journal of Educational Administration and History		Smith and O’Leary, 2013
Comparative Education	Deem, 2001;	

**Table 2.2** *Breakdown of articles and book chapters by paper type*

	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Theoretical studies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketisation</li> <li>• Results-orientation and performance measurement</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• Death of NPM</li> <li>• Critiques of NPM</li> <li>• Ideology of NPM</li> <li>• Culture sensitivity</li> <li>• Approach to change</li> <li>• Comparing theories of public sector organisational change</li> </ul>	Simonet, 2015; Dunn and Miller, 2007; Lapsley, 2008; Box, 1999; Dan and Pollitt, 2015; Hart, 1984; Hughes, 2017; Bate <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Diefenbach, 2009; Boyne <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Fernandez and Rainey, 2006; Kisner and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017;
Empirical studies	Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managerialism and managerial autonomous</li> <li>• Marketisation</li> <li>• Change strategy</li> <li>• Evaluating performance assessment</li> <li>• outsourcing and decentralisation</li> <li>• Employee empowerment on performance</li> <li>• Privatisation</li> <li>• Public value and managerial value</li> <li>• Modernisation</li> </ul>	Bezes and Jeannot, 2018; Walker <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Sminia and VanNistelrooij, 2006; Andrews <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Alonso <i>et al.</i> , 2015b; Fernandez and Moldoqazier, 2011; Fernandez and Smith, 2005; Colon and Schneider, 2015; Reilly and Reed, 2011
	Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radical change</li> <li>• Technological change</li> <li>• Managerialism</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Approach to change</li> <li>• Discourse of management</li> </ul>	McNulty and Ferlie, 2004; Brunetto <i>et al.</i> , 2018; White, 2000; Currie, 1999; Currie and Proceter, 2005; Ferlie, 2017
	Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managerialism</li> <li>• Approach to change</li> <li>• Austerity</li> <li>• Resistance</li> <li>• Emotions and stress</li> </ul>	Deem and Brehony, 2005; Christopher and Leung, 2015 Smith and O’Leary, 2013; Chandler <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Dasborough, 2015
	Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural change</li> <li>• Approach to change</li> <li>• Public value</li> <li>• Privatisation</li> </ul>	Wynen and Verhoest, 2015; Fattore <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Colon and Guerin-Schneider, 2015; Kletz <i>et al.</i> , 2014

This chapter is organised as follows: I begin by reviewing definitions of NPM and outlining the key concepts of NPM. Next, a link is made between NPM and the literature on organisational culture in order to support the argument that NPM involves a deep change from traditional bureaucratic to a more ‘business-like’ organisational culture. This is followed by a discussion of theories of approach to change in management studies and how they are adopted when studying public sector organisations. Limitations of different approaches to organisational change are then highlighted in relation to NPM. Finally, the chapter reviews important debates in NPM literature, focusing in particular on whether NPM remains relevant as a conceptual framework today.

### Defining NPM

NPM is a loosely defined term that associates with concepts such as ‘privatisation’, ‘managerialism’, ‘performance measurement’, ‘value for money’, ‘marketisation’, ‘customer-focused’ and ‘business-like’. The term ‘NPM’ is generally used by scholars to describe the global re-organisation of public sector organisations (Buick *et al.*, 2015). NPM aims to change traditional public sector organisations to become more efficient, dynamic, entrepreneurial and responsive to market forces (Cresswell *et al.*, 2014).

As a form of policy, the roots of NPM can be traced back to the successful election of Thatcher’s government in the UK in 1979 (By and Macleod, 2009; Ferlie *et al.*, 2003). Thatcher exemplified the NPM movement when she called for public sector organisations to ‘do more with less’ and provide ‘value for money’ (Simonet, 2015). Since then, expressions of NPM have become popular, not only within public discourses, but also in political and corporate circles. Thatcher argued that a private sector management style was needed in public sector organisations in order to achieve better service delivery with fewer resources (By and Macleod, 2009).

As a theory, the birth of NPM in the public management literature was not formalised until the late 1980s (Ferlie, 2017). Since then, the idea of NPM has been understood and documented in the literature in both national and comparative settings (Gualmini, 2008; Walker and Enticott, 2004). For example, scholars have documented NPM in relation to its historic insights as a political agenda in the US (Box, 1999), the impact of NPM on organisational performance in a Spanish hospital (Alonso *et al.*, 2015a), organisational identity in the UK higher education system (Clarke *et al.*, 2012; Jarl *et al.*, 2012) and

employment relationships in Norway, Denmark and Sweden (Ibsen *et al.*, 2011). Hood and Peters (2004) outline that early writing on NPM focused on descriptive mapping of institutional developments based on the observation of casual empirical evidence in the US, UK and some European countries. Some of these studies took a prescriptive approach to identify a better approach to change and rationales of public sector changes (Kettl and Dilulio, 1995; Stewart and Kringas, 2003). In contrast to the above studies, a small group of scholars suggest that NPM “did not base their operating principles on a well-defined theory but as a practical solution to operational problems confronting [public services]” (Dunn and Miller, 2007, p. 347). They argue that NPM is a paradigmatic break from the traditional bureaucratic paradigm of public administration as recognised by many scholars (e.g. Hoods, 1991; Riccucci, 2001). In other words, the term was developed by critics on the basis of a political movement, and thus lacks a theoretical base (Hughes, 2017).

Recently, there is an increasing emphasis on the individual concepts of NPM when studying changes in public sector organisations (Alonso *et al.*, 2015a; Bezes and Jeannot, 2018; Karlsson *et al.*, 2016; Walker *et al.*, 2011). These authors argue that NPM places emphasis on value for money for the taxpayer, known as the three Es - effective, efficient and economic (By and Macleod, 2009). These are the basic assumptions of NPM taken from organisational economics, specifically public choice theory (Niskanen, 1971). Although the focus of this chapter is not on public choice theory, this theory is relevant to the idea of NPM as a ‘step by step’ guidebook. First, public choice theory is an application of economics to politics inspired by classical liberal principles of free market and limited government (MacLean, 2011). Second, the principles of free market and limited government encourage market competition with level of government interference. Third, such market competition in public sector organisations emphasises on the value of public service, whether goods and services are provided to people in society “on a collective basis as a consequence of the market’s inability to do so” (By and Macleod, 2009, p. 6). However, opponents of NPM suggest it is a ‘slippery label’ (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006). They argue that different conceptualisations of NPM emphasis on different perspectives (see **Table 2.2** p. 28) and suggest that the term is too vague to be useful if scholars have such wide-ranging understandings. Similarly, in the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Hughes (2017) argues that the various definitions and concepts of NPM have been destructive rather than helpful in understanding public sector change. Despite the debate over different concepts within NPM,

scholars have reached a degree of consensus and agree that the core features of NPM are privatisation and marketisation (Walker, 2000).

To summarise, studies of NPM tend to focus on a single aspect and overlook others. This may be because different aspects of NPM can be difficult to address fully in one paper. By looking at a specific concept of NPM such as managerialism, some of these studies undermine the importance of other concepts of NPM. In this thesis I argue that there is a need to look at various concepts of NPM as a whole to enable a better understanding of changes in public sector organisations. Based on the two key concepts of NPM – privatisation and marketisation, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) distinguish between hard and soft NPM. The hard version focuses on the idea of privatisation and the soft version draw attention to the concept of marketisation. The following section explores these further.

### ***Hard NPM: privatisation***

Hard NPM emphasises managerialism based on practices of “tough measurement, rewards and punishment” (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011, p. 10) taken from the private sector. Scholars who focus on the harder version of NPM suggest that it advocates a performance-driven private sector style of management (Fernandez and Smith, 2005; Hood, 1991). This includes empowering managers of public sector organisations to manage by releasing them from “unnecessary restriction and controls” (Office of Public Service Reform, 2002, p. 16, cited in Walker and Boyne, 2006) and applying performance management systems in the public setting which are perceived as enablers of organisational change (Buick *et al.*, 2015). Whilst NPM places “a greater emphasis on output control and discipline in the use of public sector resources” (Simonet, 2015, p. 807), it implies that public sector organisations should not be judged on the inputs they consume but on the outputs they generate (Simonet, 2015).

There are two main concepts in the hard version of NPM: managerialism and performance measurement. The term managerialism in the context of the private sector refers to “a concentration on the interests of management in how organisations are managed, stressing the role and accountability of individual managers and their positions” (Lawler and Hearn, 1995, p. 8). The concept of managerialism implies the idea of *administrative decentralisation* of service delivery from the government to management in public sector organisations in order to cope with *political centralisation* of strategy control through policy changes, such as budget reduction as a result of increasing financial pressures from government and the

general public (Laffin, 2016). The term ‘administrative decentralisation’ involves “the transfer of autonomy for service delivery to lower level of government” (Alonso *et al.*, 2015b, p. 649). The term ‘political centralisation’ is used to describe a situation where public sector organisations rely on political authority and power to make organisational decisions. Here, it seems that managerialism serves as an antidote to the economic overload associated with public administration. Managerialism draws attention to the centralisation within organisations as a result of downsizing the power of central government (By and Macleod, 2009). This shifts power to senior management teams in public sector organisations.

The term ‘managerialism’ also draws attention to the role of managers in being accountable for their positions. For example, in a study of the role of managers in enhancing performance in public sector organisations, Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey (2008) suggest that in order to improve through a performance-driven approach, managers need to be made accountable for their performance. They need to define performance targets, to monitor, evaluate and reward good performance and penalise bad performance against these targets (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). Specifically, when new top management is introduced, new performance targets will be set up. New working methods, measurements and appraisal will be introduced to achieve these targets (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

Similarly, in Deem and Brehony’s (2005) study of change in UK universities, one vice chancellor revealed that by taking power over resource allocation away from faculty deans, he prevented faculty deans from overriding the resource allocation model set by senior management. Here, the vice chancellor stressed his role in preventing resource allocation decisions from being overridden and expressed his belief that he was accountable for doing that. Whilst this example shows how exercising power in the interests of management shapes how resources within the university are managed, Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest that the vice chancellor as a senior manager legitimised actions and interests that are different from other academic staff. The vice chancellor showed more interest in power and career opportunities than their research, students and staff. Similar results were also found in other academic managers at different levels in universities (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Here, academic managers refer to academics who also hold managerial roles in the university, from mid-level management such as heads of department who “albeit with an enhanced role for performance management and quality control of teaching and research”, and faculty deans who hold “considerable amount of financial responsibility for faculty departments”, to senior



management teams such as pro-vice chancellors and vice chancellors who “determine[s] the strategic direction of their institutions” (Deem and Brehony, 2005, p. 226). These interviewees often view NPM as a positive change in the higher education system. Holding these positions helps to cement relations of power and dominance among senior management, such as vice chancellors in universities. However, other interviewees such as heads of department see NPM changes less positively. Some expressed distrust of top management; others reveal an identity change from being an academic to other professional roles. One interviewee expressed the view that he started to feel like an accountant rather than an academic, spending most of his time talking about issues related to money as a result of budget cuts (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Concerns about the negative effects of NPM in higher education organisations are further illustrated by Clarke and Knights (2015). By interviewing academics at different levels and asking them about their career paths in the UK higher education system under NPM, they suggest that academics have been forced into chasing the elusive sense of career path in order to secure their identity as a good academic (Clarke and Knights, 2015). They argue that the public value of being an educator has been lost as a consequence.

A further example of how NPM influence public servant identity through diminishing public values in the health care system. Brunetto *et al.* (2018)’s study compares the impact of managerialism on nurses in private and public sector in the UK and other countries using a survey study and found that nurses in the public sector organisations were barely satisfied with the management system. They suggest this is possibly related to employees’ motivation for working in the public sector organisations. This motivation is also known as the perceived public value. In addition, by surveying and interviewing a wide range of public service providers, Brewer *et al.*, (2000) also found that there are numbers of individuals who are strongly motivated by public values. These individuals can be a great asset to the organisation, yet they may be difficult to manage if they believe that the public service mission has been compromised during changes. In Brewer *et al.*’s (2000) study, a public nurse revealed that the value of public services is important to her and the change limits her role in providing better public services. This is an important feature shared between many public sector employees. The above studies illustrate that whilst public sector organisations are trying to improve efficiency and effectiveness through the idea of managerialism as proposed by private organisations, they sacrifice their identities as public professionals as a consequence (Brewer *et al.*, 2000; Brunetto, 2018). In the example of academic managers in

universities, this can lead them to sacrifice aspects of their professional identity as an academic which they value the most (Clarke and Knights, 2015).

Performance measurement is a further concept within the hard version of NPM that has generated longstanding and widespread debate among public management scholars (Walker and Boyne, 2006; Boyne and Chen, 2006). Scholars suggest that there are two systems of performance measurement in public sector organisations: external and internal measurements (Andrews *et al.*, 2005; Boyne, 2002). *External measurement* is based on judgements that “made by stakeholders in the environment of organisations” (Walker and Boyne, 2006, p. 378). Here, stakeholders refer to service recipients, taxpayer and regulators. For example, there are three primary approaches to external performance measurement in the UK central government when evaluating the performance of local authorities: performance indicators, audit and inspection (Andrews *et al.*, 2005). These performance measurements are made by regulators based on their perceptual judgements, and archival data such as time required to process an application for a service provided by local authorities service recipients’ opinions on the service. In the UK, local authorities performance measurements have been reinforced through the introduction of Local Government Agreements and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) (Andrews *et al.*, 2005). In 2002, the results of the first round of CPA (including London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs, unitary authorities and county councils) were published by the UK government, based on the best value performance indicators released in 2000 (Andrews *et al.*, 2005). These published performance indicators are the basis of external performance measurement.

Despite the fact that external performance measurements have provided a gold standard of measurement in public sector organisations and are audited by external organisations, serious questions have been raised, one of which is referred to as the “cheating” of performance in public sector organisations (Bohte and Meier, 2000). Organisational cheating is defined as “an attempt to manipulate performance criteria” (Bohte and Meier, 2000, p. 175). Bohte and Meier outline three forms of organisational cheating: cutting comers/doing sloppy work, lying and biased samples. Bohte and Meier (2000) also argue that organisations with limited institutional resources and facing greater difficulties in producing results compare to organisations with adequate resources are more likely to engage in performance cheating as organisational behaviour. These organisations often hope to cheat on outputs in order to gain access to additional resources (Bohte and Meier, 2000). In the example of English local

authorities, the result of the first-round CPA was published in 2002. Local authorities' performance was categorised into five categories: poor, weak, fair, good and excellent. This was intended to force local authorities to improve their services based on the local economic environment (Andrews *et al.*, 2005). Authorities with a better local economic environment are more likely to be rated higher and therefore receive more resources to further improve their economic environment. Those categorised as underperformed organisations fear of negative evaluation may lead to receiving fewer resources, creating continued public pressure for them to produce desired policy outcomes (Bohte and Meier, 2000). Hence these organisations may choose to purposely engage with behaviours that improve their performance rating at the expense of working toward the desired policy outcome rather than genuinely improve their performance by providing better public services. One potential explanation of such organisational behaviour is that "focus on generating numbers that please political officials" may be seen as an easier way to improve the politically desired outcome than "devoting their energies to achieving more meaningful policy outcome" (Bohte and Meier, 2000, p. 174).

By outlining organisational cheating as a potential issue in relation to performance measurement in public sector organisations, Bohte and Meier (2000) propose two further ways in which organisations can address underperformance. The most likely solution is to add additional rules to regulate and monitor employees' behaviours. However, this requires additional regulation and control which can make the organisation more rule-bound. This is in tension with the idea of efficiency as proposed by performance measurement. Another way of addressing underperformance is through professional or organisational norms (Bohte and Meier, 2000). This involves a deeper understanding of the purpose of public sector organisations and recognising the difficulties involved in producing the desired performance (Bohte and Meier, 2000).

The second question raised in relation to external performance measurement is how it influences the quality of public service offered. In a study of the impact of NPM in Australian public universities, Christopher and Leung (2015) review the impact on the performance of measurement on academics in Australian public universities. A number of academics expressed difficulties in applying the concept of NPM in a university environment (Christopher and Leung, 2015). Specifically, they suggested that the focus on performance indicators has a direct impact on quality assessment in institutional audits. These negative

impacts on quality of assessment include lowering course standards, soft leaking of examination questions to raise the passing rates and ignoring immeasurable student learning (Christopher and Leung, 2015). These impacts have reduced the value of teaching as it is experienced by students and academics. In addition to the quality of assessment, performance measurements also reduce academic freedom to research topics that they wish to pursue (Christopher and Leung, 2015). This is because such measurements can affect academics' choice of research area and discourage them from making empirical contributions to the world outside academia, thereby damaging creativity and innovation (Bogt and Scapens, 2012).

*Internal measurements* rely on the “views of stakeholders within organisations”, including managers and frontline workers (Walker and Boyne, 2006, p. 378). Internal measurements are collected within organisations and differ from one organisation to another. In comparison to external measurement, they are seen as flawed because they suffer from “common-method bias” (Walker and Boyne, 2006, p. 378). Walker and Boyne (2006) suggest that common-method bias can be reflected in two ways. First, there is no clear consensus on what a good performance is, why it is efficient and how it enables high performance during change (Buick *et al.*, 2015). Buick *et al.* (2015) suggest that the lack of a clear definition of high performance is due to the multi-level definition of performance. Specifically, what constitutes high performance is based on an organisation, group, or individual's own definition of ‘covert[ing] measurable input into measurable output in the most efficient way’ (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 59). Second, internal measurements are based on organisational stakeholders' knowledge of performance which potentially undermines the accuracy of internal measurements (Golden, 1992). In order to compensate for the deficiency of internal performance measurement suggested above, Buick *et al.* (2015) propose a combination of external and internal performance measurements when measuring the same performance dimension. This is because external performance measurements can potentially address the bias that comes from internal stakeholders by having a standard performance measurement. However, it is impossible to fully eliminate the subjectivity and political bias that comes from internal and external stakeholders.

Despite the popularity of NPM, privatisation of the public sector has been the subject of much criticism. Chaharbaghi (2007) argues that the rise of managerialism has made the management of the public sector worse by adding a costly administrative burden that

undermines the morale, motivation and goodwill of public professionals, eventually destroying their accomplishment, satisfaction, motivation and performance. Kelliher and Parry (2015) also suggest that change informed by the principle of NPM has placed serious pressures on managers as a result of experiencing a high level of stress. The findings of their study show that these changes were perceived by managers as unmanageable in terms of expanding responsibilities, extending working hours and workloads.

The concept of privatisation also has been criticised for diminishing the value of public service. For example, Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd and Walker (2005) argue that few public policy scholars have challenged the idea that public service is not private/commercial service. In general sense, there are obvious differences between the public and private services (Schraeder, Tear and Jordan, 2005). The term ‘public service’ concerns services provided for people as a whole by government, whereas ‘private service’ refers to services provided by individuals or independently owned companies for particular groups of people. Most scholars agree that when the public service shift to commercially oriented service, it is accompanied by a prevailing shift in sectoral identity and organisational culture (Halford and Leonard, 1998; Farnham and Horton, 1996). Culture establishes the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, shared knowledge and identity for people in the same sector and organisation (Hookana, 2008). However, while they recognised the differences between public and private sector, these studies made little distinction between public and private organisations when discussing change management in public sector organisation (Kuipers *et al.*, 2014). In addition, from a practical perspective, when new policies that require public sector organisations to change from public sector culture to private, business-like culture were deemed, they were simply translated into new ways of working as required by policymakers. It is never considered how these policies align with the sector and organisational culture and identity (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). Failure to recognise the culture of public service organisations and modify the approach to change to match environmental exigencies can erode public and private confidence in public service, increase turnover at senior management level and create a high level of stress among employees (Kelliher and Parry, 2015).

### ***Softer NPM: marketisation***

The soft version of NPM “implies a greater reliance on market form for the provision of public services and an opening up to competition at all levels” (Simonet, 2015, p. 806). It

focuses on the improvement of service quality while incorporating a shift towards responding to the perceptions of customers (Simonet, 2015). Similar to private organisations, NPM encourages public sector organisations to view end-users of public services as customers, rather than as passive recipients of public services. In other words, it encourages service recipients' responsiveness and empowers the voice of the end-user, while also seeking to lower the cost of public services. This idea is known as marketisation.

The concept of marketisation is originally taken from the empirical model of market orientation, developed in the 1990s, in the interest of improving organisational performance in the private sector. *A market orientation* "attempts to strategically align an organisation with its external environment" and generate and disseminate information that appropriate to the needs and preference of current and future customers (Walker *et al.*, 2011, p. 708). According to Narver and Slater (1990), in order to achieve market orientation, there are three necessary behavioural components: customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination. Drawing on language and values from the private sector, *customer orientation* is to understand customers' current and future needs to enable them to continuously value services and products provided. It is an approach that intends to enable user participation in the improvement of public services. The idea of customer orientation was implemented and elaborated by Blair's Labour government in 2002 (Walker and Boyne, 2006). According to the Office of Public Service Reform public sector organisations should shape their services "around the needs and aspirations of customers and community" (p. 16, cited in Walker and Boyne, 2006). This emphasises "choice within each service for users" (Walker and Boyne, 2006, p. 374). Such choice empowers the voice of service users and reflects the needs and demands of service recipients.

The concept of the 'customer' is central to NPM (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). This idea is perpetuated in public sector organisations through the introduction of management language such as 'customer', to improve the performance of public sector organisations (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). However, Karlsson *et al.* (2016) note that the word 'customer' is not always suitable for public service users. In the example of health care, they suggest patients, as passive receivers of health care support and treatment, do not have the same power relationship as customers and service providers in the private sector (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). But it can be argued that the emphasis on the 'customer' in health care refers to the choice of service provider rather than the choice of treatment. Whilst the above example problematises

the term of service recipient's ability to make the choices (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016), it provides a critical perspective when discussing the idea of customer-orientation. It also highlights the inequality of power relations between service providers and users after adopting customer-oriented approach to change (Burnes, 2009a). The issue of power imbalances between service providers and users in health care has also been documented in previous studies (Harrison and Mort, 1998; Rush, 2004). For example, Rush (2004) noted that a 'user involvement approach' was adopted by managers in the NHS to improve patient care, yet users' views collected from questionnaires and service reviews were quickly ignored. Burnes (2009a) suggests this is because there is no actual democratic participation in the decisional-making process and the final decision of any change to the service lies with the managers and professionals of that services.

As a behavioural component of marketisation, customer-orientation requires a change in the attitudes of employees and end-users (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). Such change is often achieved through the use of business plans and continued reflection on daily operations. These approaches act as pedagogical instruments during a change process for employees (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). In addition, identifying customer needs and measuring customer satisfaction with the provided service is an important task for customer-oriented organisations (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). Customer satisfaction is generated through enhancing the value of public services.

Although Blair's Labour government strategy of public service improvement aimed to enhance customer choice, Walker and Boyne (2006) explain that the term 'choice' not only emphasises customer orientation but also on competition orientation. In Narver and Slater's (1990) behaviour components model, *competitor orientation* focuses on understanding the short-term strengths and weaknesses of long-term capacities and strategies of competitors. Competitor orientation draws attention to "choice between providers and suppliers of public service" (Walker and Boyne, 2006, p. 374). It encourages both private and public service providers and suppliers to play an active role in public service delivery. In order to drive up performance across the public sector, the emphasis is placed on creating competition between service providers and suppliers to improve quality of management and value of the service (Walker and Boyne, 2006). For example, in the UK, the White Paper 'Working for Patients' announced by the Thatcher government in 1990 focused specifically on NHS change (Simonet, 2015). This drew attention to competitor orientation and suggested that the aim of

proposed change is to “create an internal market...with separation between care providers, the hospitals and funders” (Simonet, 2015, p. 808). Such separation stops the central government from being the only funder. It thereby gives autonomy to look for alternative funders and be creative in operating the service. This is intended to minimise political interference in day-to-day operation of the service and enable competition within the system to provide greater efficiency of health care services. However, this change was only partially successful (Simonet, 2015). Hospitals are still characterised by long patient waiting lists and in General Practice, service providers are less inclined to manage budgets due to the risks of overrun (Simonet, 2015).

In addition, creating competition between service providers and suppliers opens up competition for talent and resources within public sector organisations and between public and private organisations by promoting greater value for public services (Simonet, 2015). As a core value of NPM, competition was pursued as a way to generate wider choice for public service delivery mechanisms (Simonet, 2015). In the example of housing associations, which is the empirical focus of this thesis, change from a public financial system that relies on government “subsidies for development” and “receive deficit funding on management overspend” to a ‘business-like’ financial system with high levels of competition between these organisations (Walker, 1998, p. 76). Specifically, housing associations focus on “collecting rent and letting homes to ensure that the resources are available to pay mortgages and satisfy private financial institutions that they are efficient and effective organisations” in order to secure further loans (Walker, 1998, p. 78).

The last behavioural component of marketisation is *inter-functional coordination*. This emphasises the utilisation and coordination of organisational resources to create the best public service for customers. It focuses on achieving better responsiveness to customers. For example, when NHS planned to shape its service based on the needs and preferences of individual patients and enable the voice of their families and carers in 2000, they proposed a planned implementation programme which outlines how patients’ views can shape the service (Burnes, 2009a). Patient advocacy, liaison services and local advisory forums were established as a way to open the door for greater public involvement in the control and management of the service. This programme is an example of utilising and coordinating organisational resources to achieve customer orientation. However, the programme failed to achieve its objective because of the size of NHS. NHS employs more than 1.3 million



employees and even bigger numbers of patients and potential future patients. Empowering participation of service recipients is thus a major challenge of NPM in the English public health care system (Burnes, 2009a). Despite the good intentions of improving quality of public service by empowering participation from customers and increasing public sector organisations' performance through competition by providing choices to customers, criticism of marketisation in higher education and health care system have revealed concerns about the idea of marketisation. Previous research has demonstrated that the impact of marketisation on public sector organisations is contingent on a range of organisational circumstances, including the level of competition and environmental turbulence (Harris, 2001; Walker *et al.*, 2011).

### ***NPM as cultural change***

NPM is much more than what has been described above. Whether NPM is results-oriented (performance-driven), associated with the concept of privatisation or customer-oriented linked to the idea of marketisation, it is not just an instrument which can be actively managed and manipulated in order to improve effectiveness and performance in public sector organisations (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2016; Wynen and Verhoest, 2015). NPM is not just a 'rational concept' that mainly concerns with consequences of strategic and organisational functions (Diefenbach, 2009). Instead it involves a culture change from a traditional public sector organisational culture to a 'business-like', private organisational culture (Garnett, *et al.*, 2008; Wynen and Verhoest, 2015). Therefore, in the remainder of this section, this thesis uses the literature on organisational culture to argue that cultural change is fundamental to understanding how the concepts of NPM fit together and are enacted in organisations.

There is an increasing interest in understanding the concept of organisational culture in public sector organisations (Wynen and Verhoest, 2015). This is mainly because cultural change has been recognised as an important factor in improving organisational performance and effectiveness in public sector (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008). The traditional public sector organisational culture places emphasis on compliance with rules and procedures (Zalami, 2005). High compliance is associated with "overregulation, inflexible working attitudes, and risk-avoiding quality deficits" which then leads to inefficient use of resources and unaccountability of results (Wynen and Verhoest, 2015, p. 357). Similar results were also observed by Litton (2006) who suggests that the bureaucratic nature of public administrative culture limits organisational performance. The purpose of public sector organisational

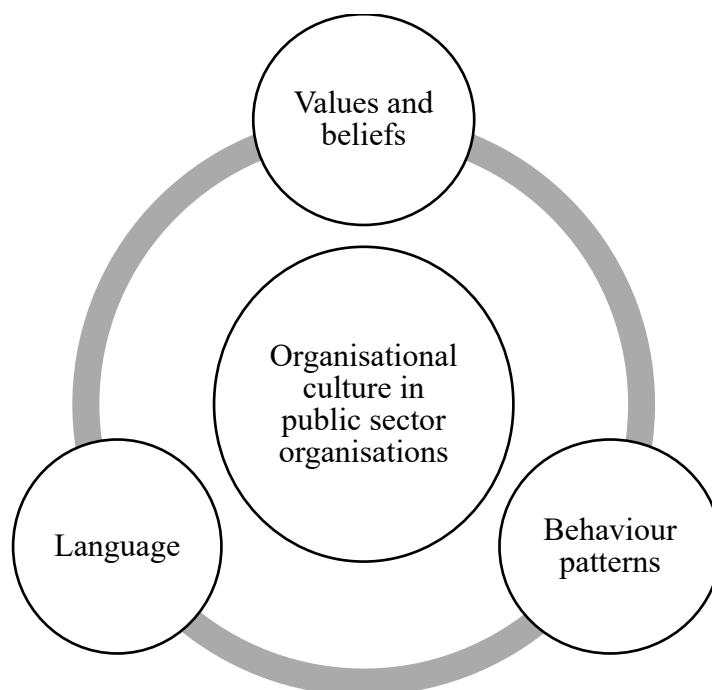
change, as well as NPM, is therefore to increase organisational performance by removing the high level of compliance and emphasis on detail associated with public administrative culture. This involves a significant cultural change from public, administrative culture to a results-oriented culture, from a performance-oriented culture to a customer-oriented 'business-like' culture in order to improve organisational effectiveness and performance. Despite the controversial relationship between organisational culture and performance, it is reasonable to say that organisational culture is an important feature of change in public sector organisations. Yet there is limited empirical evidence that deeply engages with the concept of cultural change as it relates to NPM in the public sector (with a few exceptions, e.g. Boyne *et al.*, 2004; Wynen and Verhoest, 2015).

In addition, and relatedly, Diefenbach (2009) argues that NPM is an ideology, "a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue or maintain" (p. 38). Diefenbach further illustrates that NPM provides new meaning to how public sector organisations should be run by setting 'business-like' criteria and legitimising the objectives of increasing efficiency and performative orientation, and the social relationship between management and staff. By providing new meaning, NPM also justifies why public sector organisations should function in a 'business-like' culture with "value of efficiency, rationality, market economy, choice, customer orientation, best practice, performance and the like" (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 61).

The literature on organisational culture claims that cultural dimensions are central to organisational life (Alvesson, 2002). As Smircich (1985) suggests, organisations exist as systems of beliefs and meanings. These shared beliefs and meanings are "necessary for continuing organised activity" because this "makes interaction possible without constant confusion or intense interpretation and re-interpretation of meanings" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 2). The concept of culture is a collectively shared form of ideas which includes "values and ideologies... rules and norms... emotions and expressiveness" which together constitute a "collective unconscious... [that influences organisational] behaviour patterns... structure and practices" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 3). Under the umbrella of culture studies, this thesis adopts Alvesson (2002)'s above definition and suggests that *organisational culture* is comprised of values and beliefs about the organisational reality which shape the interpretation of events,

ideas and experiences of employees and managers within the organisation. Changes in organisational culture incorporate values and beliefs, behaviour patterns and language shared by members of the organisation (see **Figure 2.1**). To illustrate the importance of organisational culture in understanding NPM as a driver of public service marketisation and privatisation, I focus here on the example of higher education in the UK. Universities in the UK have been subject to considerable change in the past few decades as a consequence of political pressures driven by NPM (Burnes, Wend and By, 2014). The purpose of these changes has been to eliminate bureaucratic inefficiency and reduce costs by making universities more market-oriented, more decentralised and more result-oriented (Burnes *et al.*, 2014). These changes include increased competition for students and funding resources; increased student fees, (capped at GBP 9,000 in 2012), and the development of performance measurement, (most recently through the Research Excellence Framework 2014, 2021) and metrics for measuring student satisfaction (e.g. National Student Survey) (Broucker and De Wit, 2015). These changes are intended to influence behaviour in these organisations and can thus be understood as an aspect of cultural change. Typical of the language of NPM in universities are terms such as “strategic planning, programme evaluation, value added and performance indicator” (Burnes *et al.*, 2014, p. 911).

**Figure 2.1** *Cultural dimensions of change in public sector organisations*



However, organisational culture is resilient and stable and therefore difficult to change in a purposive way (Schein, 2004). Changing organisational culture involves adjustments to employees and managers' values, beliefs and basic assumptions about the organisation and how it operates. Consequently, as a form of culture change, NPM not only involves changing an organisation's objectives, structures and processes, but also changing the values, beliefs and attitudes of organisation members (By and Macleod, 2009). Such changes are rarely achieved quickly. Organisations often require several change initiatives before cultural change is achieved (Macintosh, 2012). The following section reviews theories of managing change and discusses how they have been adopted in the public sector organisations under NPM.

### Approaches to change in the public sector

In the recent review of the literature on change in public sector organisations, Kuipers *et al.* (2014) suggest that more than half of all studies focus on content and context of change rather than the process. There is a vast change management literature that presents different levels, degrees and models of change in order to explain and understand the context, process and results of organisational change (Burnes, 2004; Pettigrew, 1985, 1990, 2000). Rather than attempting to comprehensively review this vast literature, the discussion here concentrates on three main approaches to change in the public sector: the planned approach, the emergent approach and contingency theory.

#### ***The planned approach***

The planned approach is the most widely used in public sector organisational change (Ferlie *et al.*, 1996; Sminia and Van Nistelrooij, 2006). It is formulated from a combination of four elements of Lewin's (1951) work on field theory, group dynamics, action research and the three-step model of change. Field theory provides an important foundation for the planned approach by focusing on understanding changes in group behaviour. It suggests that human behaviour is based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of driving and restraining forces (Lewin, 1939). Behaviour change is a learning process. Change requires destabilisation of this equilibrium in order to unfreeze/unlearn old behaviours and eventually adopt new ones. In other words, change is achieved by increasing the driving forces or reducing restraining forces. When changing individual attitudes or behaviour, there is a need to break the well-established 'social habit' (Lewin, 1951). This 'social habit' was

defined by Lewin as an internal resistance to change. It is often described as organisational culture in the change literature and mapped the forces impinging at an organisation level (Burnes, 2011). In order to overcome internal resistance (or the restraining force), an additional force is needed to break 'habit' and 'unfreeze the culture' sufficiently. This will eventually generate a new balanced status quo between the two forces.

Another central idea of planned change is that change must be focused at group level rather than individual level. This is because changes in individual behaviour are constrained by group conformity (Burnes, 2011). Therefore, change should not be treated individually in isolation. Similarly, organisational level change is achieved at the group level. Group dynamics (Lewin, 1947) not only provide a foundation for understanding of groups but also field theory. Lewin (1939) demonstrates a connection between quasi-stationary equilibria and group life. He suggests that when the membership and conditions experienced by a group of people remains constant in a period, whether it's a group of friends on a vacation or a group of workers at work - where no one joins or leaves the group, no major change occurs at any level - the same condition leads to the same effect and no change occurs. However, if anyone leaves the group for any reason, the production of group work continues. If production remains at the same level, there would be an increase in individual workload. The increase in workload means the group member's social habit is challenged; therefore, resistance to change arises. If the social values of the group are changed (in this case, the workload of individual), there will be a resistance of group members to move away from current social habits (Lewin, 1951). This example shows that when there is a change led by increasing the driving force in a group, there will be an increase in the restraining force to change that works in concern with field theory.

However, understanding group dynamics, social habits and resistance is not sufficient to bring about change. Lewin (1946) recognises the need to engage organisational members to gain their commitment to the behaviour change in order to reduce the restraining forces. This led to the development of action research (Burnes, 2009b). Action research studies a problem and offers intervention for its solution (Lewin, 1946). The process is iterative; it starts by studying and researching a problem. This leads to an intervention. Then followed by an evaluation of intervention and followed by additional research. As part of the evaluation, this approach demands feedback from research participants in order to enable further improvement of intervention. In addition, it is important to note that, like other works of

Lewin's, action research stresses the importance of group level change (Burnes, 2007). In the Harwood study, by conducting experimental and controlled group observations and measuring performance between groups, Lewin (1946) shows that democratic decision-making from a small group is the most efficient way for individual as well as group behaviour change. Again, with relevance to this thesis, this reveals that engagement among employees to promote behaviour and attitude change in the organisation is effective in approaching organisational change.

In public organisational change, with different stakeholders, there are problems to do with conflicting interests between different parties. For example, management and professionals in public sector organisations may seek to improve organisational operations, whereas politicians may press for defending political alliances (Hal, 2009). Action research and group dynamics as elements of planned approach to change have much to offer to top-down NPM-related change in such environments (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b). This is because these elements of planned approach can be used to try to resolve social conflicts and improve operational effectiveness on the human side of the organisation through participative, group-based change programmes. Change in public sector organisations requires a participative approach to change which "embraces both users and providers in an ethical, democratic and participative manner" in order to resolve social conflicts between different stakeholders in organisations (Burnes, 2009a, p. 119). In addition, encouraging participation and open discussion during change among employees in public sector organisations is also seen as a way to reduce resistance to change among employees (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006; Hal, 2009).

The last element of the planned approach is the three-step model of change. This was developed by Schein (2004) based on Lewin's original terminology. Although Cummings, Bridgman and Brown (2016) argue that the planned approach to change did not come from Lewin, nor did he ever propose a linear diagrammatic form, Lewin's work has provided a foundation for the planned approach and the three-step model of change. Schein (2004) extends Lewin's seminal works on social change, and presents the three-step model as a linear form, from the first step, unfreezing, to the second step, moving, and then the third step, refreezing. To Lewin (1951), and many other behavioural psychologists (e.g. Hilgard and Bower, 1966; Mednick, 1964), behaviour change is a process of un-learning and re-learning. This involves unlearning the original 'social habit', learning the new behaviour and

sustaining the new behaviour. The adopted new behaviour is acquired through re-education which requires refreezing, otherwise change will not be sustained. Whilst these authors (Lewin, 1951; Hilgard and Bower, 1966; Mednick, 1964) suggest that organisational change is a process of un-learning old behaviour and re-learning new behaviour among employees within an organisation, it is worth noting that organisational learning is different from other forms of structure change, such as re-engineering, downsizing, adaptation. This is because learning is “a relatively permanent change in behaviour due to experience” whereas structure change is a reactive short-term adjustment (Pratt and Branett, 1997, p. 79). By saying that structure change is a form of organisational learning, this contradicts Pratt and Branett’s definition of learning.

### ***Critiques of the planned approach***

The planned approach has been criticised by organisational scholars for being simplistic. This is mainly because of the three-step to change model. Opponents (Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Pettigrew, 1990, 1997) of the planned approach suggest it is prescriptive, recipe-driven and promotes a linear, static conception of organisational change which is problematic. They argue that organisations are never frozen and much less refrozen. Child (2005, cited in Cummings *et al.*, 2016) suggests the idea of refreezing is inappropriate as today’s organisations require flexibility and continuous adaptation. Child claims that the process of change is a complex and untidy process and the planned approach is therefore impractical to explain organisational change today. However, this critique is based on a misunderstanding of what is required to unfreeze and refreeze. To Lewin (1951), it was the behaviour of individual and groups in organisations, rather than the organisation itself, as referred to by the opponents of the planned approach. Opponents of the planned approach tend to assume that the three-step model of change is the main concept of the planned approach and ignore other elements. These arguments are assembled under the banner of the emergent approach to change discussed in the following section. They are based on a misreading of Lewin’s planned approach as a single linear approach, rather than a combination of different elements as introduced above.

A further criticism of stage models of change is associated with its limitations in accounting for the complexity of members’ emotional attachments to organisations (Bell and Taylor, 2011; Klarner *et al.*, 2011). Klarner *et al.* (2011) argue that as a stage model, the planned approach neglects the emotional experience of organisational members during organisational

change. Kiefer (2002a) and Steigenberger (2015) point out that emotion is an important component in how individuals construct the meaning of change at individual (work tasks, personal situation) and collective levels (relationship with organisations, social relationship). Organisational change, like other life events, can provoke a loss of individual and social meaning which provokes intense emotions (Sayers and Smollan, 2009). It is reasonable for employees to feel fear and anger due to uncertainty and lack of ability to cope with change. In a sense, emotions result from social interpretation of organisational change. The social interpretation of emotions is based on an individual's social relations, social background, previous knowledge and evaluation (Damasio, 1994).

### ***The emergent approach***

The emergent approach was developed by Beer (1987) in the 1980s in response to criticisms of the planned approach (By, 2005). Kanter *et al.* (1992) illustrate that an emergent change follows a bottom-up approach in response to rapidly changing conditions, where senior managers are not able to identify, plan and implement appropriate responses. The bottom-up approach refers to change is initiated by the frontline workers and seeks to involve organisational members who are directly affected by the change in the decision-making process. An emergent approach therefore relies on “ongoing accommodations, adaptations and alterations that produce fundamental change without a priori intention to do so” (Weick, 2009, p. 238). Many emergent changes are unnoticed because of the small-scale nature of adaptations and alterations. Emergent change occurs when “people re-accomplish routines” and when they “deal with contingencies breakdowns, and opportunities in everyday work” (Weick, 2000, p. 237). In other words, the emergent approach suggests that change is unpredictable, thus, cannot be planned. Similarly, Coram and Burnes (2001) argue that there is a need for a continuous and open-ended approach to change in order to cope with turbulent and chaotic environments.

Over the past few decades, the emergent approach appears to have largely superseded the planned approach in the general change management literature (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b). Similarly, scholars in public administrative studies suggest that there is a need for an emergent approach to public organisational change (e.g. Currier, 1999; Lindsay *et al.*, 2017). In discussing the emergent approach to change, many scholars suggest that successful change in public sector organisations requires an emergent, bottom-up approach with some degree of employee participation (Sminla and Nistelrooij, 2006). In other words, an emergent approach



to public organisational change is often associated with employee empowerment in order to overcome resistance among employees that results from uncertainty and fear for their futures (Coram and Burnes, 2001; Kickert, 2014). For example, Coram and Burnes (2001) evidenced that during the privatisation of the Property Service Agency in the UK, industrial strikes took place with support from the staff trade union to delay the privatisation of the agency which were perceived as employees' resistance by the central government and top management of the organisation. Due to the nature of public sector changes as being imposed by the government through funding reduction and policy changes, employees are passive recipients of change and often unable to contribute much to the decision-making process of change. In the case of the Property Service Agency, although the privatisation was delayed and the government offered a staff choice scheme whereby staff could choose to transfer fully to the private companies for a limited period or take early retirement, the privatisation still went ahead, despite actions taken by employees. Nonetheless, this example shows that the engagement of employees can have an impact on the process of change. When employee engagement is incorporated as part of change planning, it can have a positive impact on how change unfolds in an organisation. In evaluating top-down change in the Property Service Agency, Coram and Burnes (2001) suggest that a planned approach to change is not suitable in public sector organisations, especially when a change from public to private organisation is involved. They summarise three lessons learned from this case: first, there was a lack of preparation prior to the transformational change. They argue that there is a need to change the structure as well as the culture in the organisational in order to achieve successful privatisation; second, there was a high level of resistance among employees due to uncertainty and fear. This is because there was no clear plan of how it would work, which increases the fear of their future among employees as a result of lack of clear direction; last but not least, there was a lack of change management skills among management level in the organisation. Although they imply that the need for an emergent approach to change, it can be argued that there is a need for a better planned approach to change.

In addition, by examining failings in NHS inquiries, Walshe and Higgins (2002) explain why NPM failed. They observe that failings in the NHS are associated with culture. They argue that changes are not likely to happen just because it is suggested in a report. Whilst this study shows a failure to disseminate and learn the market-orientation culture in the first place among employees, they recognise the importance of the role of change recipients such as frontline staff in the organisation. Instead of change being decided upon by a few top

managers, it needs to become prerogative of the many. Whilst the size of the NHS can be seen as problematic when implementing participative approaches to change, in a recent study of technological change in the NHS induced by NPM-related change, Lindsay *et al.*, (2017) continually suggest a need for a “collaborative” approach to change. Collaborative change is specifically referred to as a bottom-up, employee driven change in this study.

A similar suggestion is revealed in a study of the role of middle managers in the NHS during change (Currie, 1999). Currie (1999) argues that change is better viewed as emergent rather than solely deliberate, rational and top-down. He interviews senior managers and middle managers in the organisation and confirms that a top-down approach took place during organisational change, where middle managers rarely involved in the planning stage of change. The lack of involvement increases resistance to change among middle managers. As some senior managers expressed the view that middle managers present a block to implementing change. However, in a few exceptions, middle managers were able to synthesise information in the change plan. As a result of their contribution, a more rational plan of allocating resources was achieved. Some senior managers recognise the importance of middle management when implementing change as a way to reduce the resistance to change among employees. Therefore, Currie (1999) suggests that there is a need for an emergent bottom-up approach to change that comes from middle managers in the organisations. To support the claim that an emergent approach to change is better in public sector organisations, Aoki’s study of a public higher education institution in Singapore suggests that a “bottom-up initiated, top-down supported” customer-oriented approach to change provides greater flexibility and choices for students (Aoki, 2015, p.168). This example not only reveals an emergent approach to change but also enables a clear connection between decentralisation of change in the public sector and a customer-orientated approach to change as part of NPM.

The importance of middle managers in the strategic contribution is an important debate on NPM. Some argue that middle managers are key strategic actors during organisational change, yet middle managers have very little opportunity to participate when planning change in public sector organisations studies (e.g. Floyd and Woodridge, 2000; Currie and Procter, 2005). In the case of the NHS, Currie and Procter (2005) offer descriptive evidence on the debate and rationale behind change by interviewing middle managers and senior managers at three hospitals. They argue that there are many reasons for lack of participation in planning change among the middle managers. First, there is a conflict of interest in the role of these

professionals and the role of middle managers. For example, a middle manager who also works as a surgical doctor proposes to increase certain areas of surgical service space in order to reduce the waiting time and provide better surgical care for patients. Yet as a middle manager, he also needs to consider operational and market sides of the business. These include the cost of operations, the result of market analysis of his propose. Sometimes, the role of being a doctor to provide better medical care contradicts the ideas of a managerial role, such as 'cost efficiency', or 'value for money'. The second reason is that middle managers, who are also professionals in the public service, are in transition as they learn to become managers. In the case of health care above, middle managers participate in a competency-based education programme facilitated by external management consultants. Such programme aims to equip middle managers with business value and a great drive for efficiency and effectiveness. However, there is a lot of ambiguity between being public servants and private/business-like employees (public value), the ambiguity between the distribution of control of power (managerialism, centralisation and decentralisation) and the ambiguity between spontaneous and performed manifestations (performance measurement) that inhibits the transition to the managerial role. Nevertheless, middle management plays an important role in the bottom-up approach to change.

Despite the strong advocacy of an emergent approach to change in public sector organisations, Currie (1999) argues that the bottom-up approach to change is only limitedly applicable in the case of managing operational change in public sector organisations. This is because changes in these organisations are often driven by financial constraints which can only be controlled top-down. Tracing this historically to the development of change in the NHS in the 1980s, he shows how regulators and central government induced massive change on the NHS but did not recognise that there was a lack of capacity to translate this ambitious change agenda into practice (Currie, 1999). What was inherited from this process was a top-down, rational approach to change. This does not allow middle managers to influence change significantly, either upward or downward in the organisational hierarchy. In other words, there is a separation between strategic change and implementation of change (Currie, 1999). Similarly, change in other public sector organisations is also top-down radical change and policy-related (Ferlie *et al.*, 1996). Specifically, with multiple stakeholders and decision-makers (e.g. policymakers, public organisational management, public organisational professionals and public service recipients), major changes are imposed on public sector organisations by the central government or authorities rather than arising from the decision of

organisational management (Siminia and Nistelrooij, 2006). For example, Van der Voet *et al.* (2015) present a qualitative study of changes in Dutch local government departments under increasing public pressure caused by a recent critical incident relevant to these departments. The study focuses on the construction of an underground parking lot in the city. Due to poor communication between these departments, the project was delayed by months and the costs were doubled. The incident quickly became a national media headline. As a result of such incidents, a number of political strategies were announced which outline a detailed vision of change to improve the quality and effectiveness of these departments. In addition, public services rely on public funding. Public budgets must be planned in advance of the spending years by the central government (Simonet, 2015). For example, in Reichard's (2003) study, he describes how German local authorities were forced into change by the central government as a result of a growing fiscal crisis (Reichard, 2003). Many other studies also reveal similar patterns which suggest that changes in the public sector are often reactive (e.g. Kickert, 2014).

### ***Contingency theory***

Taking account of debates on planned versus emergent approaches, a number of organisational scholars (cf. Burnes, 1996) argue that there is no single change approach that can apply in all organisational situations. They suggest that the most appropriate approach depends on the type of change being embarked on and the circumstances in which it is being undertaken. This approach is known as contingency theory. This theory originally argued that organisations should not follow a single form of organisational structure; instead, organisational structure depends on the specific circumstances the organisation is in (Otley 2016). The central idea of classic contingency theory is fitness to external environment. This suggests that any change is wasted if it does not promote a better fit with the external environment (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). For instance, when an organisation operates in a turbulent environment where its structure is no longer appropriate, it requires an organisational transformation (Burnes, 2014). Such transformation is relatively large-scale at each level of the organisation and is time-consuming. An example is provided by Burnes (2014) on financial institutions' response to the 2008 credit crunch, where a rapid re-organisation or restructuring was required to survive in the turbulent environment. Similarly, many public organisational changes are induced by external environmental change such as financial crisis (Reichard, 2003). A re-organisation is a major change in organisational

structure which is very disruptive at every level of an organisation (Macintosh, 2012). It often involves a radical shift in power distribution and how organisations operate. In this type of change, a clear plan and change objectives are essential to minimise ambiguity and other negative consequences and to maximise coordination between different parts of an organisation (Macintosh, 2012).

When changes take place in a relatively stable environment and the focus is at an individual and group level rather than at an organisational level, the key objective of changes is to ensure stability and predictability of individual performance. This is achieved through a top-down approach where managers identify and disseminate best practice. In traditional, bureaucratic organisations, this can involve a Taylorist approach where managers and engineers identify the 'best way of working' and impose it on workers (Macintosh, 2012). However, in a more participative organisational culture, a more collaborative and engaged approach is taken, where a group of workers and specialists get together and come up with a solution on how to improve the system (Macintosh, 2012). In a similar organisational environment, when changes entail modification of behaviour and attitudes at individual and group levels, the change process can be quite slow (Burnes, 2009). For example, changes in behaviours may involve developing new skills that can take time to learn. In addition, it is important to stimulate workers understanding of why new skills and ways of working are needed, and to provide any training to develop those skills (Macintosh, 2012).

Contingency theory is a useful and practical tool for management when evaluating the type of change situation an organisation is facing and making informed decisions about the change approach they should consider undertaking (Macintosh, 2012). In the case of public sector change, Sminia and Van Nistelrooij (2006) encourage a contingency approach for public sector organisational change because these organisations are often reactive to political and economic environmental changes. Whilst Sminia and Nistelrooij (2006) acknowledge the potential advantage contingency theory may have on public sector change as in how it helps to identify and categorise different external environmental factors, contingency theory sees organisations as passive respondents to their environment and lack of possibilities to actively shape the environment socially and politically (Ackroyd, 2002). Based on the examples above, it seems that this is particularly true for public sector organisational change.

## Responding to NPM criticisms

Whilst some criticisms of NPM have been discussed above such as increasing pressures on managers to achieve desired outcomes, diminishing the public value and professional identity and being the overly prescriptive top-down approach to change in public sector organisation, there are additional debates about NPM related to sustainability and practicality.

### ***The 'death' and return of NPM***

With the development of information technology and criticisms of NPM, alternative theories have been introduced as an alternative way of understanding change in public sector organisations, such as the Digital Era of Governance (DEG) (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006). Dunleavy *et al.* (2006) suggest that the era of NPM has ended because the key concepts of NPM have led to “policy disasters” and other parts are stalled or reversed in some of the key countries (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006, p. 468). Specifically, Dunleavy *et al.* (2006) summarise three themes of NPM: disaggregation, competition and incentivisation. They outline components for each theme based on the current status of countries, including the United States, UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Japan. Among these countries, they argue that the majority of these concepts have been reversed or stalled, and only a small number of concepts are still used. These concepts include performance measurement, customer-orientation, equity and efficiency. Since there are so few components of NPM left, they believe that “[NPM] has essentially died in the water” and propose a new movement of DEG (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006, p. 468). DEG is a digital movement which highlights the central role played by Information Technology (IT) and IT change in public sector organisations to manage business operations and deliver public services (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006). This cluster of theories based on the idea that the era of NPM has gone is known as ‘post-NPM’. A similar argument also appears in recent studies of public change (Hughes, 2017).

Dunleavy *et al.*'s (2006)'s overall premise and some of his assertions on the impact of IT on change in the public sector has been recognised in both practice and theory. However, their overall premise and conclusion that NPM is no longer relevant to the study of public sector change can be critiqued, in particular, their contention that NPM has been replaced by other post-NPM theories. Similar to other post-NPM theories, the purpose of DEG is to improve the efficiency of delivering public services through technological changes, including, intranets in organisational information networks, electronic systems for internal and external

communication, electronic service systems and electronic record keeping (Dunleavy et al., 2006). These technological changes have enabled public sector organisations to provide better public services with limited resources. Technological changes as an initiative of DEG is used to supplement the central ideas of NPM, of managerialism and performance measurement, through technological monitoring and control. DEG has been used to implement the abstract and fragmented concepts of NPM in organisations through technological change (Christensen, 2012). In other words, if NPM is a political reform in public sector organisations, DEG applies NPM in these organisations through inter-organisational orientation (Christensen, 2012). Not only has DEG proven that NPM is by no means over, it has also demonstrated that technological change is a “central force” of NPM (Hood, 2000, p. 17). A similar observation has been made by Lapsley (2012) when discussing the role of technological change on NPM. Lapsley (2012) emphasises the importance of technological change in promoting and facilitating NPM-related changes in public sector organisations. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that post-NPM theories are modified versions of NPM, which again defeats the claim that NPM is ‘dead in the water’ as proposed by Dunleavy et al. (2006).

In addition, in contrast to dismissals of NPM, a number of studies have argued that NPM still plays a decisive role in change in the public sector (e.g. Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010; Gualmini, 2008). For example, Gualmini (2008) compares administrative changes in the UK, Italy, France, Spain, German and the United States to governance decision making on public services and finds a private style of management: agencification in public service departments and increasing flexibility over employment contracts, administration and political appointments. She also identifies a trend towards decentralisation of recruiting and training and an extension of emphasis on value for money in governments in these countries. She argues that key concepts of NPM are still deeply rooted in public sector organisations in the countries studied. She concludes that NPM is still a trend. In addition, evidence from recent studies shows a return of NPM in both theory and practice (Glennon *et al.*, 2017; Lindsay *et al.*, 2017). Despite the increasing criticism of NPM, key concepts such as privatisation, managerialism, performance measurement, marketisation, competition, customer orientation are still relevant to organisational change in public sector organisations today.

## *Outcomes of change*

While some studies suggest that the outcomes of change in public sector organisations are rarely observed, others argue NPM change often leads to undesired results. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2014) suggest that outcomes of change are rarely observed for the following reasons: first, the outcome of change in the public sector has a long causal chain due to the central feature of public management; second, different stakeholders have different views of justifications, interpretations of change and its outcome. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the success of a change depends on how we define what is meant by success; finally, there is a lack of evaluation due to practical and political reasons. This includes criticism of change in public sector organisations. The outcomes of change can take many years and the next government in power may not bother to evaluate the outcome from its predecessor. Even if an evaluation has been set up, policy may have moved on before changes can be completed and policymakers may not wait for the outcome before proceeding. However, through analysing paradoxes of NPM in early studies (e.g. unexpected consequences), Hood and Peters (2004) outline a number of reasons for undesired NPM changes: adaptation of poor grounded models, disregarding historical evidence and resistance to understanding the meaning behind NPM. They argue that much of the early research attempts to deliver a 'one-size-fits-all' organisational structure and operational strategy, failing to critically adopt the central idea of NPM. They point out the importance of NPM in understanding change in public sector organisations.

However, recent reviews of previous public management literature show that most studies of change in public management focus on the undesired and unexpected effects of NPM (Fattore *et al.*, 2018; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010). An increasing number of studies examine the rationales and consequences of NPM on public sector organisations. In the example of Glennon *et al.* (2017), through analysing interviews with managers in UK local government, they outline that some obvious consequences of change in the public sector, such as staff reduction, service reduction and skill deficiencies; yet these are rarely discussed as consequences of NPM. They explain that the level of employment in the local government are at the lowest level records of the Office of National Statistics (2016, cited in Glennon *et al.*, 2017). As a result of budget reduction, local governments are required to do more with less resources. Staff members are the main resource in public service delivery. Cutting staff members means losing staff skills and capacity required to deliver public services. In



addition, this has a significant impact on the motivation and commitment to the organisation of those who are able to retain their jobs (Glennon *et al.*, 2017). Although Glennon *et al.* (2017) examine the impact of NPM on employees based on interview data from managers, there is no direct evidence from these frontline workers to confirm how NPM affected their job and the way they work.

### Conclusion

This chapter presented a critical review of NPM in the public management literature. It argues that a single focus (privatisation or marketisation) NPM does not provide a full picture of how NPM works. By applying the theory of organisational culture, I suggest that NPM involves a culture change from traditional administrative culture to 'business-like' culture that connects and incorporates central concepts of NPM - privatisation and marketisation - when explaining changes in public sector organisations.

By reviewing theories of organisational change, I draw attention to the limitations of different approaches to change in public sector organisations. Despite scholars' (e.g. Currier, 1999; Lindsay *et al.*, 2017) recommendation of an emergent approach to change to reduce potential negative impacts associated with employees' resistance, this thesis is aligned with proponents of planned approach who suggest that this is sometimes the only possible approach to managing NPM-related change in public sector organisations. This is because the planned approach not only fits the top-down nature of NPM but also helps to reduce potential conflicts brought by top-down approach to change through elements such as group dynamics and action research. In other words, the planned approach not only incorporates important features of NPM-related change as a top-down approach from the central government, but also addresses resistance resulting from social conflicts between different stakeholders (Burnes, 2009a).

The chapter concludes by exploring the extent to which more recent literature has responded to earlier critiques. Specifically, it builds on recent work and argues that NPM is still relevant and crucial to understanding change in public sector organisations. With support from empirical studies in different public sector organisations, it demonstrates the strong presence of NPM in practice. It also responds to the claim that NPM changes often lead to undesired results by discussing the lack of evaluation of NPM change.

## Chapter 3

### **Understanding emotional ambivalence: a way of overcoming dualistic representations of emotion in organisations**

#### Introduction

Many organisational scholars and practitioners agree that organisational change can be experienced as a highly emotional event (e.g. Huy, 1999; Kiefer, 2002a, 2002b). Emotions such as excitement, frustration, anger and fear are often embedded in employees' experiences of organisational change (Liu and Perrewe, 2005; Huy, 2005). This is particularly the case in situations of radical organisational change which generate upheaval through transformation of organisational structures and processes (Kirsch *et al.*, 2010). Here, radical change is understood not only as involving a major redistribution of resources and power but also as an expectation of a cultural shift that challenges underlying assumptions about the nature of the organisation (Fineman, 1993; Huy, 1999).

The main purpose of this chapter is to understand employees and managers' emotional responses to organisational change through the concept of emotional ambivalence (Piderit, 2000; Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). In this thesis, *emotional ambivalence* refers to simultaneous, conflicting emotions experienced by employees and managers during organisational change. Whilst previous studies of organisational change have tended to categorise emotions into negative and positive, there is a growing literature that seeks to problematise and address limitations associated with earlier research, which represents emotional responses to organisational change as either positive or negative (Klarner *et al.*, 2011). The concepts of ambivalence, mixed emotion and emotional dissonance (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010; Rees *et al.*, 2013) are important to this. These studies identify conflicting emotions as a response to organisational change and show how this influences individual decision-making. However, applications of the concept of ambivalence in some of these studies suggest that organisation members' responses to change are attitudinal rather than emotional (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010). In their view, there are three dimensions of attitudes, namely the cognitive, emotional and behavioural. In other words, these studies see emotion as a component of attitude rather than a response to the event – organisational change based on the tripartite view of attitude (Piderit, 2000). However, there is a growing literature on mixed

emotion which addresses the lack of understanding of complex emotions experienced by employees and managers during organisational change. These studies of mixed emotion during organisational change have developed through longitudinal study (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). They provide clear evidence of conflicting emotions during the whole process of organisational change. Here, *conflicting emotions* refers to one's experience of contradictory emotions resulted from organisational change. However, these studies tend to overlook the possibility of conflicting emotions that exist at the same time. Nor do they differentiate between conflicting and mixed emotions.

Based on the summary above, it is suggested that understanding of conflicting emotions during change remains underdeveloped. Similarly, the concept of emotional ambivalence as a type of conflicting emotion has also been overlooked when studying employees' emotional responses to organisational change. By applying the concept of emotional ambivalence to change, this helps to overcome the binary logic associated with previous studies of emotions in organisation. In turn, this offers an alternative framework through which to explore and understand employees' and managers' emotions in response to organisational change more comprehensively. This chapter seeks to differentiate between mixed emotion, conflicting emotion and emotional ambivalence. It argues that understanding emotional ambivalence in organisations can be enhanced by studying how employees and managers engage with and respond to organisational change.

This chapter is organised as follows: I begin by reviewing definitions of emotion and summarising the role of emotion in organisations. This is followed by an exploration of the role of emotions during organisational change, specifically focusing on 'negative' and 'positive' emotional responses to change. Through discussing sources and outcomes of attitudinal and emotional ambivalence, it provides a better understanding of ambivalence in organisational context. By reviewing studies on attitudinal ambivalence during change, it highlights the need to understand the complexity of emotions experienced during change through the idea of emotional ambivalence. I then move on to discuss mixed emotion as an alternative way of addressing the binary logic associated with studies of emotion in organisational change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). However, as will be shown, these studies do not consider the possibility of mixed emotion occurring simultaneously during organisational change. In the final part of the chapter, attention is

drawn to emotional dissonance, given its relevance to emotional ambivalence as both concepts are associated with the experience of conflicting emotions.

### Defining emotion

The term ‘emotion’ has been defined inconsistently across disciplines. However, researchers tend to agree that emotions consist of individual subjective experiences which involve “feeling[s]...related thoughts...psychological and biological states and subsequently behaviours” (Fiebig and Kramer, 1998, p. 536.). This definition of emotion locates “emotions as being on inside of a person” (Kuby, 2014, p. 1286). It emerges from psychological perspective which focuses on studying emotions as a way to explore the internal consciousness of a participant. In the organisational literature, emotion is the focus of considerable study with a number of books (e.g. Fineman 2003, 2005; Clarke, Broussine and Watts, 2015; Hart, Ashkanasy and Zerbe, 2015; Hochschild, 2003) and journal articles (e.g. Schuh *et al.*, 2016; Brannan, 2005; Kirsch *et al.*, 2010; Kiefer, 2005), many based on empirical studies, having been published since 1980s. Within this, there is a longstanding traditional view which portrays emotions in contrast to rationality, especially in the workplace (Argyris, 1985). For instance, Argyris views emotion as a dysfunctional, irrational negative aspect of organisation that disrupts the smooth functioning of the system and therefore needs to be regulated. Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) adopt a managerial perspective which portrays managers in organisations as involved in seeking to resolve conflicts and struggles in order to maintain a rational approach to completing tasks and meeting objectives by dealing with emotions raised during social interactions. While early studies frequently contrast emotion with rationality, especially in the workplace, more recent work suggests emotions are of primary importance in how we make sense of organisational reality (Hempap and Bekmerier-Feuerhahn, 2016). This draws attention to the intersubjective experience of how organisation members constitute their work environment by negotiating a shared understanding of reality (Bryant and Cox, 2006; Gill, 2015).

Aligned with this second perspective, this thesis moves away from the traditional psychological perspective which sees emotions as solely residing in a person, towards a sociological perspective which sees emotion as active performance in relation to others (Kuby, 2014). Emotions are “culturally determined...[and] learnt as part of...the beliefs, values, norms and expectations” (Armon-Jones, 1986, p. 33). The social and cultural context provide rules and vocabularies for us to label and display emotions (Fineman, 2003;

Mesquita, Boiger and De Leersnyder, 2016). Specifically, we often hear people saying, ‘I would feel the same way if I were you’ or ‘It is normal to feel this way’. These sentences sometimes imply that there is a certain expectation and group norm to feel a particular way in a specific context. These emotional norms within a social group or society which we are member of, influence how we experience emotion (Fineman, 2000; Hochschild, 2012).

This is particularly true during organisational change when radical changes take place. In such contexts, it is reasonable for employees to feel fear and anger due to uncertainty and their lack of ability to cope with change. For example, many studies suggest that employees find radical changes in organisations stressful due to heavy workload fears about being layed off (Kiefer, 2005). Some scholars see these negative emotions as the reason for employees’ withdrawal and obstructive behaviour toward organisational change, therefore arguing that they need to be removed from the organisation (Nippa, 1996, cited in Kiefer, 2002b). Some suggest that negative emotions jeopardise rationality in organisations and thus reduce the effectiveness of employees (Piderit, 2000). Emotions such as fear and anger are often perceived by managers as negative due to the potential negative consequences they might bring to the organisation. In order to overcome negative emotion, scholars focus on positive emotions experienced by employees during organisational change (Kiefer 2005). This is driven by the assumption that positiveness is “an optimistic route to optimistic outcomes” (Fineman, 2006, p. 272). Positiveness is key to producing positive outcomes in organisations. It is likely that employees will feel excitement and passion due to potential career progression and improvement of working conditions led by organisational change. These employees are likely to contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation as well as to other employees’ commitment to organisational change. In other words, emotions such as excitement and passion are perceived as positive because of the potential positive benefits they might offer to the organisation (Fineman, 2006). The separation of positive and negative emotions in the literature is problematic because it imposes a value judgement created by management as to how employees should experience change. These interpretations of emotions are communicated and learnt by the employees through social interaction in organisations. In a sense, emotions result from organisational member’s interpretation of social interaction – in this case, organisational change. The interpretation of emotions is based on social relations, social background, previous knowledge and experiences (Damasio, 1994). This is also known as an interpretive frame of reference (Isabella, 1990). The meaning of emotions is created and negotiated within the interpretive frame of reference (Fineman, 2000; Isabella, 1990).

This also implies that as a social being, our emotions come after the evaluation of organisational change against the interpretive frame of reference adopted by individuals. This idea is aligned with a cognitive behavioural perspective which presumes that experiencing emotions is a cognitive process (Prinz, 2005; Stanley and Burrows, 2000). Conversely, events such as organisational change can induce emotions that influence individuals' subjective experiences of work and how they interpret information regarding change (Gill, 2015). In other words, although *emotions* are individual experiences, they do not pre-exist within an individual. Emotions are emergent, performative products of specific situations that are socially and culturally determined (Kuby, 2014).

### Dualism in the study of emotion during organisational change

Emotions are often treated dichotomously as opposites in organisational contexts. This is especially the case in the study of organisational change (Kiefer, 2002b). Many studies tend to treat emotions during change in a relatively undifferentiated manner, grouping them into positive and negative, rather than treating them independently (Antoniadou *et al.*, 2015). A possible explanation is this bifurcation provides a way of understanding employees' engagement with or resistance to change as either an opportunity (positive emotion) or a threat (negative emotion) (Smollan, 2012). The following section provides a more detailed review of 'negative' and 'positive' emotions. However, the use of these labels in this thesis does not reflect my acceptance of this dualistic positioning in the previous literature. Instead, I argue that the application of dualism in previous studies neglects the possibility of alternative ways of understanding emotion, including by using terms such as 'mixed emotion', 'conflicting emotion' and 'emotional ambivalence'. I suggest that these alternative labels enable a more fluid, dynamic understanding of emotion during organisational change.

### *Negative emotions*

Early studies of organisational change see negative emotions as a dysfunctional reaction (Cartwright and Cooper, 1994). Bryant and Cox (2006) suggest that such a claim assumes that emotions are obstacles to organisational change and, therefore, they need to be minimised or eliminated. Kiefer (2002a, 2005) also points out that previous studies tend to treat emotion as a cause of problems during the implementation of organisational change, especially negative emotions which can result in resistance to organisational change among employees. Other potential problems include an increased likelihood of withdrawal and a

reduction in organisational trust. As such, it is argued that, in order to successfully manage change, there is a need to understand employees' emotions and, more importantly, to understand the role of different emotions during change (Kiefer, 2002b; Kirsch *et al.*, 2010).

Kiefer (2005) suggests that organisational change is often associated with negative emotions. These negative emotions include anger, distrust and frustration toward management (Kiefer, 2005; Smollan, 2012), fear, anger, sadness, and frustration as a result of uncertainty (Giaever and Smollan, 2015), perceived injustice (Barclay, Skarlicki and Pugh 2005; Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2002), and loss of identity (Clarke, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2007; Eriksson, 2004) during organisational change. While it is important to differentiate between diverse negative emotions, it is also relevant to look at the potential connection between negative emotions experienced in organisational change as these emotions do not exist in isolation. This is because almost every negative emotional tone involves frustration, including stress, anxiety, fear and insecurity. These emotions are interconnected. For example, fear as an intense emotional experience occurs when there is an immediate threat (Antoniadou *et al.*, 2015). This is the most commonly identified negative emotion associated with organisational change (Kiefer, 2002b). It is associated with the fear of losing one's job, fear of reduced income and fear of increasing workload (Harris and Gresch, 2010). When explaining the experience of fear during organisational change, Kiefer (2002b) categorises a group of negative emotions as based on fear; this includes anxiety, despair, panic and insecurity. Many interviewees in Kiefer's (2002b) study expressed feelings of job insecurity as a consequence of concern that they may not be needed by their company in the future as a result of changes. In addition, they highlighted reasons for feelings of job insecurity as caused by unsatisfactory communication about change and lack of control over decisions that directly impacted on their lives. Similarly, anxiety is a response to threat and danger (Stanley *et al.*, 2001). These two negative emotions during organisational change are both associated with job insecurity. As this example highlights, some negative emotions experienced during organisational change are closely associated.

Another common negative reaction to organisational change is a feeling of distrust and injustice, which has been overlooked in previous studies (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015). According to organisational justice theory (Greenberg, 1987), change is associated with employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of decisions and outcomes about procedures and processes of change (Saunders *et al.*, 2002). Previous studies have identified three types

of organisational justice: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Greenberg, 1987). In the context of organisational change, employees' "perception[s] about the outcomes of decisions... [associated with change] form the basis of distributive justice"; employees' "perception about the processes [is] used to arrive at...these decisions form the basis of procedural justice"; and interactional justice is associated with employees' "perception about the fairness of the interpersonal treatment received during [change] implementation" (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003, p. 361). On the basis of organisational justice theory, a number of studies of the effects of fairness on employees have provided insights into the emotions experienced as a result of perceived injustice during organisational change. For example, Saunders *et al.* (2002) interviewed 28 employees in a local council in the UK shortly after a re-organisation. Analysis of employees' responses to change reveal both positive and negative emotions. Their findings also suggest that employees felt positive toward change tended to discuss the outcomes of change for the organisation which are associated with distributive injustice. Those who felt negative toward change tended to focus on fairness of change in relation to personal outcomes which are associated with interactional injustice. Although insightful, these findings provide only a partial view of the role that fairness perceptions play in employees feelings' during organisational change; they overlook the adversity of employees' emotional response when they receive unfair treatment. To address the lack of understanding of emotional response to unfair treatment, De Clercq and Saridakis (2015) found a positive relationship between employees' perception of injustice and negative emotions during organisational change. However, these studies see unfairness as one of the sources of negative emotions rather than an emotional response to change. There is still a lack of understanding of distrust and feeling of unfair or injustice as emotional responses to change (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015).

Grief is another common response to organisational change that has been well-documented in the emotion literature (Bell and Taylor, 2011; Castillo, Fernandez and Sallan, 2018; Julie and Cox, 1997). The feeling of grief is often associated with personal job losses or losing colleagues who are close as a result of downsizing (Friedrich and Wustenhagen, 2017), as well as the death of organisational identity resulting from organisational culture change (Eriksson, 2004). Many of these studies often adopt Kubler-Ross's (1969) stage model of grief to explain emotional responses to change. The emotional stages defined by Kubler-Ross have a close relationship to the emotions experienced during organisational change (Castillo *et al.*, 2018). This "allows emotions to be grouped into well-defined categories, from where



emotional classification the emotions are no longer seen as a whole at the end of the process of change” (Castillo *et al.*, 2018, p. 471). In some cases, studies slightly modify the original stage model of grief to explain employees’ negative emotions during organisational change (Castillo *et al.*, 2018; Christensen and Hammond, 2015). For example, Castillo *et al.* (2018) identify five stages of negative emotions: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance - as proposed by Kubler-Ross in the context of organisational change. They also find that the stages of anger and denial often arise concurrently. Specifically, interviewees who showed a feeling of denial to change also expressed anger toward the organisation in their study. Therefore, they integrate denial and anger as one stage of grief during organisational change. Castillo *et al.* (2018) introduce another two further stages of grief: revisiting and deserting. The stage of deserting is discussed in comparison to depression in the original version. Their evidence, drawn from interviews, has shown a stage of deserting, where interviewees discuss their desire to leave the organisation.

Elfenbein (2007) criticises these traditional approaches and assumptions about emotion and argues that negative emotions can function as warnings of resistance, which are vital to organisational change. Specifically, resistance is perceived as the product of careful consideration. Therefore, understanding the reasons behind resistance to change, and adjusting change programmes accordingly, can lead to more effective change (Ford, Ford and D’Amello, 2008). In other words, negative emotions provide a critical function to members in the organisation and enable them to devote their attention to an event and mobilize resources to address concerns generated by it (Liu and Perrewé, 2005). While some studies identify the potential benefits of negative emotions in facilitating organisational change, they overlook analyse the role of these negative emotions in making sense of organisational change, specifically, how emotion shapes employees’ interpretation of change (Klarner *et al.*, 2011). Kiefer (2002b) and Steigenberger (2015) point out that emotion is an important component of how individuals construct the meaning of change at individual (work tasks, personal situation) and collective levels (relationship with organisations, social relationships).

### ***Positive emotions***

There is a burgeoning literature that highlights the role of positive emotions such as excitement, hope, and contentment in situations of organisational change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Kiefer, 2002b; Kirsch *et al.*, 2010; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). For example, in a study of emotional dimensions during organisational change, Kirsch *et al.* (2010) surveyed

employees in 200 organisations undergoing organisational change. They developed a feeling scale for organisational change using factor analysis. They confirm that positive emotions such as passion, pride, excitement, humour and curiousness are associated with organisational change. In addition, other studies have provided evidence of a complex relationship between positive emotions and positive engagement with change (Avey, Wernsing and Luthans, 2008; Harris and Gresch, 2010).

In a case study of a local authority, Saunders *et al.* (2002) found positive emotions toward change were experienced among employees in this public sector organisation. This was evidenced by the results of a survey and later confirmed by in-depth interviews. Interviewees who felt positively towards change emphasised the maintenance of communication throughout the process. They draw comparisons with the inadequate approach to communication in the local council. One interviewee expressed appreciation of how he was engaged during the organisational change. He felt that his opinion was listened to. Saunders *et al.* (2002) suggest that employees who report positive emotions toward change often engage in social interaction with senior management. Based on their findings, when there is appropriate communication about change, Saunders *et al.* (2002) argue that employees are more likely to feel positive rather than negative emotions toward change, particularly those who are actively engaged in process of change. This draws attention to the importance of communication in enabling positive emotions during change in a public sector organisation which has potential relevance to this thesis. Similarly, in a study of the impact of emotion on organisational acquisition, Vuori *et al.* (2017) identify a number of positive emotions such as excitement, trust and optimism at the beginning of a restructuring process. They also suggest that initial trust resulted from extensive negotiation and two-way communication (e.g. workshops and informal meetings to build strong bonds) where opportunities were provided for employees to learn more about the capabilities and the culture of the other company. Positive emotions are also evidenced in the Giaever and Smollan's (2015)'s study of emotional experiences among hospital nurses in response to ongoing technological change. They report that many nurses express joy and excitement since they are the first ward to introduce the new technology, positioning them at the forefront in their hospital.

To summarise, these studies not only acknowledge the presence of positive emotions such as excitement in responses to organisational change, they also recognise the potential benefits that positive emotions contribute on organisational members' understanding of change.

However, some of these studies only treat positive emotions as an opposite category to negative emotions (Kiefer, 2002b; Harris and Gresch, 2010). The idea that positive emotions hold “the key to forge paths towards positive change” contagiously spreads among academics and practitioners through ‘positive thinking’ by positive scholars who acknowledge the existence of chaos and conflicts brought by ‘negativity’ in organisations but choose to disengage with it (Cooperride and Sekerka, 2003, p. 236, cited in Fineman 2006). However, by critically reflecting on aspirations of positiveness in organisations, Fineman (2006) argues that the positive study is more problematic than it initially proposes. He suggests that the positiveness is a loosely assembled term that involves a group of ‘good’ attributes of subjective experiences, personal traits and organisation that enables positive experiences. What we see as ‘good’ attributes are contingent regarding a particular social order or event (Fineman, 2006). Also, Fineman acknowledges the potential dark side of applications of positiveness on those who fail to achieve positive attributes in organisations. He also criticises one of the principles of positive studies on the separation of positive from negative emotions (Fineman, 2006). Fineman (2006) suggests that separation of positive from negative emotions overlooks the ‘continual, dialectical relationship’ between these two types of emotions (p. 274). Based on Fineman’s (2006) critique I argue that such bifurcation in emotional studies not only overlooks the complexity of emotions experienced in organisations but also imposes positive and negative value judgement that in favour of management. It is problematic because it suggests negative emotions need to be managed or eliminated in order to achieve the desired outcome of change (Collins, 1998). Therefore, there is still more to be done to understand positive emotions towards change.

### ***Emotional ambivalence***

Whether the focus is on positive or negative emotions in situations of organisational change, this literature analyses and evaluates the emotional experiences of employees and managers dichotomously. As Pratt and Doucet (2000) suggest, simple shades of positive or negative emotions are no longer sufficient to understand individual experiences of work as a result of ever-increasing complexity caused by the realities of hypercompetitive marketplaces, technologically mediated relationships, inconsistent empowerment and economic insecurity in the workplace. As a result of these issues embedded in the social structure of organisations, individuals often experience ambivalence (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). In addition, Harris and Gresch (2010) explain that “change can offer opportunities for personal and career growth,

empowerment, improved salary, benefits and working conditions and enhanced employment security”, at the same time, change also engages with “high costs of establishing new relationships, skills and patterns of activity, reduced income, increased workload and job loss” (p. 190). In response to opportunities and potential losses accompanied by organisational change, emotions must be understood in much more complex terms than has been enabled by the traditional dichotomous approach to emotion as either positive or negative. The simple separation of positive and negative emotions favours management interests which allow desired emotions to be obtained and undesired emotions to be controlled, reduced and eventually eliminated (Klarner *et al.*, 2011).

Positive experiences are tied to positive as well as negative occurrences and events, and vice versa. Specifically, when change happens, some emotions occur immediately after thoughtful evaluation of information and making sense of the change, an individual starts to see how they can benefit as well as the potential consequences resulted from change (Isabella, 1990). In other words, emotions induce sense-making of change which in turn generate conflicting emotional responses (Liu and Perrewé, 2005). Klarner *et al.* (2011) point out that it is entirely reasonable for employees to experience conflicting emotion during change, such as fear of losing their jobs resulting from uncertainty and lack of information, and excitement and hope for a better future and organisational improvement. A dualistic approach to emotion and organisational change neglects the possibility of conflicting emotions identified in the previous studies. It also overlooks evolving emotional processes under the label of emotional ambivalence, where at least two contradictory emotions are experienced at the same time (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman and Melwani, 2017).

The literature of emotional ambivalence contains an array of views on how this is defined (see **Table 3.1**). Specifically, there are many terms used that seem to describe the similar phenomenon, namely, ‘ambivalence’, ‘mixed emotion’, and ‘emotional dissonance’. In order to better understand how emotional ambivalence can resolve the problematic binary treatment of emotion in studies of organisational change, there is a need to compare emotional ambivalence with other terms adopted by previous studies. In the following sections of this chapter, I look at each of these concepts individually in order to better understand complex emotional responses to change.

**Table 3.1** *Ambivalence and related concepts*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Sources</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Ambivalence	Rothman <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Ashforth <i>et al.</i> , 2014	“Simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotion or cognitive orientations towards a person, situation, object, task, goal or idea” (Rothman <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Emotional ambivalence	Weigert, 1991; Pratt and Branett, 1997	“The simultaneous production of conflicting emotions” (Pratt and Branett, 1997, p.82)
Mixed emotion	Larsen and McGraw, 2014	“The co-occurrence of any two or more same-valence or opposite-valence emotions” (p.263)
Emotional dissonance	Diestel and Schmidt, 2011	“The discrepancy between emotions felt and those required by the job role is commonly referred to as emotional dissonance” (p.643)

### Ambivalence

Weigert and Franks (1989) use the term ‘the age of ambivalence’ to describe the normality of such phenomena and to emphasize the importance of studying ambivalence in contemporary life. Ambivalence has been studied by researchers in different disciplines for over a century, starting with psychological analysis of individual attitudes between the 1910s and the 1960s in psychological contexts. Psychoanalyst, Bleuler (1910, cited in Pratt and Doucet, 2000) coined the term and discussed it in relation to competing affective forces in psychological context. After two decades, the concept of ambivalence was further explored by Allport (1935) who examined it in line with the feature of neutrality in attitudinal studies. Here, attitudinal neutrality refers to a neutral position held by individuals. It incorporates the unclassified attitudes that cannot be easily grouped into positive or negative attitudes (Allport, 1935). Studies between 1970s and 1990s have been inconsistent in identifying the features of ambivalence (Kaplan, 1972; Priester and Petty, 1996; Thompson, Zanna and Griffin, 1995). These studies investigate neutrality attitudes in order to critique the oversimplified bipolar model of attitude. Bipolarism in attitudinal studies is similar to the dualistic logic in studies of emotion. These studies suggest that a bipolar conceptualization of attitude was insufficient to understand the cognitive information processes involved in evaluation. These studies aim to develop equations to calculate the neutrality as one of the features of ambivalence. They see neutrality as a response of ‘neither positive nor negative’

or 'equally positive and negative' on traditional semantic differential scale participants could give (Thomson *et al.*, 1995). Although the findings of these studies did not confirm the likelihood of two conflict positions held by a single individual, they point out the possibility of a neutral position as a result of conflicting information processed by that individual.

Around the same time, the concept of ambivalence as an attitude was applied by sociologists to problems associated with incompatible normative expectations of one's status and role at societal level (Coser, 1966; Goffman, 1961; Merton, 1976). For example, ambivalence occurs when a working mother is switching between different societal roles that she places, such as a mother and a worker. Ambivalence arises due to the contradictory societal expectations of a mother, who is expected to devote her time to family and children, and a worker, who is required to commit time and energy to her job. Merton (1976) argues that conflicting societal expectations of the roles we play may lead to ambivalence. He also argues that ambivalence is a temporary condition and it can be resolved. For example, by studying social ambivalence among surgeons, Goffman (1961) and Coser (1966) reveal that people tend to deal with sociological ambivalence by withdrawing or pretending to withdraw from one role in order better to perform the other. This is also known as 'role distance'. They argue that it is a way of solving temporary sociological ambivalence. To summarise, sociological research not only provides a potential solution to the temporary condition of ambivalence, it also enables development of understanding of ambivalence from an early psychological perspective based on individual attitude, to a broader social conceptualization of why ambivalence occurs.

### ***Attitudinal ambivalence in organisations***

Ambivalence was not applied in organisational contexts until the mid-1990s. Meyerson and Scully (1995) use the term to explain the behaviour of 'tempered radicals', female professionals "who are committed to their organizations, and also committed to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of their organization" (p. 586). Tracing back to the original semantic meaning of ambivalence, they argue that ambivalence is characterised by duality, as "ambivalence involves a pure expression of both sides of a dualism" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995, p. 588). One explanation is that the term 'ambivalence' is taken from Latin *ambo* (both) and *valere* (to be strong) (Foy, 1985, cited in Meyerson and Scully, 1995) which suggests that duality is a natural feature of ambivalence.

The concept of *duality* is used to describe the simultaneous presence of contradictory qualities within a unified whole (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014). The reason ambivalence is not the same as neutrality is because neutrality or marginality seeks a middle ground which may lessen the features of both sides (positive and negative). For example, a marginal person who lives at the edge of two distinctive culture groups. Situating on the boundary of two distinctive groups means this person does not have the ancestry, belief system or social skills to become a full member of neither culture group. Similarly, when a person is having a neutral attitude toward an object or event, it means he or she does not have a positive or negative attitude toward it. However, when someone is ambivalent towards an object or event, it means that he or she has a positive and a negative attitude toward it.

Meyerson and Scully (1995) explicitly challenge the view that ambivalence is a temporary condition as suggested by Merton (1976) and argue that individuals can remain ambivalent. This is because Merton sees ambivalence as a temporary condition. He suggests ambivalence is associated with neutrality due to lack of information and evaluation and it can be resolved when more information is provided. However, findings from other studies suggest otherwise. For example, by discussing the difficulties they face when experiencing change in relation to women's identities in business school, Meyerson and Scully (1995) believe that as female researchers who work in business school, they worked in an unequal system that is dominated by white males. On the one hand, Meyerson and Scully (1995) both perceive themselves as "feminists and radical humanists" who strongly believe in "eradicating gender, race and class injustices" (p. 587). However, on the other hand, they find themselves in an awkward position to try to master the professional norms in order to achieve power and authority within the institutional culture that they disdain. Meyerson and Scully (1995) describe ambivalent female researchers are "outsiders within" (p. 589). These ambivalent researchers have "knowledge and insight of the insider with the critical attitude of the outsider" (Stonequist, 1937, p. 155, cited in Meyerson and Scully, 1995). This is different from what was suggested by Merton (1976) to be a lack of information and evaluation.

Whilst the above studies show understanding of how ambivalence is experienced by individuals in organisation and society, a review of organisational change and ambivalence conducted by Piderit (2000) brought the concept of ambivalence into the field of organisational change with the purpose of replacing ambivalence for resistance. Similarly, Oreg and Sverdlik (2011) illustrate the possibility of misinterpreting employees' resistance to

organisational change as ambivalence through overlapping measurement. To be specific, organisational members who experience ambivalence during change may be perceived as resistant because of their negative attitudes toward change or change agent. Both studies hold the purpose of replacing the idea of resistance with the concept of ambivalence in the organisational change context. This is because resistance is commonly recognised as employees' response to organisational change and it is seen as an important factor that causes organisations to fail to achieve their objectives through organisational change (Burnes, 2015; Oreg, 2006).

By conducting a critical review on workers' responses to change, Piderit (2000) identifies three attitudinal dimensions of ambivalence cognitive, emotional and behavioural. The cognitive dimension is associated with what the worker knows about the change. The emotional dimension is related to the feeling the worker has toward the change. The behaviour dimension is tied to the intended behaviour of the individual. In her paper, *ambivalence* refers to individuals' experiences of a contradiction between emotional, cognitive or intentional behaviour responses (Piderit, 2000). This experience is revealed in Randall and Procter (2008)'s findings. In their study, Randall and Procter (2008) interviewed 20 senior public servants in a public sector organisation. Ambivalence was expressed by managers in relation to hidden agendas involved in the perceived managerial role as a result of change, criticism over the new appraisal system and monthly meetings. In the example of a voluntarily monthly meeting, one manager expressed the view that he understands what the top management think, but he believes this time could be better used by visiting clients. This reveals a positive cognitive response to meeting; at the same time, it shows his emotional hope that this meeting will not be organised in the future. This example shows clear ambivalence because there is a contradiction between cognitive, emotional and intentional dimensions.

Piderit (2000) also sees ambivalence as workers' rational sense-making processes toward change. She suggests that the process of attitude formation often begins with ambivalence. This suggests that evaluation of change happens after the experience of ambivalence. Randall and Procter (2008) agree with Piderit and suggest that ambiguity is one of the sources of ambivalence and ambivalent experience could be reconciled by evaluation. However, this view contradicts the view argued by Meyerson and Scully (1995) that ambivalence is not a temporary condition. This is because Meyerson and Scully see attitudinal ambivalence as



having equivalent strong positive and negative attitudes toward the same event, person or object (Thompson *et al.*, 1995). Strong attitudes refer to being able to remain stable over time and resisting persuasion (Krosnick and Petty, 1995). By testing the stability of ambivalence attitudes on behaviour among hospital workers, Armitage and Conner (2000) confirm that ambivalent attitudes are less susceptible to persuasion.

A number of studies (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010) also challenge Piderit's view and suggest that the experience of ambivalence requires a deeper evaluation between positive and negative orientations, which increases receptivity to alternative perspectives. By differentiating between ambiguity and ambivalence, Plambeck and Weber (2010) argue that there is an element of evaluation in ambivalence. They argue that ambivalence stands in contrast to the notion of ambiguity. This is because ambiguity is often associated with vagueness and uncertainty of evaluation, whereas ambivalent evaluation assumes the valence of an issue is based on a clear and known contradiction. By examining sources of ambivalence among Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of European organisations in different industries after EU enlargement in 2004, Plambeck and Weber (2010) analyse the role of ambivalence in the information gathering and sense-making process among these CEOs. Specifically, on strategic issues in relation to coping with increasing competitiveness within the new market, they find that CEOs with an ambidextrous strategic orientation and a sense of control over organisational environment are more likely to develop ambivalent evaluations of issues. Plambeck and Weber's (2010) findings also suggest that evaluation of conflicting information potentially produces CEOs' ambivalence when making strategic decisions. In other words, interaction with contradictory information can be seen as one of the sources of ambivalence (Plambeck and Weber, 2010). A similar idea is proposed by Ashforth *et al.*'s (2014) model of organisational ambivalence. Since ambivalence involves careful evaluation of contradictory information, it is argued that organisations are more likely to achieve a successful change when organisational members are experiencing ambivalence. This is because individuals who have experienced ambivalence will consider different aspects of information about the change.

Researchers have investigated attitudinal ambivalence in relation to coping strategies in situations of environmental uncertainty (Tang *et al.*, 2010), impact on CEO's decision-making (Plambeck and Weber, 2010) and organisational resistance (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011). These studies seek to measure attitudinal ambivalence in relation to factors such as

identity, decision-making, leadership in order to explain how ambivalence affects organisational performance. Some studies confine analysis of the concept of ambivalence in relation to other variables and rely on measurements based on previous psychological attitudinal studies (e.g. Kaplan, 1972; Thompson *et al.*, 1995). Others focus on the meaning of ambivalence in relation to cognitive evaluation processes (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010). They tend to adopt a performative orientation by aiming to develop knowledge which contributes to the purpose of maximizing outputs with minimum inputs. The knowledge generated from these studies is limited to inscribing a means-ends calculation (Fournier and Grey, 2000). The ultimate goal of this type of study is to improve the effectiveness of management practice and increase organisational productivity. Despite the performative purpose of studying ambivalence, studies of ambivalence discussed in this section see ambivalence as an attitudinal response that contains an emotional dimension, rather than see it as an emotional response. This aligns with the concept of multi-dimensional ambivalence as proposed by Piderit (2000).

### ***Emotional ambivalence in organisations***

While the above studies focus on attitudinal ambivalence in relation to organisational performativity, a small but growing literature focuses on the experience of emotional ambivalence by investigating sources and potential behaviour outcomes of emotional ambivalence (e.g. Pratt and Branett, 1997; Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). These studies see emotional ambivalence as the experience of having a combination of strong, yet conflicting emotions toward the same person, object, or an event (Pratt and Branett, 1997). Although there may be cognitive evaluation involved in the experience of emotional ambivalence, the focus is on how evaluation as a product of social interaction influences the experience of conflicting feelings rather than this being seen as a cognitive process based on one's mental ability.

In a two-case study of emotional ambivalence, Pratt and Doucet (2000) demonstrate the process of emotional ambivalence experienced by employees from a banking call centre and rural doctors managed by a care organisation. They used focus group methods to explore experiences of individual emotional ambivalence and the outcomes of these experiences. They also examine collective identity as one of the sources of emotional ambivalence at organisational level. In the case of the call centre, they identify experiences of emotional ambivalence among frontline workers. Pratt and Doucet explain that the purpose of call

centre is to provide a customer service which solves issues raised by customers. This requires time for employees to solve an issue (proficiency), yet management places emphasis on statistics such as customers waiting time (efficiency). Sometimes it is impossible for call centre employees to achieve proficiency and efficiency at the same time. This then contributes to employees' ambivalent attitudes toward their jobs. Pratt and Doucet (2000) suggest that attitudinal ambivalence contributes to the experience of conflicting emotions. For example, the call centre workers in Pratt and Doucet's (2000) study enjoy helping customers who are intimidated by telephone banking. At the same time, they express frustration with those customers who were "incompetent" in telephone banking. Feelings of frustration arise because it takes longer to deal with these customers, which slows down the speed of their work and adversely affects their work productivity (efficiency).

In the study of rural doctors' case, social status and perceived dual identities are perceived as one of the sources of emotional ambivalence based on conflicting behaviours caused by the same role (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Being private health practitioners, rural doctors have to take care of patients, yet running a practice also means actively making decisions about its functioning. There is a conflict of interest between these two roles. Similarly, attitudinal ambivalence was associated with incompatible expectations associated with a doctor's role of taking care of patients, and at the same time being required to manage the practice and make business decisions (Merton, 1976). Again, attitudinal ambivalence and identity duality become sources of emotional ambivalence because they affect doctors emotionally (Pratt and Doucet, 2000).

In a study on organisational learning in Amway, Pratt and Branett (1997) explore emotional ambivalence as a recruiting technique to promote individual change among 'prospects' who have the potential to become distributors/ organisational members. They find that emotional ambivalence plays an important role in the formation of individual changes. By interviewing new and existing Amway members, Pratt and Branett (1997) assert that each new member of an organisation is engaged in organisational learning. They argue that organisational learning is a process of change among individuals in the organisation. Pratt and Branett adopt the three-step to change approach as a way to study emotional ambivalence. They demonstrate that contradictory emotions are induced by the process of 'un-freezing', existing cognitive and behavioural routines as suggested in planned approach. Specifically, strong negative emotions, such as dissatisfaction and fear, are generated by new members through stories or

statistics (e.g. 87% of people in the United States are looking for a new job) that imply things in society are deteriorating. At the same time, existing members in the organisation induce positive emotions through positive language (e.g. excitement) and dream building. Then existing members create a safe environment for the prospects by revealing personal information and personal values about themselves in order to develop connections with 'prospects'. They remind prospects that everyone has a chance to succeed in their life. They explain how 'Amway's plan' can help members achieve their dreams. In other words, emotional ambivalence is elicited by recruiters as a recruitment technique. And the plan becomes a solution for new members' emotional ambivalence. Emotional ambivalence as a recruitment technique is also evidenced in a study by Pratt and Rosa (2003). They suggest that employees' emotional ambivalence around work and family can increase their commitment to organisations. Based on studies of three selling companies, Pratt and Rosa (2003) point out that these companies tend to recruit married individuals with children, so they are more aware of work-family conflict. As an organisational practice they help employees to transfer their emotional ambivalence into commitment to the organisation by encouraging "making workers into family" and "bring family to work" (Pratt and Rosa, 2003, p. 395). 'Making workers into family' as a recruitment technique enables employees to foster family-like relationship with other colleagues and clients and 'bring family to work' means bringing family into work and making them become employees of Amway, so their family becomes part of the business.

Another study by Pratt (2000) investigates identity change during distributors' sense-making process at Amway. He finds that distributors self-identified as emotionally ambivalent toward the organisation. Members' identities are formed through sense-breaking and dream-building. Sense-making is grounded in identity construction and involves self-questioning when one's sense of self is challenged. Pratt (2000) explains that this process is similar to change in general and the aim is to "disrupt one's sense of self 'and 'create a meaning void must be filled" (p. 464). Here, the experience of identity change is much like an organisational change. It creates a distributor who loves the organisation, who hates the organisation and who feels ambivalent toward the organisation. These ambivalent distributors showed contradictory emotions toward the organisation.

While these studies focus on the sources and the role of emotional ambivalence as a result of identity change in organisations, a few recent reviews draw attention to the outcomes of

ambivalence. These studies see emotional ambivalence as a simultaneously opposing orientation toward an object or an event. These opposite orientations can lead either to a cognitive clash (also known as cognitive dissonance), an emotional clash, or cognitive and emotional clash (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). They believe there is an element of cognitive evaluation involved in emotional ambivalence. However, unlike Piderit's (2000) three dimensions of ambivalence which is defined as an experience of inconsistency between emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions, in these studies, behaviours are seen as a response to, or an outcome of emotional ambivalence. Ashforth *et al.* (2014) differentiate responses to ambivalence as conscious or unconscious effects that are made to reduce the intensity of ambivalence experienced by individuals or collectives. The intensity of ambivalence refers to the degree of contradictory opinions (negative and positive). They explain that responses to ambivalence occur when individuals intend to protect themselves from emotional consequences of adversity. This involves *defence mechanisms* and *coping mechanisms*. As Ashforth *et al.* (2014) suggest, a defence mechanism is unconscious and unintended, and labelled as avoidance, whereas a coping mechanism is conscious and intended, and draws attention to problem-solving. Ashforth *et al.* (2014) specify two types of response within the coping mechanism, which are compromise and holism. Compromise involves intentionally accommodating either positive or negative orientations. Holism is the only response that comprises the complete, simultaneous, and typically conscious, acceptance of both opposing orientations, and embraces a win-win of both orientations.

Based on the above ideas about behavioural responses to ambivalence, Ashforth *et al.* (2014) propose a multidimensional approach of ambivalence that examines individuals as well as collectives' responses to ambivalence. This approach looks at ambivalence using a process approach. This engages with sources of ambivalence, the experience of ambivalence and responses to ambivalence. Ashforth *et al.* (2014) also argue that ambivalence does not need to be as strong as suggested by previous studies (e.g. Meyerson and Scully, 1995; Piderit, 2000), which refers to the experience of strong and opposing orientations toward an object. Differences in the degree of positive and negative orientations will lead to different responses to ambivalence, in the form of avoidance, compromise, domination and holism. Whilst previous studies examine the different behavioural responses to ambivalence, they suggest that behaviour is the outcome of emotional ambivalence rather than being a part of it. This notion clarifies a question raised previously in the literature (e.g. Piderit, 2000; Randall and

Procter, 2008) that is whether the behavioural dimension should be seen as part of the experience of ambivalence.

Ambivalence resulting from organisational change not only occurs at an individual level but also at a collective level. The two levels are often independent of each other. This is because collective sources of ambivalence such as organisational identity and change will lead to collective experience and collective response of ambivalence; individual sources of ambivalence such as role conflicts, membership dualities will contribute to individual experience of ambivalence and response (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). However, the two levels can be also intertwined with each other. For instance, membership duality as one of the individual sources may also be perceived as a contradiction between different collective groups by individuals. In Ashforth *et al.*'s (2014) model, ambivalence occurs at individual, collective or both levels.

In a recent review of the role of ambivalence in organisations, Rothman *et al.* (2017) focus on negative and positive responses of ambivalence. They develop a framework comprised of two key dimensions of ambivalence based on previous work (e.g. Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Pratt and Pradies, 2011) which they use to explain the duality of emotional ambivalence in organisations. These dimensions are “inflexibility-flexibility” and “disengagement-engagement”. By reviewing literature across different disciplines, Rothman *et al.* (2017) demonstrate that psychological studies see experiences of ambivalence as a single entity (a person or an organisation) leading to flexibility and inflexibility responses, whereas sociological and management studies suggest that ambivalence is associated with engagement and disengagement responses. Among these dimensions, they identify positive and negative responses resulting from ambivalence. Rothman *et al.* suggest that inflexibility is often viewed as negative, whereas flexibility is perceived as positive. In the case of disengagement, it is largely viewed as negative. However, the dimension of engagement is rather complex as it can take on either positive or negative forms. In their paper, each dimension is discussed in relation to its cognitive, behavioural, emotional and physical aspects (Rothman *et al.*, 2017). Here, I focus on disengagement and engagement given its relevance to emotional ambivalence in organisational studies.

Rothman *et al.* (2017) point out that individuals with a disengagement pattern of emotional ambivalence tend to move away from the sources of their ambivalence because these sources are often seen as promoting negative response of emotional ambivalence. For instance, when

call centre workers experience emotional ambivalence, they become more disengaged while talking to a customer on the phone, and they tend to use avoidance behaviour such as putting them on hold or hanging up (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). From an organisational perspective, this is a negative response to emotional ambivalence. From an individual level, such disengagement is also revealed as a negative response to emotional ambivalence. However, there is a possibility that such behaviour could potentially reduce further emotional harm to the workers by disengaging with the sources of negative response. Similarly, Pratt and Doucet (2000) also suggest there are two negative responses to ambivalence: negative approach responses and negative avoidance response. The negative approach accentuates negative aspects of the relationship. However, the degree of negativity is not strong enough to prompt them to leave the relationship. Similar to the negative approach response, negative avoidance response is characterised by a negative attitude towards the relationship. Individuals who respond to ambivalence in this way are more likely to react by detaching themselves from the relationship. These responses are indicative of an individual's coping style when experiencing ambivalence in an organisational context (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). When an individual is experiencing ambivalence resulting from organisational change, they may choose to leave the organisation in order to retreat.

Pratt and Doucet (2000) also identify a positive approach to ambivalence. It occurs when the emphasis is placed on the positive aspects of the relationship between an individual and the organisation; eventually, the individual chooses to respond to the emotional ambivalence by engaging the organisation. However, Rothman *et al.* (2017) suggest engagement as a response to emotional ambivalence has many forms. Moving toward the sources as a form of engagement is sometimes perceived as a negative response to ambivalence because of its association with conflicts and violence. From an organisational perspective, an example of engaging as a negative form of ambivalence could be strike and resistance. Vacillation as another form of engagement occurs when individuals constantly move away and move toward the sources of ambivalence. For example, in Pratt's (2000) study of Amway's distributors, he shows that a number of distributors sometimes building their business and selling products whereas at other times doing little of this work.

Whilst the above studies evidence behaviour consequences of emotional ambivalence among individuals in organisations, a small number of studies suggest that emotional ambivalence can improve judgement accuracy by increasing receptivity to alternative perspectives (Rees *et*

*al.*, 2013; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). By reviewing literature on judgment accuracy, Rees *et al.* suggest that judgement accuracy can be improved by “forming a judgment based on multiple, diverse perspectives”, even when the multiple perspectives come from the same person (p. 360). Similarly, the experience of emotional ambivalence often results from two or more opposite emotions simultaneously. Such emotional experience allows expansion on evaluation of a problem by considering a set of alternatives before making a decision. By comparing results from positive, negative and ambivalent emotions in an experimental study, Rees *et al.* (2013) suggest that emotionally ambivalent individuals are more likely to consider alternative perspectives provided by others and therefore they make more accurate judgment compared to individuals who experience positive or negative emotions. Therefore, this thesis suggests that organisational members who are emotionally ambivalent toward change may be more receptive to organisational change because they constantly engage with conflicting information and emotional resulted from change.

### ***Emotional ambivalence in organisational change***

Despite increasing interest in emotion ambivalence in organisational contexts, understanding employees’ experience of emotional ambivalence during organisational change remains limited. Rothman *et al.* (2017) suggest organisational events are one of the major sources of emotional ambivalence. Among these, organisational change is the most profound event. Organisational change can induce conflicting feelings and emotions because it elicits positive emotions such as excitement about new opportunity, hope for the future, as well as negative emotions such as fear of losing one’s job, and giving up cherished traditions (Rothman *et al.*, 2017). Hence it is suggested that emotional ambivalence occurs more frequently than resistance to organisational change (Piderit, 2000). In addition, it can be argued that emotional ambivalence could have been studied under different terms, definitions of these terms showed otherwise (see **Table 3.1**, p. 66). In order to better understand the concept of emotional ambivalence in organisational change, in the following section I will consider other related terms and examine their roles in organisational change.

### **Mixed emotion**

An alternative way of addressing the bifurcation of the emotion in organisation change literature is through applying the concept of mixed emotion. For example, Saunders *et al.* (2002) identify a combination of different emotions during change. In this study, a number of



employees in professional or managerial positions expressed negative emotions when talking about working under pressure, but at the same time, they expressed positive feelings, saying that they want to do their best to adopt change. Although the focus of this study was on understanding managers' evolving identities during organisational change, it provides empirical evidence to argue against the dualistic division between positive and negative emotion. Klarner *et al.*, (2011) also argue that previous studies tend to overlook the complexity of emotions involved in organisational change and neglect the possible co-existence of multiple emotions and emotional change throughout the process.

Following calls for further research that considers the complexity of emotions during organisational change, a recent study by Giaever and Smollan (2015) examines employees' mixed emotion during transformational technological change. The study of emotional experiences of organisational change among hospital nurses reveals an emerging theme of mixed emotion from interviews prior to the change taking place. Giaever and Smollan (2015) report that nurses show concern about the consequences of the change, on quality of patient care, loss of the caring aspect of nursing work, less time for face-to-face patient care and more administrative and computer work in their roles. In the meantime, some nurses also express joy and excitement since they are the first ward to introduce the new technological forefront in their hospital. However, they seemed to have a vague understanding of the new technology due to lack of information and training which led to feelings of uncertainty. These conflicting experiences of positive emotions (e.g. excitement) and negative emotions (e.g. fear) are labelled mixed emotion in their study. Over time, other negative emotions such as anger and cynicism toward management and the change project team emerged. Based on their analysis, Giaever and Smollan (2015) suggest that this is due to lack of computer skills and struggling with documentation, and consequent fear of job loss. Their findings indicate that there was a change of overall emotions from positive and negative (excitement and fear) to negative (anger and frustration) over time. It shows that mixed emotion unfolds over time during the same change event. Fineman (2003) suggests this is because the effects of organisational change unfold over time. He refers to such fluctuating emotional experience as the changing emotional experience of change (Fineman, 2003).

Another study of emotions on real-time acquisition between two marketing companies (A and T) also revealed positive emotions such as trust, happiness and hope at the beginning of change (Vuori *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, disagreements over how to process various

tasks between the two companies emerged. These disagreements were persistent and the management in both companies failed to deeply engage with the rationale behind the disagreements. Instead, the disagreements were resolved too quickly through what Vuori *et al.* (2017) call an ‘elusive agreement’. Specifically, this is when one company promotes their approach to business and the other is “willing to act temporarily according to the other’s views and opinions, despite privately maintaining personal dissenting prior beliefs” (Vuori *et al.*, 2017, p. 872). An example was given by the top management at T during an interview. The manager said that they did not reject the idea when A proposed their own open sales process for both companies. Although they did not explain why managers in a similar situation withhold their objections, it implies an association of fear of jeopardising their careers (Manzoor, Johnson and Rashid, 2018).

In Vuori *et al.*’s (2017) study, due to differences in context between two companies (e.g. product types), employees’ job tasks had doubled. Hence they have to adopt the new way of processing sales as well as maintaining the old way. With the good intention of learning about the benefits of a new way of working, T adopts the new way. However, due to the inapplicability, they always go back to their old way in order to make a sale. Managers in T doubt if A has understood the local context of T whereas managers in A doubt if T acquired an understanding of the new way of working. As a result of this “elusive agreement”, negative emotions such as uncertainty, frustration, anger, emerged among managers and employees in both companies. Rather than expressing negative emotions, both companies choose to ‘mask’ negative emotions in order to avoid harming to the friendly relationship between the two companies. In an interview with A’s manager, he articulates that he was suppressing his anger because he wanted to encourage discussion and promote proactive and creative voices in the business. As a way of reducing elusive agreement, later, A started to impose stricter control over T and to set standard task procedures for T which then led to resistance among managers and employees at T. In the end, A decided to divest, and the acquisition failed.

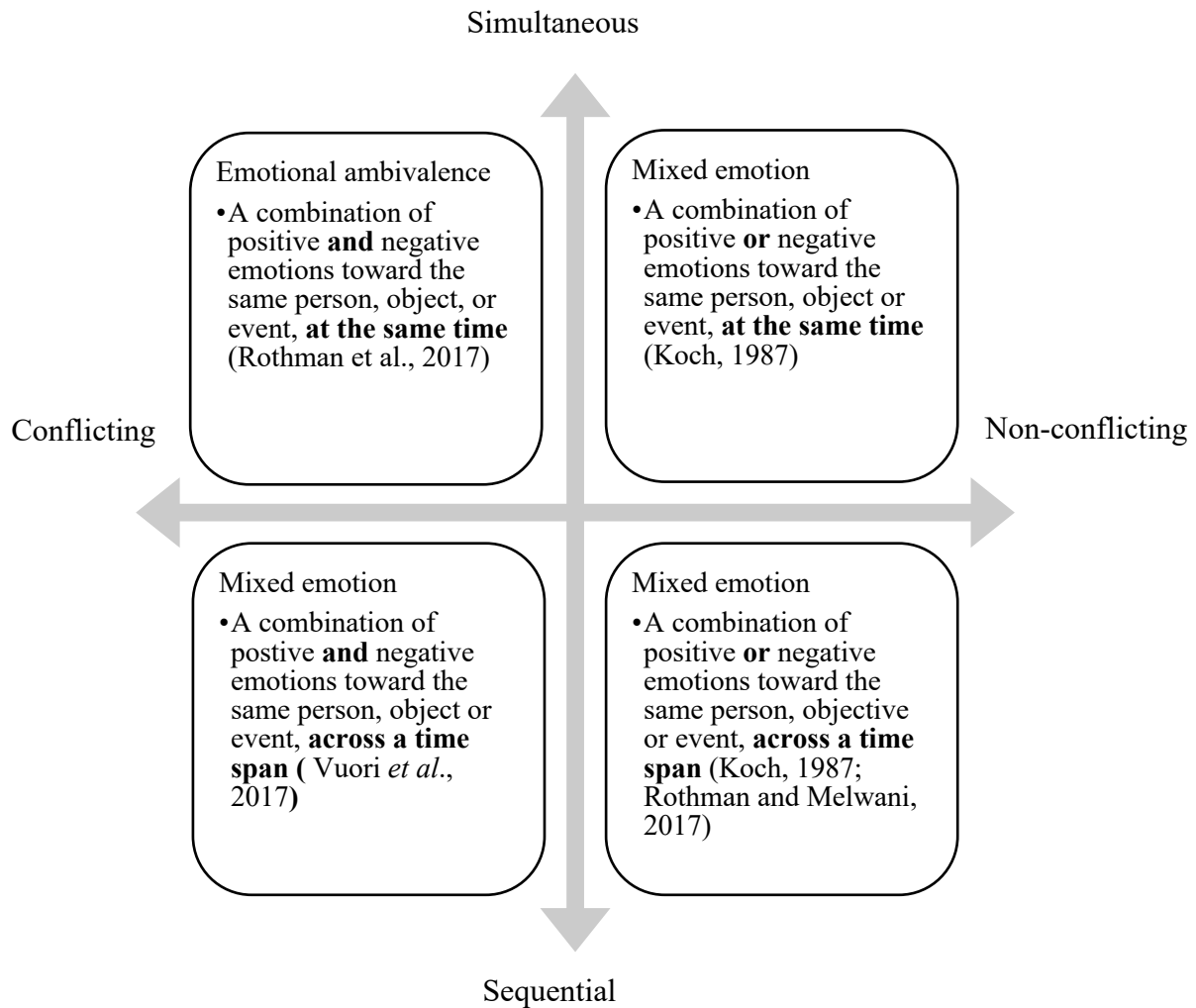
The main purpose of Vuori *et al.*’s (2017) study is to reveal “how the practice of masking negative emotions... can lead to a situation where an optimism illusion of satisfaction...with ongoing... [organisational change] process” (p. 887). It also provides evidence of mixed emotion among employees and managers throughout the whole process of organisational change. In this article, the term ‘mixed emotion’ is defined as a combination of positive

and/or negative emotions towards change. However, studies of mixed emotion have yet to fully address the complex emotions experienced by employees and managers during organisational change for two reasons. First, previous studies often draw attention to conflicting, sequential emotional experiences and neglect the possible existence of simultaneous, conflicting emotional experiences to change (Vuori *et al*, 2017). Second, the term 'mixed emotions' is vaguely defined in these studies and there is no clear view as to how it differs from other conflicting emotions experienced during organisational change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015). Hence understanding of complex emotions experienced during change remains limited.

Whilst recent studies suggest that mixed emotion is conflicting emotions that unfold over time (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017), Koch (1987) suggests that when a person experiences two emotions toward the same event, it does not necessarily make them conflicting. In other words, he believes that mixed emotion is blended rather than conflicting emotions. Taking into consideration both sides of the arguments above, this thesis proposes that there are two types of mixed emotion: non-conflicting and conflicting emotions. This is supported by the claim made in the early section when discussing studies of negative and positive emotions during organisational change where I suggested that non-conflicting emotions such as a group of negative emotions are interconnected. Similarly, positive emotions can also be interconnected. Here, non-conflicting emotions refer to a combination of positive or negative emotions. As discussed previously, conflicting emotions refers to the experience of having positive and negative emotions in response to the same event, person or object. Within this, I identified two types of conflicting emotions: mixed emotion and emotional ambivalence. Whilst both terms are used to describe conflicting emotions, mixed emotion focus on the sequential, conflicting emotions whereas emotional ambivalence refers to the simultaneous, conflicting emotions experienced during organisational change. Hence the sequential, conflicting emotions described in Giaever and Smollan (2015) and Vuori *et al.*'s (2017) studies are automatically grouped under the category of the mixed emotion. According to Koch (1987), the term mixed emotion refers to a wider range of emotional groups. These groups can be a combination of positive emotions, a combination of negative emotions or a combination of positive and negative emotions. Mixed emotion does not have to occur at the same time, whereas emotional ambivalence only occurs when there is a conflicting emotional experience toward the same person, object and event at the same time.

This categorisation of emotions helps to distinguish the concept of mixed emotion and emotional ambivalence, which are often used interchangeably.

**Figure 3.1** *Classification of complex emotions experience during change*



Emotional dissonance

Emotional dissonance is discussed here as a concept that is relevant to emotional ambivalence because it shares some similar features. Specifically, both terms are concerned with the experience of contradictory emotions. To put it simply, emotional ambivalence focuses on the actual experience of having conflicting emotions at the same time, whereas *emotional dissonance* refers to the inconsistency that results from experiencing two conflicting emotions. A conflict arises when there is a dissonance between one’s ‘true’ feelings and the feelings that one is required to display (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000; Mishra and Kumar, 2016). This section examines how the role of emotional dissonance differs from the role of emotional ambivalence in organisational change.

In organisations, employees are often required to display appropriate emotions that contradict to their 'true' emotions in order to comply with organisational rules and meet customers' expectations (Mishra and Kumar, 2016); this is particularly the case for face-to-face work service worker (Hochschild, 2012). Sometimes the displayed emotion may be opposite to how they actually feel at that moment. The feeling of unease that occurs during evaluation of discrepancy between one's 'true' emotion and the displayed emotion is known as emotional dissonance (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000; Jansz and Timmers, 2002). For example, most service providers and frontline staff are required to display a cheerful and welcoming smile to greet and serve customers regardless of how they really feel at that moment. Examples of emotional dissonance can be seen among frontline service staff providers in hospitality and tourism who are required to display a cheerful and welcoming smile to greet and service customers, even if they are not happy at that moment (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). For example, in a study of service agents in various occupations conducted by Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000), they found that salespersons display cheerful emotion to get a sale and flight attendants display positive emotion to calm customers down. In both cases, salespersons and flight attendants felt false when they had to defend conventions with which they disagreed or lie to a customer on behalf of the organisation (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). Similarly, a nurse revealed that she had to display and deliver positive emotions and messages to a very serious cancer patient on his condition even though she did not really believe the messages (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000).

While some studies suggest that emotional dissonance is one of the dimensions of emotional labour (Morris and Feldman, 1993), others argue that it is a consequence of having to express an organisationally desired emotion that is not one's genuine feeling (Adelman, 1989). Based on the definition of emotional dissonance adopted above, this thesis sees emotional dissonance as one of the consequences of emotional labour. Emotional labour refers to the expression of organisationally required emotions, or the suppression of one's personal emotions "in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" at work (Hochschild, 2003, p. 7). According to Hochschild (2012), there are two main emotional labour strategies, surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to the expression on one's face or the posture of one's body; in such case the level of inauthenticity is relatively low. Deep acting is associated with conscious mental work and higher level of authenticity, compared to surface acting, because people need to align their displayed emotions with their actual feelings (Hochschild, 2012).

The relationship between emotional dissonance and authenticity was addressed by Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) (see **Figure 3.2**). They suggest there are two levels of authenticity: surface and deep authenticity. The former concerns expression or display of current emotional experience and remains at behavioural and surface level, whereas the latter is concerned with expression of genuine feelings at the level of one's identity. In the example of the salesman, when he expresses or displays emotion consistent with his behaviour, this is surface authenticity. In the example of the nurse, when she expresses or displays emotion consistent with the role of her identity, this is deep authenticity. Similarly, there are two levels of inauthenticity acting (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). When the salesman displays emotion inconsistent with his behaviour, this is surface inauthenticity. When the nurse displays emotion inconsistent with her identity, this is deep inauthenticity.

**Figure 3.2** *Authenticity and emotional dissonance in a service encounter (reproduced from Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000)*

	Deep authenticity	Deep inauthenticity
Surface authenticity	Cell 1 No emotional dissonance	Cell 2 No emotional dissonance
Surface inauthenticity	Cell 3 Low emotional dissonance	Cell 4 High emotional dissonance

As shown in **Figure 3.2**, emotional dissonance is absent in cell 1 when authenticity at both levels is consistent. When the surface level displays authentic emotion, emotional dissonance is absent despite deep inauthenticity (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). Such experience of deep inauthenticity is often associated with work alienation resulting from low job satisfaction and low organisational commitment. Both cells 3 and 4 show inconsistent emotional expression at surface and deep levels (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). The idea of dissonance proposed here

is slightly different from the concept of dissonance proposed in studies on ambivalence. It reflects the feeling of unease that occurs during evaluation of emotional experience (Jansz and Timmers, 2002).

As an event, organisational change can involve intense emotional dissonance. In this thesis, emotional dissonance is seen as “the discrepancy between emotions felt and those required by the job role” during organisational change (Diestel and Schmidt, 2011, p. 643). However, the concept of emotional dissonance is rarely addressed when studying individuals’ experience of organisational change, with few exceptions of studies discuss emotional labour or emotional dissonance during organisational change (e.g. Bryant and Cox, 2006; Clarke *et al.*, 2007). Similar to emotional dissonance in other organisational contexts, emotional dissonance involves displaying inauthentic emotions or suppressing of authentic emotions during organisational change. Bryant and Cox (2006) report that employees were told not to display inappropriate emotions such as frustration, anger or fear in the interests of the organisation as well as in the interests of their own career progress. For example, a number of employees in this study expressed the view that they would be verbally abused by manager if they complained, voiced their anger or showed annoyance during organisational change, even though they were left with inappropriate working condition where the system was not working and the stock was missing (Bryant and Cox, 2006). Employees also revealed that they were told to suppress their actual feelings even when there was a great loss of position and colleagues’ relationships. Such behaviours from management level were described as unreasonable by the employees and it is unlikely that they contributed to the improvement of change management because of the potential negative emotions and consequences caused.

While Bryant and Cox (2006) discovered emotional dissonance in employees’ experience of change, Clarke *et al.* (2007) evidenced that managers also experience intense emotional dissonance which they describe as emotional work during change, yet scholars often neglect this aspect of research. As James and Arroba (1999) suggest, facilitating and managing change is “an emotional process, with its own tasks and stages” (p. 71). Managers experience fear and anxiety reveal emotional dissonance in the same way as other non-managerial staff. In addition, Clarke *et al.* (2007) argue that as part of managers’ role during change, they carry out seemingly rational change implementation, yet they may be in conflict with their personal interest or opinions about change. They suggest that managers are more likely to experience emotional dissonance as result of their fear of displaying negative emotions which may then

lead to confusion among subordinates or even be labelled as a sign of weakness (Clarke *et al.*, 2007). In other words, managers are likely to engage in emotional dissonance at a deep level of inauthenticity because to do otherwise they reveal a level of emotional ambivalence that risks jeopardising their managerial identity. They constrain their expression of voice to balance the needs of the organisation with the need of their subordinates. This implicitly suggests that emotional ambivalence is harder to cope with compared to emotional dissonance. Whilst previous studies imply that emotional ambivalence can be of greater consequence of emotional dissonance during organisational change, the experience of emotional ambivalence is beneficial to organisations because individuals who experience it are likely to actively engage with organisational change (Rothman and Northcraft, 2015).

### Conclusion

This review of studies of emotion during organisational change has shown that previous studies have tended to categorise emotions into negative and positive emotions (Klarner *et al.*, 2011). It has argued that organising emotions dichotomously according to a dualistic logic overlooks the complexity of emotions as well as organisational change (Klarner *et al.*, 2011; Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Consequently, there is a need to go beyond the simple bifurcation of emotions in the study of organisational change and to understand employees' emotions to change as something arising much more often from the interaction between positive and negative responses.

I propose that one way to resolve the problems associated with such bifurcation on emotion and organisational change studies is by engaging with the concept of emotional ambivalence. Although ambivalence was first coined to describe conflicting emotional states, it is often treated as an attitudinal response to a change event. The studies reviewed in this chapter identify a number of sources of attitudinal ambivalence such as conflicting information and ambiguity which are relevant to organisational change. However, these studies take a performative approach and look at employees and managers' attitudinal ambivalence in relation to identity, decision making and leadership (e.g. Plambeck and Weber, 2010). Although these studies focus on attitudinal ambivalence rather than emotional ambivalence, attitudinal ambivalence is seen as one of the sources of emotional ambivalence (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Exploration of attitudinal ambivalence thus contributes to the understanding of emotional ambivalence during change because both concepts share many similar features. The concepts used to understand of attitudinal ambivalence can therefore be adapted to



enable understanding of emotional ambivalence, particularly when there is little direct evidence of emotional ambivalence during organisational change.

There is a growing literature on emotional ambivalence in organisations. Attention has been drawn to emotional ambivalence in relation to organisational identity, role conflicts and recruitment techniques (Pratt, 2000; Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Pratt and Rosa, 1997). Recent research advocates a process approach when studying outcomes of emotional ambivalence (e.g. Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). These authors identify a number of different behaviour outcomes of emotional ambivalence among employees in organisations. In addition, understanding the outcomes of emotional ambivalence provides the foundation for further exploration of coping strategies on conflicting emotions during organisational change in this research.

Recently, a growing literature has developed that examines mixed emotion during organisational change in order to explain conflicting emotional responses to change during the same emotional episode (e.g. Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). Whilst these studies provide an alternative way to address the bifurcation of emotion studies in the context of organisational change, it overlooks the simultaneous, conflicting emotions during change. In the final part of this chapter, I discussed emotional dissonance to organisational change as a concept related to emotional ambivalence. By reviewing studies of emotional dissonance during organisational change, I argue that emotional dissonance does not provide a way of problematising the dualistic logic of emotions; instead, it is used to minimise emotional ambivalence to change. Similar to studies of mixed emotions, emotional dissonance also concerns with conflicting emotions. In this thesis, by investigating employees' and managers' experiences of emotional ambivalence during organisational change in two English housing associations, a case is made to go beyond the dichotomous presentation of 'positive' and 'negative' emotions in this thesis.

## Chapter 4

### Change in English social housing organisations

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the empirical context of this study. The focus is on outlining different types of organisations in the social housing sector. By reviewing the history of specific English types of housing organisations, this chapter describes changes in these organisations, and examines the consequences of these changes under NPM. The traditional housing association culture is largely shaped by the history of social housing in the UK. In order to understand NPM-related change in the housing sector and housing associations, it is important to provide a brief description of the formation of its culture.

This chapter is organised as follows: I begin by providing a brief history of the housing sector and housing organisations, as well as the key events that may have shaped the social housing sector culture. These events have had a significant impact on the formation of the English housing sector today. I then discuss the positive and negative consequences of NPM on social welfare and housing organisational operations. This is followed by an examination of technological changes in social housing organisations. Finally, I reflect on the potential issues in the current social housing literature and how these issues can be addressed in the current study.

#### A history of social housing organisations

The term ‘social housing’ is used to describe houses owned by non-profit landlords that let at below-market rents (Pawson, 2006). Non-profit landlords include local governments and housing associations. In the UK, housing associations are independent bodies that exercise a certain degree of autonomy from the central government. However, their stockholdings are partially public-funded and are subject to formal state regulation to ensure accountability for public resources (Walker and Jeanes, 2002). They are voluntary organisations by nature which distinguish themselves from local council housing and the private rental market (Cope, 1990). Social housing sector has been continually expanding at the expense of local government provision in the last few decades (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005).

### ***Local council housing organisations***

Social housing organisations have been historically dispersed between local governments and housing associations. Social housing was introduced to address social inequalities and house overcrowding of the nineteenth century (Machin, 2016). The first council housing was introduced in 1876 to provide low rent housing, delivering management and maintenance services for citizens who could not afford private housing in England (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). Rapid expansion (over 17,000) in the numbers of council houses was accompanied by a rise in the standard of living, including the provision of hot water, flushing toilets and electricity for many council house tenants during the interwar years, which had a specific purpose of providing homes for war veterans. This was later replaced by providing homes for the working classes in the Housing and Town Planning Act 1919. This was the first time that local councils were involved in developing, renting, owning and retaining property (Cope, 1990; Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). The expansion of housing development continued after World War Two to encompass over five million homes in the 1970s (Pawson 2006). This was followed by local government re-organisation based on Local Government Act 1972, which aimed to bring about the devolution of power from central government and provide separate housing departments in local governments (Davis and Niner, 1987). From the early 1980s, cutbacks to government expenditure, the privatisation of public services, the reshaping of local governments, and the introduction of the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme and other housing regulations, saw a significant reduction in council housing (Machin, 2016). These circumstances led to the first significant change in the modern housing system. In order to reduce the cost of housing in local governments, a large number of housing stocks was transferred to housing associations. This enabled access to resources that were denied to local councils as government bodies because housing associations had a wider scope of providers and provision (Cope, 1999). In other words, local governments saved on the cost of maintaining and repairing housing stocks by transferring their duties to housing associations. This stock movement is known as ‘housing stock transfer’ which has been generally welcomed by professionals and academics in the field. For example, many academics regard housing stock transfer as “proposals to enhance community participation and development of new forms of social landlords that are more responsive to tenants needs, signalling an end to Stalinist housing bureaucracy” (Mooney and Poole, 2005, p. 28). Professionals and policymakers see it as a way to subsidise local authorities by reducing their financial

pressures on repairing and maintaining a better living condition of their housing stocks (Walker and Jeanes, 2002).

### ***Housing associations***

Enlightened industrialists and philanthropists introduced early forms of housing associations (Baker, 1976). They were primarily concerned with the increase of a vulnerable population with poor living conditions, and they raised economic questions in relation to national housing issues. The early form of housing associations can be traced from the 1830s to 1950s, with a longer history than council housing (Baker, 1976). Between the 1960s and 1970s, there was a number of charitable organisations such as Shelter and various churches that aimed to provide housing for people with the greatest need or those who were excluded from council housing provision (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). Following the Housing Act of 1972 that concentrated on decentralisation and regeneration, there was a rapid growth in housing associations. In the late 1980s, housing associations were promoted as the main providers of social housing. Following privatisation (as noted above), there was a large-scale voluntary transfer from local government stocks to housing associations (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005). The significance of housing associations has continuously increased ever since. Housing associations now undertake a range of functions, including acquiring landlords and existing property, developing new housing and maintaining old stocks, and providing permanent and temporary accommodations.

### **NPM in the social housing sector**

Like other public sector organisations, social housing organisations have undergone profound changes since the Conservative government was in power in 1979. Changes in British social housing has resulted from two sets of pressures: central government and market conditions (Pawson, 2006). Changes driven by central government pressures include “privatisation programmes which have led to the residualisation of the sector, the introduction of a new financial regime for housing associations, and the voluntary and compulsory outsourcing of local government housing” (Walker, 2000, p. 281). Such change brought about by NPM in the housing association is shaped by two central forces: externalisation and managerialism. The externalisation of social housing was led by government policy and community through the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme and the control over expenditure (Walker, 2000). As previously noted, to reduce the cost of housing in local governments, a large number of housing stocks

was transferred to housing associations. This process also brought further changes in the nature of housing associations (Walker and Jeanes, 2002). However, as a result of the externalisation of public housing services, there was a rapid increase in rents, which put more financial pressure on the housing associations and tenants rather than local authority revenues (Walker, 2000).

Changes in housing management were drawn from Neo-Taylorism which focused on reducing costs and improving efficiency. The term 'management' was derived from the private sector in contrast to the focus of 'administration' in the public sector (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 1996). Changes in social housing were characterised by a top-down control process. This was gradually replaced by a more decentralised and indirect approach, particular on finance. For instance, prior to 2011, the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG) had total control of social housing organisations' funding (this does not include housing benefit and other individual subsidies for social tenants). When the rents were collected by the housing organisations, the income went straight to local governments and was passed on to the DCLG. The funds were then reallocated to the organisations in specific amounts, which was unrelated to their performance on rent collection. Whereas now, housing organisations are responsible for their own finances. They have full control over their rent income; however, government policies can still have a direct impact on their financial and strategical decisions.

Recently, the most controversial reconfiguration of Housing Benefits (HB) from landlord payment to Direct Payment (DP), also known as Universal Credit (UC), was proposed in 2010 by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. The central idea of this proposal is a form of neoliberal responsabilisation (Peck and Theodore, 2012; Trnka and Trundle, 2014). Hickman *et al.* (2017) summarise the three features of responsabilisation: "extending market relationships and reducing state intervention; welfare state rollback; and an emphasis on the responsibilities of citizens to maximise their opportunities within markets, thereby reducing the level of risk to the state" (p. 1109). Instead of receiving an HB payment that was previously paid directly to the social landlord, tenants under this scheme are now responsible for managing their own finance and paying rent. Along with proposal UC, other responsabilisation policies were also introduced, including a 'bedroom tax' and 'benefits cap'.

### ***Consequences of NPM on society***

Previous studies have identified a range of positive consequences of NPM on society. For instance, in order to improve concentrated deprivation, the ‘Right to Buy’, ‘shared ownership’ and ‘urban regeneration’ was introduced as part of privatisation (Monk and Whitehead, 2010). Specifically, the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme was first introduced in 1980 for social tenants to buy their home under a discount with local councils or housing associations (HM Government – Right to Buy). Similarly, ‘shared ownership’ also helps social tenants to buy their home at affordable percentages between 25%-75%, and to pay the rent on the remaining share of the home (HM Government-Shared Ownership). The ‘urban regeneration’ project attempts to improve rundown areas “to reverse that decline by both improving the physical structure, and, more importantly and elusively, the economy of urban areas” (Weaver, 2001, no page number). The project makes an “attempt to pump prime private investment into an area” (Weaver, 2001). It has been suggested that these programmes have provided mixed-income communities, retained a wider range of household types and tenure, encouraged businesses on the basis of a larger and more affluent consumer base, and improved infrastructure (Crook *et al.*, 2016).

Recent studies (Hickman *et al.*, 2017; Kemp, 2014; Peeters, 2013) also illustrate the positive impact of UC which redirects payment for housing benefit to the new payment system – UC which provides a payment system that helps claimants with their living costs on a monthly basis (GOV.UK, 2019). This programme was proposed to increase the responsibility of recipients/social tenants for managing their own finances and to encourage employment for working-age people who are in receipt of benefits. However, the purpose of UC pushes for more income cuts for claimants by introducing other restrictions on child supports and working hours (Cain, 2016). There are still many issues that arise for the low – paid or unemployed single and working people, particularly for single parents in an insecure job market (Cain, 2016). By changing the way HB is paid, claimants might be tempted to use the funds to address more urgent or alternative needs subsequently falling into rent arrears (Irvine, Kemp and Nice, 2007; Hickman *et al.*, 2017).

### ***Consequences of NPM on housing associations***

The impact of privatisation programmes such as the “Right to Buy” and “regeneration” schemes, and ‘housing stock transfer’ from local governments to housing associations, has

been extensively studied by urban and policy scholars (McDermont, 2007). Assessing the impact of privatisation programmes is crucial to understand change in social housing associations. These programmes aim to make enough housing selling to market players to cross-subsidise social housing organisations (Crook *et al.*, 2016). However, some studies question the effectiveness of these programmes under lower market demands in different geographic locations in the UK (Lee and Nevin, 2003). Others argue that the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme under the New Labour government led to severe conflict between local and central government (Walker, 2000).

Previous studies have examined how privatisation changes the housing sector identity from a social-voluntary sector, which aims to provide housing services for those who are in need, to business-like organisations that have to take investors’ interests into consideration in order to attract private funding (Mullins, 2006; Walker and Smith, 1999). Social housing organisations must consider how organisational strategies may influence investors in both the short and long terms, anticipate market challenges, and prepare to respond to changes led by government policy (Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2014). In other words, the contradictory identities of housing associations are a result of the intersection of their social mission with investor interests relating to financial return (Wainwright and Manville, 2017).

Private sector organisations concern with their ability to meet stakeholders’ interests and cope with market competitiveness (Burnes, 2014), whereas public sector organisations, including housing associations, aim to enhance their overall capacity to assist in the further development of society (By, Diefenbach and Klarnar, 2008). The application of the private sector approach to managing change in public sector organisations could potentially cause conflicts when attempts to increase efficiency have proven counterproductive to public wellbeing (Kelliher and Parry, 2015). Similar to other public sector organisations, non-profit social housing landlords are regulated by the central government, housing associations are also influenced by political agendas (Walker and Jeanes, 2002). As pointed out in Chapter Two, previous literature on the management of change makes no distinction between public and private organisations (Kuipers *et al.*, 2014). This has resulted from a lack of recognition of the culture change involved during the process of sector restructuring and organisational change. Kelliher and Parry (2015) argue that a lack of recognition of the cultural differences between public and private sectors during the process of change can lead to potentially negative outcomes, such as a high level of stress among employees. Hence it is important to

consider the differences in organisational structure and culture when planning and implementing organisational change, especially when housing associations are hybrid organisations that consist of private, public and voluntary activities (Morrison, 2016).

In addition, with increasing government and market pressures, including the ongoing reduction in government funding, the introduction of new policies, and the increased competition from private landlords (as a result of a mixture of public and private rental activities), English housing associations continue to change radically in order to achieve a more effective performance and reduce costs by re-examining their asset management strategy and organisation structure (Morrison 2016). Asset management encompasses repairing and maintaining old stock; reviewing underperforming stocks and selling old stocks; buying and developing new houses; and making sure that all the properties adhere to stringent government safety regulations. Changing asset management strategy may involve selling a small number of vacant high value properties as a way to increase cash flow in order to buy and develop smaller and cheaper properties in lower value locations that fit more general needs (Morrison, 2016). Some housing associations have developed a relatively comprehensive policy framework with sets of decision-making models and tools; others have addressed the key challenges without an overall framework (Larkin, 2000). The publication of the Housing White Paper by Department for Communities and Local Government in 2017 puts more pressures on housing organisations to build more houses faster with limited available resources, whilst at the same time continually participating in the housing market as a social housing provider.

As for the DP scheme, housing associations are expected to feel the impact of non-payment by tenants. Green *et al.* (2015) point out that housing associations are expected to have a significant increase in arrears by 98%. Similarly, Hickman *et al.* (2017) also observed approximate two million rent arrears over eighteen months in a DP demonstration programme. By comparing arrears of tenants in DP demonstration programme with tenants who use non-direct HB payment, a sharp reduction in rent payment is found in DP tenants. This suggests that DP not only does not address the problem of high arrears but also increase it. In addition, it results in an increase in transactional costs in relation to staff employment, as more resources will be needed for rent collection and recovery (Hickman *et al.*, 2017).



### *Technological change in the social housing sector*

Technological innovation has not only led to a new form of service delivery, but also a significant cultural change in the housing system under NPM. For instance, the adoption of call centres from the private sector has transformed the traditional working pattern in social housing (Walker, 2000; Walker and Jeanes, 2002). The traditional mode required housing officers to deal with tenant business on a face-to-face level, such as arrears prevention, arrears, lettings, neighbour disputes and so on. In a call centre, advisors are required to be sufficiently skilled to solve specific issues (Walker, 2000), working from existing policy and procedures to deliver the service, which lowers expenditure and replaces face-to-face interaction. In addition, technology enables operators to access tenants' files and attempt to resolve any problems at the first point contact. However, housing management involves a range of complex and unanticipated problems, which may not be resolved over the phone. The introduction of call centres increased the responsiveness of the service which led change in the form of a more business orientated, customer-focused culture in the sector (Walker and Jeanes, 2002). While technology brings advantages, such as a reduction in the cost of resources to tenant management in the housing association, it is accompanied by a range of positive and negative consequences for the organisational members. This study will reveal some of the consequences of the NPM technological changes in the two housing associations.

#### Potential issues in the study of social housing

Much research on the housing sector is expected to inform policymakers to resolve social problems. Within this policy-informed paradigm, the task of housing research is to analyse social phenomena, establish facts and prescribe effective actions after acknowledging the problems (Jacobs and Manzi, 2000). Jacobs and Manzi (2000) argue that housing studies have developed an empirical tradition with limited theoretical basis, as there is still a lack of any substantial body of explanatory theory in this literature. This observation still holds true for studies of change in the housing sector. In the remaining section, I outline the potential issues involves in the study of social housing.

To begin with, it is difficult to pursue new lines of investigation of change in the housing sector. One explanation is that studies in the public sector tend to be policy-oriented. Research on social housing is largely influenced by the practical concerns of policymakers as they are in control of the resources, such as research funding (Jacobs and Manzi, 2000). It

may be that changes in social housing organisations exist to cope with environmental changes to some extent. The nature of change in public sector organisations, in general, can be perceived as a passive response to policy change. Nevertheless, the series of changes in the social housing sector and housing associations has resulted in a major culture shift from traditional public sector organisations to a commercially oriented culture. Simultaneously altering the nature of housing management to a performance culture leads to new sets of problems (Walker, 2000).

Many studies (Gibb, 2002; Mullins, 2006; Pawson, 2006; Walker, 2000, 2001; Walker and Jeanes, 2002) discuss the history of social housing, the differences between local councils and housing associations, and the differences in their historical background, but cultural change relating to employees experiences rarely appear in these studies. In other words, these studies explain change in terms of context, such as the need for change due to changes in market needs and changes in housing policy. In addition, the impact of change in the social housing sector has been well studied, but little is known about how these changes influence individuals who worked in these organisations. Some studies discuss the impact of reform in housing in relation to public welfare at sector level in order to investigate the impact of change on tenants (Crook *et al.*, 2016; Hickman *et al.*, 2017), yet they often ignore the impact of these changes on organisations, especially those who work in housing organisations. In fact, theories that relate to managing change are rarely discussed in housing studies. In addition, Walker (2000) suggests that most of our knowledge about change management in the housing sector exists at the sectoral level, whilst we know little about the nature of housing management, the influence of individual behaviour and the impact of changes on performance. Walker's observation holds true for many of the studies relating to change in other public sectors (Pollitt, 2013). The ideas of externalisation, managerialism, responsabilisation under NPM, serve to the cultural change in housing sector and housing associations. Despite ample studies on NPM, little is known about how NPM is operationalised in housing associations, how NPM influences those who experience it, and the nature of the relationships between the and individual and organisation within that context.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I set out the empirical background for the research in housing associations, detailing the history of the social housing sector and different types of social housing

organisations, including local councils and housing associations. I also discussed how the social housing sector is affected by NPM-related policy changes, such as the 'Right to Buy' and 'Decent Home Standard' schemes, 'housing stock transfer' and 'UC'. Similar to NPM in other public sector organisations, the aim behind this change is to reduce funding from the central government and enable people who rely on social benefit to take more responsibility themselves.

I outline the impact of policy-related NPM changes on society, on organisational and social tenants which are well documented in housing studies. It seems that these changes have improved the deprivation of mixed-income communities by retaining a wider range of household types and tenure through the 'Right to Buy' and 'Shared Ownership' schemes at a societal level (Crook *et al.*, 2016). However, at organisational level, in order to reduce the cost of housing in the local council, a large amount of housing stocks was transferred to housing associations. Whilst taking financial pressure away from local authority revenues, there was a rapid increase in rents that put more pressure on housing associations (Walker, 2000). In addition, on an individual level, while the changes improve living conditions and increase tenants' responsibilities to manage their own finance, encouraging them to reengage in labour markets to reduce dependency on welfare services, the changes also increase the stress and insecurity of the tenants, as a result of being unable to pay their rent, which could lead to the loss of their homes. However, studies on how employees experience NPM-related change in housing associations are limited.

Finally, by reviewing the research in housing studies, I identified problems in specific areas: firstly, housing studies are descriptive in nature because they are policy-oriented. Secondly, housing studies focus on society, sector, organisational and individual levels in relation to social tenants, neglecting how employees and managers experience change in social housing organisations. Finally, housing studies draw attention to how changes affect their asset management at a strategical level, but we know little about how housing associations manage organisational change under NPM.

## Chapter 5

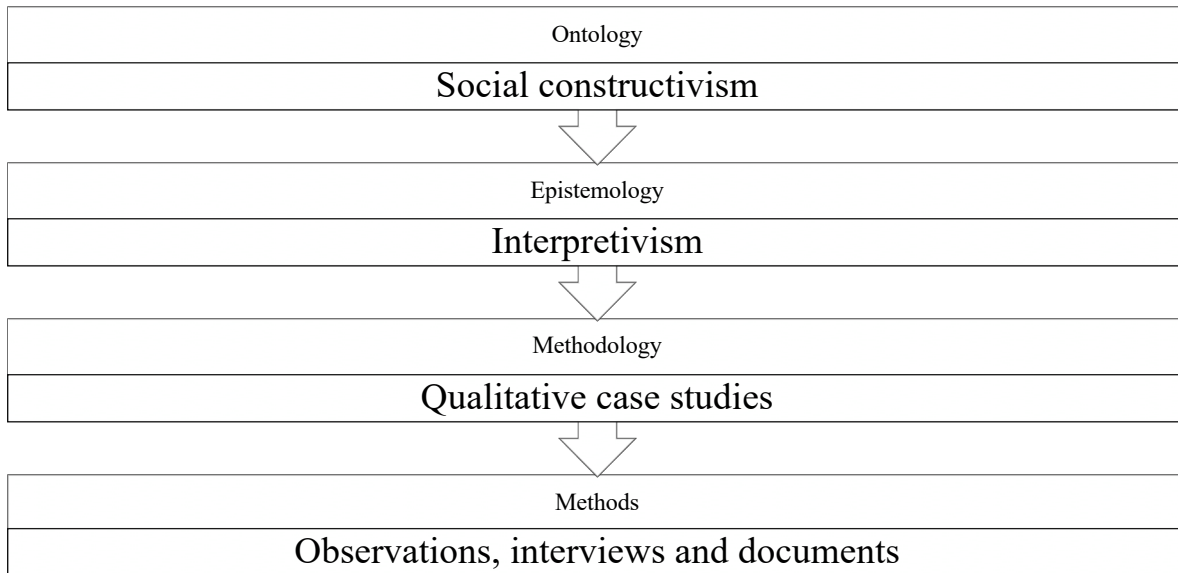
### Methodology

In this chapter I begin by outlining my research philosophical position and reflect on the reasons behind these choices. I then set out the case study research design as a way of exploring employees and managers experience of organisational change. Next, I explain my sampling approach and reflect on issues encountered when negotiating research access. I address ethical issues raised in and out of the fieldwork. I move on to discuss different types of analyses used when analysing data. Then I provide brief descriptions of the two case organisations. I finish this chapter with a short reflection on my own ambivalence as a result of changing from positivist to social constructionist/interpretivist and learning to write for qualitative research when coming from a positivist paradigm and discuss issues I have encountered as an as a non-native English-speaking scholar and how this has affected my writing.

#### Philosophical position

The philosophical position refers to the research paradigm taken by the researcher that informs and guides the research, this includes ontology, epistemology, methodology (see **Figure 5.1** for an illustration of the research paradigm used in this thesis). Ontology concerns with “the nature of what exist[s]. It is the study of theories of being, theories about what makes up reality” (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2004, p. 767). Epistemology is “a theory of knowledge, a theory of how human beings come to have knowledge of the world around them – of how we know what we know” (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2004, p. 309). Methodology is concerned with explaining what and how methods were adopted to address particular research questions.

**Figure 5.1.** *Research paradigm used in this thesis* (adapted from O’Gorman and Macintosh, 2015)



In this chapter I begin by determining the research purpose and intention to select a research paradigm that matches the methodology and methods this study embarked on. The purpose of my research is to provide a rich description, explanation and understanding of the experience of organisational changes amongst employees and managers in housing associations. This is because little is known on how these changes influence employees and managers in housing association and how, in turn, they experience these changes. In line with this research purpose, social constructivism was adopted as an ontological position, interpretivism was adopted as an epistemological position and case studies were adopted as the methodology. From an ontological position, social constructivists believe that realities are constructed by individuals through social interaction (Gergen, 2015). This position refutes the realist assumption that reality exists independently of our interpretation and understanding of it. Instead, the assumption is that reality is constituted through interpretation. Aligned with the basic idea of social constructivism, this thesis also suggests that the meaning of organisational change in the two organisations is constructed by members of the organisations through social interactions and encounters. The meaning of change cannot be interpreted independently from the organisational members who experience it, neither can the researcher's perspective of change be isolated from that meaning. In addition, it is worth noting that 'constructionism', 'constructivism', and 'social constructivism' are different terms. Constructivists advocate the idea that individuals make up the world on their own, whereas constructionists argue that we understand the world through social relationships (Gergen, 2015). This study takes a social constructivist approach that emerges from constructivism and constructionism and suggests that realities are constructed by individuals

through mental categories, but that we acquire these categories through social interaction (Gergen, 2015).

By adopting a social constructivist position, I am not only focusing on how emotions are labelled and displayed individually, but also holding the view that emotions are a product of wider social structures negotiated between people, and therefore, are intersubjective (Fineman, 2000). In order to understand organisational members' experience of change, it is therefore necessary to identify the emotions accompanied by the experience, where they come from, historically and culturally, and how they fit into the overall biographies of organisations and individuals. In other words, emotions are individual experiences of a specific situation and learnt through social interaction.

While I agree that emotions should not just be treated as a dichotomous phenomenon, it is important to note the idea that the presence of emotions would make no sense in the absence of the opposite. This idea aligns with the idea of social constructivism proposed by Gergen (2015) that "words have no meaning in themselves and their true meaning can never be discovered" without associating it with others (p. 19). Specifically, the words 'emotion' and 'happiness' have no meaning in themselves, instead their meanings are endowed by us, and it is difficult to understand the feeling of happiness without comparing it to the opposite state, unhappiness or to understand the concept of emotion without comparing it to rationality. This is because the meaning of emotion as a reflection of one's self-relevance of a perceived situation is missing; thus, the meanings of positive and negative emotions are related (Fineman, 2003). Similarly, the idea of 'emotional ambivalence' has no meaning without individual and collective interpretations; this includes by comparison of different emotional states.

This position enabled me as a researcher to explore employees' and managers' subjective meaning of organisational change in housing associations in relation to NPM and emotions embedded within a wider social interaction inside of the organisational setting. Specifically, NPM-related change means different things to different organisational members. Some employees see it as career progress and opportunity to learning new things in relation to how to work efficiently, others see it as burden as it is accompanied by a high level of uncertainty and increase in workload (Kiefer, 2002b). These perceived different realities among organisational members are real to every organisational members. Their perception of reality is acquired through previous knowledge and experiences of change and these experiences are

gained through social interaction with others (Gergen, 2015). By taking a constructivist approach, this allowed me to investigate the multiple subjective experiences of employees and managers who were involved in organisational change through an interpretive epistemology position.

Social constructivism also helped me to reconsider what we might have taken for granted about social relationships in this context, opening up new interpretations of organisational members' experiences of change (Gergen, 2015). For example, the concept of 'resistance' is often discussed in relation to negative emotions and responses to organisational change in the literature (Piderit, 2000). As discussed in Chapter Three, such interpretations of resistance are based on a managerial perspective which sees resistance as a barrier to change because of the potential negative consequences it brings to the organisation. This inhibits multiple voices and co-construction of change among employees. By taking a social constructivist position, I know that employees may have different experiences of change and different reasons for resisting change. The term 'resistance' may also have different meanings to different organisational members based on their social interactions in the organisation.

Following an interpretive epistemological position, I argue that people's understanding of organisational change cannot be interpreted without some pre-established "conceptual boxes" (Yanow, 2006, p. 10). Knowledge about emotions experienced during organisational "is understood as being produced not through disembodied reasons but through the situated context of the knower who producing it" (Yanow, 2006, p. 10). From this position, I acknowledge that prior knowledge of interviewees and my understanding of organisational change and emotions are parts of the research inquiry. In other words, understanding of the phenomenon is in itself inter-subjective. It relates to "one's prior knowledge base on experience and on personal, educational, and other background and a setting" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012, p. 38). Any prior experience may have a knock-on effect on knowledge creation in an interpretive position. However, it is impossible, phenomenologically to become fully aware of everything. Therefore, the production of knowledge under interpretive paradigm is, by nature, context-specific. In this thesis, the knowledge of employee and manager's emotions during change, more specifically, the knowledge about employee and manager's emotionally ambivalent experience during organisational change is situated and specific to the context in which these changes take place.

Interpretivists reject the idea that the basis of knowledge is direct physical experience of sensory stimuli. While this implies the dismissal of the concept of sense, interpretivist argues that sense-making is central to knowledge interpretation (Yanow, 2006). Specifically, emotions are not direct physical experiences of a stimulus event of organisational change in this study. Experience of emotions cannot be manifested in an observational world. It is not self-evident without our prior understanding of it, and the new interpretation of the situation. This idea is based on the interpretation of a story of ‘Elephants and blind people’ in Yanow and Ybema (2008) and is a good metaphor to illustrate the context-specificity of the experience of emotional ambivalence. In the story, people in a village were told to escort an elephant (an unfamiliar creature to the village people) out of their village. Different people stand nearby different parts of the elephant: one describes it as a brick wall because he was nearby its flank; another depicts it as a rope because he had encountered its tail; the third man describes it as a large leaf because he touches its ear; and there are fourth, fifth and sixth men who describe it as different things that they are familiar with because they were standing at different part of the elephants. The overall plot of this story is what we see depends on where we stand when it comes to making sense of a phenomenon and creating knowledge about it. Hence by taking interpretivist epistemological position, my interest in this thesis is in the process through which meaning is created (Yanow and Ybema, 2008). The sense-making of emotions during organisational change, is in a way, an iterative process. Employees and managers’ experience of organisational change is shaped by their own prior experiences of change. And their new understandings of their emotions as well as organisational change are the result of a combination between prior and current experiences of change, which may subsequently refine their knowledge about change and its relation to emotions.

### Research design

In view of the research questions that started with ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions, I designed a qualitative study that enabled exploration of NPM-related change in housing associations. This allowed me to understand the meaning and responses to organisational change as interpreted by those who experienced it (Smollan, 2016). The thesis is founded upon case study investigation into two housing associations in the East Midlands and the West Midlands of England. Fieldwork was carried out over the course of six weeks in 2017. At the time of the study, both organisations were undergoing different scales of organisational change, including changes in executive team structure, department structure and individuals’



job duties. Both organisations had completed a major restructure in response to the 1% reduction in social rents for registered English social housing providers introduced in 2016 prior to the fieldwork.

The case study research design allows me to focus on the understanding of what is important about the people experiencing change within its own world, issues, and social encounters in which change took place (Stake 2005). This methodological choice is aligned with the social constructivist ontological and interpretivist epistemological position discussed earlier.

Evaluative comparisons were involved as a way of recognising the similar and dissimilar features of the cases that are important.

Inspired by ethnographic study, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used as ways of getting close to the reality of organisational change in the two organisations, where I tried to learn the local language, documented the social engagement and patterns of organisational operation, and deconstructed experiences and meanings of organisational change with those who experienced them through interviews and informal conversations. With permission from the organisations, I also obtained a small set of internal documents related to organisational change from each organisation. Next, I will discuss these data collection methods in more depth.

### ***Observations***

The two selected housing associations, namely East Midlands Housing Association (hereafter EM) and West Midlands Housing Association (hereafter WM), formed the basis for participant observation, where I shadowed and observed a small number of employees and managers who experienced significant changes in the organisations in order to gain insight into their everyday work (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011; Spradley, 1980). This allowed me to engage with employees on a daily basis through immersion into the organisational culture, talking to people informally, building relationships with employees, observing their daily practices and interactions, and working to relate this to the context and their experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Stake, 2005).

There were two benefits of participant observation in the study: first, it was the first step towards building a good rapport with employees in preparation for the interviews. Thus, engaging with employees at a personal level during the observation phase helped to create a more comfortable environment for interviewees to discuss their experiences of change.

However, there were a number of interviewees who were not engaged in the observation. Therefore, it was important to establish a good rapport at the beginning of the interviews, particularly those whom I had not interacted with prior to that. In addition, it was crucial that I emphasised the critical issue of complete confidentiality at the beginning of the interview to help them feel safe and stimulate open discussion. The second benefit of the observation was associated with the fieldnotes. Fieldnotes not only provided a verbal transcript but also entangled with my inner experience as a reflection of being in this 'new' environment (Okely, 1992). This allowed me to be descriptive, interpretive and reflective about what was going on in the setting, in expressing meanings of organisational change (Stake 2005).

In addition to the two benefits of observation, it was important to note that many of employees' activities were to a large extent difficult to observe. For instance, it is hard to fully understand how someone perceives their work by simply observing that person interact with his or her computer for the whole shift. In order to tackle such challenges, I tried to adopt the shadowing technique suggested by Czarniawska-Jeorges (1998) where she followed interlocutors in their everyday work for 10 days to construct a collective experience of their daily work. However, in my case, I was not able to observe everyone who participated in the study for that long period of time due to the limited time I had been granted by the organisations to conduct my fieldwork. I therefore had informal conversations with participants between breaks.

In this study, as pointed out early, observations took place in both organisations: EM and WM. At EM, observations were negotiated by the researcher with observers and took place between interviews during the fieldwork. The researcher observed Customer Service Teams in Head Office and Regional Office, Asset Management Teams in Head Office and Regional Office, Allocation Team in Head Office, Finance Team in Head Office and Income Office Team in Regional Office. Informal conversations also took place during these observations. In the WM case, observations were arranged by a coordinator at WM. Each observation took half day, where I observed Assistant Support and Wellbeing Team, Learning and Development Team, Human Resource (HR) Team and reception in the new office building, Property Care Team in one of the old offices, and Environmental Team near one of the estates. As one of the central services of the organisation, Customer Service Team was not observed at WM because they refused to participate in the study. The coordinator explained this is because there is a high level of distrust between front-line staff and management. In

addition, I never observed a community visit with a neighbourhood officer or other support officers in either case study organisation. Although I had an opportunity for a tenant visit observation with a tenant support officer, for ethical reason, I decided not to observe in the end because I was advised by the officer prior to the visit that this tenant has mental health problems. In particular, the tenant suffered from a high level of anxiety when meeting with a stranger. I was concerned about putting pressure on the tenant and increasing his level of anxiety as a result of my presence; therefore, I gave up the opportunity and instead, I interviewed the officer prior to the visit.

### *Interviews*

Qualitative interviews were used as the main approach to explore employees and managers' experience of organisational change. All interviews were recorded with interviewees' consent. These interviews were semi-structured to enable flexible conversation around the research questions. This allowed me as the interviewer, to ask follow-up questions (see Appendix D and E for interview schedules). The thesis adopted a localist interview approach (Alvesson, 2003). This approach derives from social constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology and suggests that "people are not only reporting external events but producing situated accounts, drawing upon cultural resources in order to produce morally adequate accounts" (Alvesson, 2003, p. 17). It sees information acquired from interviews as knowledge of the shared social world and enables understanding of social and organisational change of those who experienced it (Alvesson, 2003; Welch and Piekkari, 2006). This favours the interpretation of those who experience change and takes account of social interaction into consideration.

The majority of the interviews were carried out in a private office in the organisations. However, there were a small number of interviews which took place in an open office area and other public places (e.g. café) for practical reasons. In total, I conducted thirty-five interviews, including with managers and employees across the two organisations: EM and WM (see **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2** for interviews breakdown between the two organisations, to ensure the anonymity of interviewees, titles of their roles are specified as 'customer-facing staff', 'non-customer-facing staff', 'middle manager' and 'senior manager'). The length of interviews was between thirty minutes and an hour and a half. Considering the epistemological position adopted in this study, it is important to note that some interviewees were reluctant to talk about their feelings in response to organisational change. There are

various reasons that may explain this. First, as an outsider, interviewees may not have trusted me enough to freely discuss their feelings about organisational change. Second, the distrust between management and employees as noted earlier might have played a part in this.

**Table 5.1** *Case 1: EM interviews breakdown*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Location</b>
Zara	Senior manager	Head Office
Ruth	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Carrie	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
John	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Cathy	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
David	Middle manager	Head Office
Alice	Non-customer-facing staff	Head Office
Angela	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Anna	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Gracie	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Flora	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Pippa	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Nancy	Customer-facing staff	Head Office
Jess	Non-customer-facing staff	Head Office
Eve	Senior manager	Head Office
Mark	Middle manager	Head Office
Linda	Customer-facing staff	Regional Office
Sue	Customer-facing staff	Regional Office
Karen	Customer-facing staff	Regional Office
Sarah	Customer-facing staff	Regional Office
Liz	Middle manager	Regional Office
<b>Total = 21 interviewees</b>		

**Table 5.2** *Case 2: WM interviews breakdown*

<b>Pseudonyms name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Jack	Senior manager
Nadia	Senior manager
Rachael	Customer-facing staff
Rob	Middle manager
Ben	Middle manager
Philp	Customer-facing staff
Lisa	Customer-facing staff
Betty	Non-customer-facing staff
Victoria	Customer-facing staff
Julie	Middle manager
Chloe	Senior manager
Debby	Customer-facing staff
Lucy	Non-customer-facing staff
Laura	Customer-facing staff
<b>Total = 14 interviewees</b>	

### ***Documents***

Documents were examined in combination with other qualitative research methods outlined above. They were used as a way of providing data on the context within which research participant organisations operated and as a source of supplementary information for the case studies (Bowen, 2009). Unfortunately, I was not allowed access to some documents, such as

organisational change strategy meeting minutes and organisational change strategy reports, due to commercial sensitivity. It took me several meetings with the Head of Transformation Team, HR directors and many email correspondences with the coordinators to gain access and gather the relevant documents in both organisations. These documents include change management procedures, restructure information provided to employees, and structure change information. The organisational structure change documents for WM were provided by one of the interviewees. Collectively, these documents helped me to understand the organisation structure and generate interview questions on organisational changes at management level and how these changes affect front line employees. This understanding also allowed me to become more confident when it came to building rapport and trust prior to the interviews, as interviewees would not see me completely ignorant about their organisation.

### Sampling approach

The study adopted two sampling approaches: purposive sampling and opportunity to learn. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling approach. It accompanies with a focus on specific people and situations when making the sampling decision. In this case, this approach was applied to make sure that managers and employees in housing associations who took part in the study have experienced or are experiencing organisational change, thus, their contributions were relevant to the research questions (Bryman and Burgess, 1999). This is also an important context when selecting case organisations, as it is believed that knowledge drawn from these cases will lead to a better understanding of organisational change and perhaps better theorising organisational change in housing associations. Opportunity to learn is a case study sampling approach coined by Stake (2005). It encourages researchers to lean toward cases that they feel they can learn the most and to engage with the most accessible, or the one where they can spend the most time, to collect data (Stake, 2005). In this case, the two cases selected are the most accessible cases that my access negotiations enabled, and consequently the ones I could learn the most from.

Interviewees in the two organisations were chosen by the researcher in collaboration with gatekeepers and coordinators from the participate organisations based on the potential theoretical contribution and availability of employees. This was because, being an outsider, I am unfamiliar with the organisational setting and employees and managers who work in the organisation. I therefore had to take suggestions that managers and coordinators had about the

choice of interviewees into consideration in the study. After discussing with the manager and the coordinator, I was provided with a list of employees who had experienced significant changes in their roles. An email was sent to each employee individually, which explained the purpose of the research, how it would be conducted and inviting them to participate. Once participation was confirmed, the coordinator organised the time and location for interviews and observations.

### Negotiating ongoing access and cooperation

Research access is critical to any research project that involves data collection within or around organisations (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016; Cunliffe, 2010). There are two types of research access: primary and secondary.

#### ***Primary access***

Primary access refers to the ability to get into the organisation to undertake research (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016). This was a central issue that I had to confront because I was an outsider to the sector. This meant that all of the organisational contacts were developed through attending a public communication professional unconference and a social housing conference. The process of negotiating primary access took time and energy (Scourfield, 2010, Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 1988). It was a recursive process and involved negotiation and renegotiation. For example, in one of the case studies access negotiation took 6 months from initial contact to confirmation of primary access. In other instances, primary access was granted during early negotiation, but then rejected later on by different people in the organisation with different concerns. For example, the CEO of a housing organisation agreed to take part in the study, but primary access was later on rejected by the Head of HR due to concern over people resources required for the study. Another example, an Assistant Director agreed to take part in the study after few email exchanges, but this was later on rejected due to misunderstanding of what involved in the study, even though this was explained in the information sheet attached to the emails. There are a number of researchers (e.g. Buchanan *et al.*, 1988) who are in favour of informal approach such as use of friends and relatives, yet, this was not possible in this study. Of the two organisations that were approached through friends did not result in primary access.

There was a brief interlude during fieldwork that temporarily threatened primary access at WM. During the second week of fieldwork, I was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement

with the company. This happened between two observations where I did not pay sufficient attention at the time. I signed the agreement without actually reading it because I was rushing to an observation. I believed that I had already provided detailed information about confidentiality and anonymity to participant organisations in the information sheet. It was also discussed during an access negotiating meeting. It was taken as an access agreement with the company. Later on, I noticed that the confidential agreement I had signed was between the organisation and people who take placements in the organisation. It required me to keep everything I saw and heard in the company to myself. Although this was resolved the next day quite easily after talking with the coordinator, and the agreement was destroyed, it was a difficult experience and unexpected event during the fieldwork.

### *Secondary access*

Once primary access was granted, the researcher needs to “build relationships to gain access to people and information within the organisation” (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016, p. 537). This is known as secondary access. Sometimes, secondary access is less structured and cleaned, and messier than it was as described by most of the organisational studies. There were expected, and unexpected events involved during the fieldwork. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) point out that being outsider researchers are more likely to obtain secondary access after gaining primary access than insider researchers. They argue that for an insider researcher, it may be harder for them to get restricted privileged information due to potential conflict interests between the insider researchers’ membership and the organisations or the sector. However, it was not the case in this study. As an outside researcher, I found it was hard to gain secondary access among employees. This was possible because of different interpretations of secondary access, which is why the thesis uses the concept of gaining acceptance from participants when describing secondary access. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) provide a vague definition of secondary access: access to documentation, data, people and meetings. However, my fieldwork experience and reflective dairy showed that individuals who gave consent and agreed to be interviewed did not necessarily agree to participate in the study in other ways. For example, they were reluctant to provide detailed answers during the interview. This might be due to my less proficient interview skills. Another explanation could be that there was some level of distrust among interviewees, or even some level of introversion amongst interviewees. Similar observations about interviewees’ reluctance to provide detailed answers have been pointed out in ethnographic



studies of different types of organisations (Cram, 2018). Although advice on how to secure the requisite degree of trust is offered in the form of reflexive debates on methodological dilemmas faced by ethnographic researchers (Agar, 1996), there is no step-by-step 'cook book' that researchers can follow in order to become accepted by interviewees.

In addition, there were unexpected interview cancellations because of employees' short-term sickness and annual leave. These cancellations were never informed prior to the interviews. Instead, most of the cancellations were discovered on the day. There could have been an element of short-term sickness due to the restructuring which was taking place at the time. This speculation was indeed captured and noted by managers and employees during the interviews. They pointed out that with few people left in the team, it increased the workload and work pressure of each team member; it became a vicious cycle. These ideas will be discussed in more detail in the later chapters. As a result of these cancellations, I had to renegotiate a second visit with the coordinator at EM and conduct additional interviews two months after the first fieldwork visit. However, with WM, a second visit was unsuccessful. This was due to potential distrust between management and employees in the organisation as a result of previous restructuring. This was explicitly and implicitly noted by some of the interviewees and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Moreover, some teams refused to be observed for various reasons. For example, in the case of WM, Customer Service Team and Neighbourhood Team refused to be observed because of established agreement between tenants and the organisation, despite the emphasis on the confidentiality and anonymity of the study. Another possible explanation is related to the negotiation process. As noted earlier, interviews and observations were arranged by the coordinator who works as an HR officer at WM. In the case of EM, observations were negotiated by me during the fieldwork. The majority of the employees I contacted agreed to have me acting as an observer. One or two refused to take part because of work pressure. There is a possibility that employees at WM saw me as someone sent by higher-level managers, whereas in EM, employees appeared to see me as a complete outsider to the organisation.

The issues addressed above on secondary access may have a negative influence on the quality of data collected. However, I did not feel that my fieldwork was unsuccessful. Instead, the large number of cancellations resulted from the high level of sickness and employees'

reluctance when talking about organisational change provided a new angle of interpreting employees' experience of organisational change.

### The nature of researcher

Following a social constructivist ontological position which asserts that “[realities do] not begin with a lone individual observing and recording the world for what it is” (Gergen, 2015, p. 13), Gergen explains that our observations, description and explanations emerge from the value of our tradition which we gained through social interactions. Aligned with this, an interpretive epistemology sees knowledge as understanding phenomena through one's prior knowledge gained from personal experience, educational background and other backgrounds in a specific context (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). For example, the use of terms such as ‘strike three’ is understood in baseball game setting, and the term ‘a trim’ is accepted at a hairdresser shop. However, it makes no sense if we use ‘strike three’ in a hairdresser shop. The relationship between words (what we use to describe and explain the world) and the specific setting in which we use them is vital in understanding the world and the meanings we make. These relationships and prior knowledge about these relationships foster our vocabularies, assumptions and theories about the world and self. The point here is to understand the constructed meaning of change and employees' emotional response to change with those it belongs (Schwandt, 2003). While these understanding of emotions are gained, the process of how interviewees make sense of emotions during organisational change, it is also related to their interaction with me and my prior knowledge gained from the literature. Through interviews, I also developed a new understanding of employees and managers' emotions during organisational change that shaped by my interaction with interviewees. In other words, knowledge was a collaborative interpretation, based on communication between me and my interviewees. As an outsider to the social housing sector, it became particularly important to bridge the gap of perceived meaning of change experienced by both parties.

During interviews, I was actively engaged in meaning-making about organisational change with those who had experienced it in housing associations. This is a matter of co-constructing understandings of emotions between interviewees and interviewer through the interpretations of those who experienced change. My role as a researcher was aligned with social constructivist ontology and an interpretive epistemology, which suggests that “I am an instrument of my inquiry and the inquiry is inseparable from who I am” (Louis, 1991, p. 365). It is also important to recognise my role as an interpreter of the data in a qualitative

study. I am not only the person who conducts the research but also a part of the research and meaning-making process.

### Ethics

The most concerning ethical issues in organisation studies arise around harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and involvement of deception (Bryman and Bell, 2015). These ethical concerns also raised in the course of this research at research design stage, during the fieldwork and analysis, as well as when writing up this thesis.

#### ***Harm to participants and researcher***

Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that harm to participants can entail a number of facets, including “physical harm, harm to participants’ development or self-esteem; stress; harm to career prospects or future employment, and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts” (p. 135). Although no physical harm or inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts were involved in the research, there were potential psychological harms during observation as mentioned earlier, such as in the example when I gave up the opportunity for a tenant visit due to concern over the tenant’s mental health issue. Although it was a great opportunity to learn more about housing officer’s job and changes involved in the job, I decided to give up this visit to eliminate the potential psychological harm I might have brought to the tenant.

In addition, the topic of organisational change can be perceived as a sensitive topic as it involves participants talking about their experiences, which may produce a strong emotional reaction during the interview (Brannen, 1988). The sensitive topic referred here is different from the definition of sensitive topics given by Sieber and Stanley (1988), which aims to “address some of society’s most pressing social issues and policy questions” (p. 55). Brannen (1988) acknowledges that interviews on sensitive topics may be stressful for both interviewees and interviewers. In addition, it is suggested that “change is often emotional and that negative emotions may arise as a result of the disruption associated with change” (Rafferty and Jimmieson, 2017, p. 251). This is a particular issue for organisational researchers because emotional expression has been traditionally perceived as unacceptable in organisations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Fineman, 2003). Interviews about the experience of organisational change might result in increased stress levels among interviewees. However, talking to someone about how they are/were feeling during change can also be a way of coping with stress (Smollan, 2016). Nevertheless, the study did not pose

any substantial threat to those involved in the study as supported by the approval of the relevant University ethics committee. Any potential consequences and implications toward participants' later career progression will be further addressed by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the data (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

### ***Confidentiality and anonymity***

Information related to organisations was kept at a minimum in the thesis in order to ensure organisational and individual anonymity. Sometimes, because of the specific organisation type and location and the changes they have been through in recent years, this may threaten organisational anonymity, therefore, I only provide brief history, size and vague location of the organisations to help distinguish the two cases and understand the formation of organisational culture and consequences of organisational changes may have in each case. This is also true for individual participants when discussing personal experiences that can be identified within the organisation and information they share may potentially cause conflicts in the organisations. Failure to ensure anonymity can result in damage to individuals' reputations and their career within the organisation or the sector (Lee, 1993). Taking account of these ethical considerations, the study aimed to minimise the potential identification of organisations and individuals involved in the research by withholding identifiable information and using pseudonyms.

### ***Informed consent***

All participants in the study were given relevant information about the nature of the research prior to the interviews and observations (Bryman and Bell, 2015). An information sheet was sent to all participants at least a week before observation and interviews took place. It included detailed information about involvement in the research and provided an opportunity to decline to participate, refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the research at any time without any justification (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This partially addressed the invasion of individual privacy. It provided participants with confidence to refuse to answer any questions that they did not wish to. Interviewees were made aware of the recording equipment at the beginning of the interviews. Alternatives such as note-taking during the interview were planned if interviewees refused to be recorded. Fortunately, all the interviewees agreed to be recorded.

## Analysis

As suggested by Flick (2013) there are three aims of analysing qualitative data. The first aim is to “describe a phenomenon in some or greater detail” (Flick, 2013, p. 8). The phenomenon can be the subjective experience of an event with a specific individual or group. The second aim is to identify the differences between cases (individual or groups). The third aim is to “develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material” are based (Flick, 2013, p. 8). The aims of analysis in this thesis incorporates elements of all of these aims. The materials collected from this study include fieldnotes based on observation, interview transcripts and organisational documents.

### *Thematic analysis*

A combination of thematic and narrative analyses was used during the analysis. All interview transcripts were analysed by thematic analysis. The first step of analysis after data collection is coding. Coding is the process of “naming segments of data with a label [code] that simultaneously categorises, summarise and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Coding consists of two main phases: initial coding and focused coding. During the initial coding, I studied the data line by line and incident by incident to understand and define what was happening in the organisations and during change, and what they mean by change (Charmaz, 2006). Line by line coding was particularly helpful to identify the implicit and explicit meaning of the statements in the data. During this phase, I remained open-minded to all possible theoretical directions identified, as Charmaz (2006) argues, “initial codes are provisional, comparative and grounded in the data” (p. 48). After the development of analytical directions from initial coding, I moved onto focused coding. This phase involved selecting and categorising the most significant and frequent codes created in the initial phase and identify central themes and subthemes that associate with common emotions and emotional ambivalence shared by employees during organisational change in order to make the most analytical sense of their experience of change (Glaser, 1978). It is worth noting that the process of moving from initial coding to focused coding was not a linear process. It often requires moving back and forth in order to fully engage with the data, as was the case in my study. Apart from coding, memo-writing is also a crucial activity during data analysis. Memos are informal analytical notes produced throughout the research process, particular while coding (Glaser, 1998). Lempert (2007) describes a memo as a record of analytical conversations between the researcher and data. The advantage of memos-writing is that it

promotes continue engagement to the data and increases the level of abstraction of analytical thoughts and assists in writing the thesis (Charmaz, 2006).

Thematic analysis was used for analysing internal organisational documents related to organisational change, including organisational change guideline and change in many organisational policies and procedures, change reports in order to gain a partial insight of past as well as recent managerial decisions and actions on organisational change. In addition, thematic analysis was also used as a way to organise stories of change in each case study. This is because “themes give stability to understand living-story experiences” (Boje *et al.*, 2016, p. 393). This will be discussed in more detail in the following section when talking about narrative analysis.

### *Narrative analysis*

There are two types of narrative in this thesis, namely *conventional narratives* and *antenarratives*. The former one requires at least three basic elements: “an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs” (Czarniawska-Jeorges, 1998, p. 2). It also requires plots and coherence in order to bring elements of stories into a meaningful whole (Boje, 2001). Conventional narratives were used as an approach to describe what was happening in the two cases following chronology order of key events. It is one of the forms of narrative used in organisational studies, as a way to write the research in a story like fashion (Czarniawska-Jeorges, 1998; 2004). This form of narrative is adopted as a main organising device of two cases. It adopts an epic-change narrative approach which focuses on key events of organisational change as main themes.

Antenarratives refer to “fragmented, nonlinear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculations” (Weick, 2012, p. 144). It “focuses on entering the webs of stored relationships and meanings, the stories and counter stories of [a specific] time” (Boje, 2001, p. 49). It provides an invaluable way of “helping people make sense of complex issues, by expressing the inexpressible” (Parkin, 2004, p. 1)”. The reason I use antenarrative as a way to approach this thesis is that organisational narratives are similar to antenarratives which tend to be “temporal, discursive constructions that provide a means for individual, social and organisational sensemaking and sensegiving” (Vaara, Sonenshein and Boje., 2016, p. 496).

As part of the analysis, organisational narrative analysis was used because “narratives provide an essential means for employees and managers to make sense and give sense to

change... around organisations” (Vaara *et al.*, 2016, p. 496). I adapted a narrative thematic analysis. It imitates taxonomy of thematic analysis from the emic categories in use by people who tell stories (Boje, 2001). Emic refers to the way in which how storytellers sort of their stories. By adopting this approach, it also helped me to focus on how themes were embedded within the stories (Boje, 2001).

I analysed the data using the NVivo software, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis package that helps organise data and analytical thoughts produced throughout analysis, including coding, categorising codes and writing memos (Gibbs, 2013). This software is particularly helpful when a large number of codes are created during analysis. There are tools in NVivo which assist the development of code tree or other code mapping strategies in order to visualise and constructing and reconstructing the connection between codes, sub-codes and sub-sub-codes (Gibbs, 2013).

### Reflection: the long journey from positivism to social constructivism

In this section, I reflect on the impact of changing philosophical position on the research development and my writing style, using a series of autoethnographic vignettes. An autoethnographic vignette is a first-person of the conduct of an event(s) (Brettell, 1997; Humphreys, 2005). It holds a “story focused approach” which emphasises “subjective experience of the narrator and the form of the narrative itself” (Brettell, 1997, p. 225) and demonstrates complex and subtle consideration of one’s motivation in an event (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). This strategy has been used by many researchers in relation to conference experience (Bell and King, 2010), PhD supervision (Bell and Shoaib, 2015), career journey (Humphrey, 2005) and experience of pain and disability (Esposito, 2014). The vignettes elicit the researcher/author’s emotional identity and understanding by directly addressing their personal feelings and involvement in the vignettes (Saldana, 2004, cited in Humphreys, 2005). Here, I attempt to apply a similar strategy to “construct a window through which the reader” (Humphreys, 2005, p. 845) can view my emotional conflicts and provide further insight into the process of decision-making behind the choice of methodology. It will draw attention to the learning process of becoming a qualitative researcher/writer after years of training in quantitative writing as a non-native English researcher.

My philosophical journey begins with my higher educational experiences in psychology, which has had a major influence on my identity as a researcher.

*With a psychology background in both BSc and MSc, I was trained in a positivistic methodological approach. I accepted the existence of external objectivity without questioning. I conducted a number of small-scale quantitative experimental and survey studies and applied advanced statistical data analyses. I was unaware of my positivistic philosophical predisposition to research. Through my Master's dissertation on factors that affect employees' organisational commitment to change, I began to recognise the limitations associated with quantitative studies, which restrain the exploration of employees' experiences of change. I therefore embarked on my PhD study on the topic of organisational change determined to use a qualitative approach but without realising my positivistic epistemological orientation.*

In contrast to my background, this thesis explores organisational members' emotional responses to change through rich textual data collected through participant observation and interviews. The purpose of my inquiry in this thesis is to understand meaning of these responses. While this can have an impact on managing organisational change it is not the primary purpose of my qualitative research to pursue managerial interests. Nevertheless, the change in epistemological and ontological commitment gave me an opportunity to rethink my taken-for-granted researcher identity and its alignment with my background and education experiences.

Recognition of my personal philosophical position and methodological approach leads to a series of emotional conflicts. The next few vignettes focus on my struggle on deciding on a philosophical position not only revealed tensions between my positivist and social constructivist/interpretivist identities. It links with Gergen's (2015) suggestion that there is no requirement to abandon positivistic values but simply seem them as optional. Looking back now, I did not perceive my positivistic position as an optional. Instead, I concentrated on resolving my internal conflicts by consciously and subconsciously rejecting a positivistic stance. These vignettes do not reflect a linear temporal order, whereby my philosophical struggles were eventually resolved. Instead, as the next vignette highlights, these are continuing struggles.

*For a time, I thought that continued engagement in the practice of qualitative research communities, would enable me to move from a positivist to social constructivist/interpretivist stance. It seems reasonable for me at the time that in order to accept something that is completely opposite to what I believed in, I need to*



*somehow dis-acknowledge/unlearning things I used to believe in. I started to question whether I would change much in the way I think about knowledge, as I think I need to, in order to match my choice of method. Yet, I do not want to accept that I was probably, and I am still thinking as a positivist in many ways. I felt that, by accepting this, I would have made no progress as part of my research study. This is followed by crucial event in a supervision meeting when my supervisor pointed out that I do not have to become an interpretivist in order to complete my PhD. I consistently remind myself that acknowledge my positivist position does not necessarily mean I cannot adopt an alternative approach that suits the study. In fact, it stands me in a good position where I can problematize positivist studies on the topic. While this helps to resolve my struggles temporarily, it also carries foreshadowing of my contradictory arguments developed in the thesis writing.*

The above vignette supports Elliot, Reid and Baumfield's (2016) claim about international PhD students' adaptation to new academic environments and internal conflicts referred to above resulting from 'conform[ing] to the norm of the new environment [ which is social constructivism in my case] compels personal introspection process of learning [social constructivism/interpretivism], unlearning [positivism] and relearning [social constructivism/interpretivism] new ideas, thoughts and behaviours' (Elliot, *et al.*, 2016, p. 1183). The idea is similar to Lewin's planned approach to change and Isabella's interpretive framework of change.

In line with interpretive epistemological approach, my understanding of the research was dependent on the prior knowledge I gained through the positivist research paradigm (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). In other words, there are always going to be pre-established 'conceptual boxes' that help us to make sense of phenomena. According to Carnap (1934, cited in Irzik and Grunberg, 1995), every epistemological stance is embedded within its own linguistic framework which consists of its own theoretical postulates and correspondent rules. As researchers, we present ourselves, research arguments and research identity through language. The following vignettes highlight my contrasting experience of writing in qualitative research to produce reflexive knowledge versus writing within the positivist paradigm.

*When I first started to write the methodology chapter, I found the structure of the methodology much less standardised in qualitative compared to quantitative research.*

*There is a clear structure I can follow in quantitative writing, whereas in qualitative writing I struggle even to start a chapter. I spent days sitting in front of the computer and reading different qualitative research textbooks, with no progress in writing. Eventually, I ended up writing about the struggles I experienced. Initially, I did not consider reflecting my own experience as a rhetoric device to persuade my audience about the choice of my philosophical approach. I was simply unsure about where to start with this chapter.*

The above vignette hints at the emotional uncertainty involved in qualitative research/writing, where there is no ‘roadmap’ to follow. Here, emotional experiences are “resources that may be utilized flexibly to manage” my identities through “appropriate communications”, in this case, through rhetoric, how language is used to communicate ideas to audiences (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p. 328). Unlike quantitative research, which uses figures and graphs to persuade the audience and has a more linear structure, qualitative research requires “a range of writing skills in its production” (Cassell *et al.*, 2009, p. 521). These skills not only include the use of metaphors and other rhetorical devices but also an ability to create a coherent account built on the relatively messy analytic process (Cassell *et al.*, 2009). This is particularly difficult for qualitative researchers initially trained in quantitative traditions (Cassell *et al.*, 2009).

*The use of positivistic wordings such as ‘trigger’, ‘construct’, ‘reject’, ‘uncover’, ‘impact’, ‘affect’, constantly follow me throughout my study. Although my supervisors pointed out these words are affiliated with a positivistic approach, I struggle to find alternatives which do not impose a positivist paradigm. Sometimes I wonder if this has something to do with their perceptions of my identity as a positivist. It seems that some of these words are frequently used by other interpretivists and social constructivists, but the ways in which I use them, seems to predispose me toward positivism.*

Language is our “primary expression of identity” (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, p. 304). It is a vehicle for understanding of “how [we] construct identity and to what extent this is made transparent to others” (Delahunty, 2012, p. 409). My positivist, psychological training has meant that I have gradually built up a vocabulary pool that is consistent with this paradigm. It is difficult for me to find alternative expressions when English is not my first language. Although prior studies (Flowerdew, 1999; Kaplan, 2005; Shaw, 1991) acknowledge linguistic problems that non-native English-speaking scholars may face in writing and publishing, no distinction was

made between qualitative and quantitative paradigm in these studies. It is hard to judge whether the struggle of writing in qualitative is due to prior training in quantitative methods or being a non-native English speaker' status or both. By reflecting on these struggles in writing and language, I intend to raise awareness of this issue. Hence, the term 'non-native' is used here not only to refer to non-native English-speaking academics but also to scholars whose training is in a philosophical position that they no longer take.

It is easy for multilingual scholars who have been previously trained in their native language and later moved to English speaking countries for advancement (e.g. further education, career) to justify their struggle in writing academically in English due to prior experiences of writing in a native language. However, my experience is slightly different from these scholars.

*As mentioned previously, I obtained my degrees in the UK. I had no previous training in academic writing in Chinese. Although I was educated in China, I never wrote an academic essay in Chinese. Since the start of my undergraduate degree, I learnt to write academic essays in English. English was not my first language, but it is my first academic language. Even so, I find it hard to acquire a large vocabulary pool, like many other non-native English scholars.*

The experience reflected in the above vignette is slightly different from challenges faced by multilingual and/or bilingual scholars that have been discussed in the previous studies (Flowerdew, 1999, Shaw, 1991, Uzuner, 2008). As mentioned earlier, most of the multilingual/bilingual scholars in the previous studies had a prior education or career in their native language. They have already established intellectual identities which influence their writing practice. Academic writing is an act of "intellectual identity" (Shi, 2003, p. 370). There is a mismatch between multilingual scholars' established intellectual identities and academic writing in English. Yet, this is different from my experience presented above, since such intellectual identity has not been developed prior to study in the UK. Nevertheless, I experienced a similar lack of confidence in writing as many multilingual scholars whose intellectual identities are associated with their first language do (Bhatia, 2001).

In addition, the lack of confidence in using English also extended to other communication channels, including supervision relationship and fieldwork. The following vignette provide an example of such.

*In a supervision meeting, I was talking to my supervisors about previous correspondence with a housing organisation manager. In the email, he used words such as 're-engineering', instead of 'change' or 'transformation'. I was not aware of the differences of these words. I simply see them as synonyms of 'change'. Then my supervisors asked me if I know what they mean by re-engineering. I said I don't know. I then asked him this question in the following skype meeting when he talked about re-engineering in their organisation. He explained that re-engineering refers to change in technological communication, for example, from telephone on a physical desk to skype app on computer desktop. This is an example of people using concepts understood in their community without explaining when communicating to an outsider. I am sure if my supervisor did not ask me this question, I would not ask the manager what he means by re-engineering. Being a non-native English speaker, I spontaneously assumed re-engineering is a synonym of change and transformation. I thought if I asked what they mean by a word which I presumed I should understand, it would make me look stupid.*

The above vignettes illustrate how lacks confidence in English could lead to potential communication breakdowns which inhibit emerge of richer data in the fieldwork (Winchatz, 2006). Although the notion of lack of confidence was initially proposed by Bhatia (2001) when writing about non-native English speakers writing and publishing in English, perceived language fluency affects how non-native researchers position themselves in fieldwork (Tanu and Dales, 2016). By reflecting on these struggles in writing and language, I intend to raise awareness of things often taken for granted by native scholars. The term native scholars here not only refers to native English scholars but also scholars whose training is in a philosophical position that he/she currently take.

## Chapter 6

### Stories of change in housing associations

#### Introduction

The link between storytelling and the concept of change...is as old as some of the stories themselves! The frog turns into the handsome prince, the ugly duckling becomes a beautiful swan and the poor cinder girl is transformed into a fairy princess. (Parkin, 2004, p. 1)

Inspired by Parkin's book *Tales for Change*, this chapter adopts a storytelling approach to discuss organisational change in housing association organisations. It applies a combination of conventional narrative and antenarrative analysis. Specifically, it follows key change events that are used to organise the conventional narratives in each case study. Antenarratives from interviewees are analysed to explore the deeper structure beneath the story of change in each organisation (Boje *et al.*, 2016). The antenarratives cover a collection of different change stories told by interviewees who have experienced change, and my experience of their organisational change through listening to their stories and trying to develop a degree of empathy and rapport with members of organisations during fieldwork. By comparing the stories of change in both organisations, it is argued that NPM-related changes in the two housing associations involve a cultural shift from a traditional bureaucratic local council (hereafter local council) to a 'business-like' organisation. This enables development of the theory of NPM by bringing it into dialogue with the literature on organisational culture change. By exploring the relationship between these ideas, this chapter enables better understanding of organisational change in housing associations as public sector organisations.

#### Case 1: EM

EM is a medium-sized housing association in the English East Midlands. It employs approximately 300 people and manages over 9,000 properties at the time of study across two locations in England. Similar to many housing associations set up in the early 2000s, EM was originally formed in 2003 to take on housing stock from a local council in the East Midlands. At the time, it was called E Ltd. As a result of the merger between two local housing providers in two counties during large-scale voluntary stock transfer in 2007, along with

employees from the local council who worked for local housing department, the organisation was rebranded as EM. Consequently, EM is a parent organisation that comprises two organisation in different locations. The first location is known as Head Office and the second location is Regional Office. With an average score using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) of approximately 27 (Head Office) and 13 (Regional Office), the IMD is relatively lower than the national average in both geographical locations (Official Statistics, 2015). 24.7% (Head Office) and 14.3% (Regional Office) of the population in the areas served by EM are non-White British.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Housing stock transfer***

As mentioned in Chapter Four, as a housing policy, housing stock transfer was originally pursued by the Thatcher government through the idea of ‘privatisation’ between the 1980s and the 1990s, and privatisation had its cemented place under New Labour policy, as conducted by the New Labour administration since 1997 (Daly *et al.*, 2005). The purpose of housing stock transfer is to outsource public services to voluntary, not-for-profit organisations to overcome insecurity and funding reduction, and to address the inabilities of council housing departments to deal with long-standing social problems and housing crisis (Baines and Cunningham, 2011). These problems include failure to deal with “tenants’ demands, poor quality stocks, unresponsive service and poor management” (Daly *et al.*, 2005, p. 328). Specifically, the Thatcher government introduced ‘Right to Buy’ legislation under the Housing Act in 1980 in order to promote homeownership. The results are profound, as Daly *et al.* (2005) report that between 1981 to 2002, over two million houses from local councils were sold to social tenants under ‘Right to Buy’ scheme. In addition, 800,000 houses were transferred under housing stock transfer programmes to landlords under the claim of promoting tenant’s choices (Daly *et al.*, 2005). Promoting users’ choice is one of the aims of NPM under marketisation (Walker and Boyne, 2006). Although a number of studies have criticised the highly contentious and misleading rhetoric of housing transfer policy (Mooney and Poole, 2005), this was generally welcomed by professionals and academics as an important government intervention in the social housing sector as suggested by Daly *et al.* (2005) and Malpass and Mullins (2000).

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<sup>1</sup> Reported in 2011 by local authorities in both areas and published on local council websites; in order to ensure the anonymity of the organisation, URL reference is not provided.

Because EM has two offices in two different locations, each office operates under different housing stock transfer agreements with local councils. This has resulted in differences between some customer-facing teams' operations in Regional Office and Head Office. The Head Office is responsible for housing allocation, whereas, in Regional Office, housing allocations are dealt with by the local council who shortlist applications and pass them onto Allocation Team in Head Office to arrange tenancy agreements. As pointed out by customer-facing staff members from both offices:

*We've got a ... [Allocation] Team. They manage the waiting list. They will tell you who the property has been offered to.* Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

*An application would go to [the] local authority [at Regional Office]. They manage all the local districts of housing associations ... They would assess for needs and give them priority base[d] on their circumstances ... when a property became available, Head Office would notify the [local] council [at Regional Office]. The council will ... come back with a list of people ... They decide who's going to be nominated.* Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

For the same reason, different council agreements were signed during housing stock transfer between the two offices. This also resulted in different operations for another customer-facing team in both offices.

*When we transferred all the houses from [the] council, we were tied to... the local agreements with [the council] ... we have to remain a local presence [at Regional Office]... There are a lot of agreements we have to [follow] for seven years. Once that seven-years was gone, that's when EM really changed.* Liz, middle manager, Regional Office, EM

Liz worked at Regional Office prior to housing stock transfer. The above quote illustrates her awareness of the organisational culture change accompanied by housing stock transfer as part of NPM. She suggests that after the completion of housing stock transfer, EM started to change culturally, from a local council to a business-like organisation.

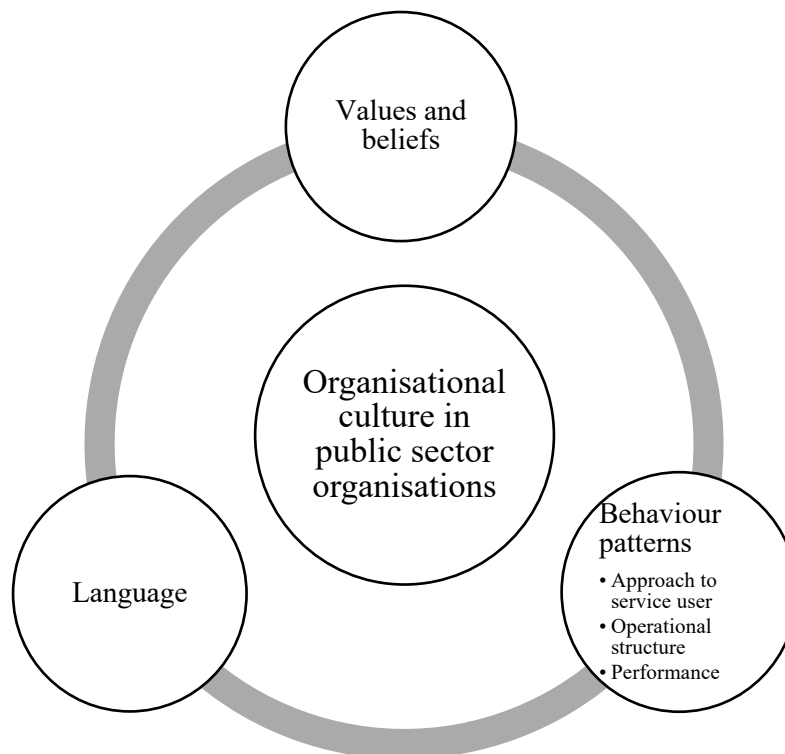
### *After housing stock transfer*

As a result of housing stock transfer, a large number of staff from local councils were brought into EM. However, the values and beliefs of local councils remained embedded among these employees and managers many years after the housing stock transfer, prior to the restructuring in 2016. A change in culture was recognised and addressed as part of the business plan and organisational strategy, as pointed out by Zara:

*There are two parts to organising change, one is the corporate planning and strategic element ... which looks at overall across the business: What do[es] the main business need to change? What are the main things do we need to do? Often, that's culture. And the second part we look at more detail [in] processes; we look at how they need to change. The cultural change involves both people and changing policies and practices. Zara, senior manager, Head Office, EM.*

**Figure 6.1** below is an expansion of ‘the dimensions of cultural change’ presented in Chapter Two (see **Figure 2.1** p. 41) based on themes emerged from this research; **Table 6.1** elaborates the cultural shift from a local council to a business-like organisation.

**Figure 6.1** *The edited version of dimensions of cultural change in public sector organisations*





**Table 6.1** *Cultural dimensions in the shift from council culture to a business-like culture at EM*

Cultural dimensions		Council culture	Business-like culture
Values and beliefs  (From community-focused to customer-oriented)		<p><i>Our old chief executive was very community-focused ... in those days, we work with charities. We[’d] do nice things for the community... when I first started [here]... it was really community-focused. Like a lot of the pictures you see around here, we[’d] do a lot of community stuff.</i> Interview with Liz, middle manager, Regional Office, EM</p>	<p><i>EM delivers value for money by making the most of our assets and resources and by generating savings through smarter working practices and better use of technology.</i> Extract from the business plan at EM.</p> <p><i>We make it easy for customers to do business with us; we are clear about what we offer to our customers; we use research and insight to understand how we are doing for our customers; we will help customers maintain their tenancy through appropriate service and support.</i> Extract from the business plan at EM.</p>
Behaviour patterns	Approach (From community-focused approach to results-driven approach)	<p><i>One of the biggest parts of our job was the social aspect of living in sheltered accommodation. We’d run bingo. Every British sort of celebration. We’d have Easter, Halloween, Christmas parties. If someone had a significant birthday, we would have teas. We would have entertainment. We’d play games.</i> Interview with Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM.</p> <p><i>You became friends with the tenants. I would do anything from giving them a lift to [the] doctor, picking [up] their pensions, picking [up] their prescriptions, taking them out for the day... We were free to offer what was a good neighbour service ... there was no real boundaries to what we could do.”</i> Interview with Linda.</p> <p><i>“A Television screen above the reception is playing Sky News. There are two black leather sofas. One is next by the reception, the other by next by the entrance. Next to the safe by the entrance are some toys and two chairs and a small table with charity donation things on it. Later on, I learnt that regional office used to be more community-focused as a result of close working relationships with local council. I suspect that this is why they have a TV, sofas and a play area for children.</i> Research fieldnotes.</p>	<p><i>There was a chart of ‘make a cup of drink/coffee’. It was like a coffee shop procedure: taking and processing the order (identifying customer needs), the customer paying for the order and making the drink (providing the service that matches the customer’s needs).</i> Research fieldnotes.</p> <p><i>We then have to introduce this manual ... instead, we have like [a] basic manual, where we only see them once a year, through to a handful of our customers [who] we do still visit daily. But there are only two or three in each scheme ... we are much traveling around. Really, we are just checking on people, well fair check, test equipment that kind of thing.</i> Interview with Linda, Independent Living Officer, Regional Office, EM.</p> <p><i>Because the word we quite often say is no (say no to [any] request outside of the basic manual) because we’ve been asked to do things.</i> Interview with Ann, Independent Living Officer, Head Office, EM.</p> <p><i>Now, all that is gone ... We certainly [are] not allow[ed] to handle anybody’s drugs, whereas before we used to pick them up regularly for them. We cannot do that anymore. We definitely cannot touch their pensions. That’s just a big no. We literately work our set hours and go home...The job is... unrecognisable in many ways. Clearly, we help in [an] emergency.</i> Interview with Linda.</p>

<p>Operations</p>	<p><i>Before [the restructure], we probably still operated in solid, each team, each department operated in their own way, their own understanding of their objectives. Interview with Zara, senior manager, Head Office, EM.</i></p> <p><i>An application would go to [the] local authority [at Regional Office]. They manage all the local districts' housing associations... They would assess for needs and give them priority based on their circumstances... when a property becomes available, Head Office would notify the council [here]. The council will ... come back with a list of people ... They decide who's going to be nominated. Interview with Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM</i></p>	<p><i>Change [has] made Repair Operatives work directly with the contact centre agents ... they're no longer just putting them in the diary and just never seeing them again. They are responsible for [the work] if there are any issues. [Call centre agents are] working directly with Repair Operatives ... they spend a lot of time on the phone to Repair Operatives. Making sure that if the repair is in, checking where they are, seeing if they can fit in additional repairs on that day ... that's a direct relationship. It's a very different job to just answering the phone and looking at appointments. Interview with Zara.</i></p> <p><i>We have our own Repair Team in plumbing, gas, some engineers, but a lot of our works are sub-contracted out. Interview with Karen, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM</i></p>
<p>Performance (efficiency)</p>	<p><i>I think things were a little different at [the] council. [It's a] little slower pace. Interview with Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM.</i></p> <p><i>We will give you this funding, but you have to meet these procedures and support people ... We justified what we did, who we visited ... Everything was recorded all the time. Interview with Linda.</i></p>	<p><i>I definitely feel that it's more productive here; it's being more accountable for what we do. Interview with Sarah.</i></p>
<p>Language (From community-based to customer-oriented)</p>	<p><i>We took care of elderly and disabled tenants that lived in our shelter[ed] accommodation. Interview with Linda.</i></p> <p><i>They used to call 'customers' as 'social tenants' which is a term that aligned with the traditional public service culture they had previously. Research fieldnotes.</i></p> <p><i>They call neighbourhood officer as housing officer. This is possibly due to the close connection with local councils as they used to call neighbourhood officers as housing officers in the housing department in local council prior to the housing transfer. Research fieldnotes.</i></p>	<p><i>Almost every interviewee I encountered used the term 'company' to describe their organisation. Taking from research field notes.</i></p> <p><i>A customer comes through Customer Service [Team], if it's something that Customer Service [Team] cannot deal with it, they will put them through the income line. Interview with Flora, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM</i></p>

**Table 6.1** demonstrates a significant shift from community-based values under the local council culture, to a more ‘business-like’ culture. This shift in organisational values emphasises a results-driven approach and indicates a customer-oriented culture. The aim of these values is to achieve efficiency whilst meeting the needs of customers - both key concepts of NPM (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016).

Driven by changes in values and beliefs within the organisation, employees’ behaviour patterns also have to change in order to fit. Specifically, three themes emerge from the findings within the behaviour patterns dimension. These are related to: approach towards customers, organisational operations and organisational performance. Here, *performance* refers to the speed and quality of the services that the organisations provide. The approach to customers has been reshaped to fit a private organisational culture, where services are outlined in the manual in order to meet the needs of different customers. By standardising services, this aligns with the value change on increasing the level of organisational performance and efficiency. This results-oriented approach focuses on the benefit of one’s actions rather than on the process (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). The relationship between the staff and customers has also changed from ‘friendship’ to ‘business relationship’. By outlining changes in the relationship between customers and staff and stating that “*the job is unrecognisable*”, Linda expresses a loss of professional identity as a public servant because the community-based tasks that she valued no longer generate any income for the organisation. These tasks have been rendered unnecessary within the context of the standard service manual. Whilst the aim of introducing standard services is to provide better service to each customer, interviews suggest that customer-facing staff often declined to meet the needs of some customers because they have a set manual and a specific schedule to follow. They have lost a degree of professional autonomy when deciding what they want to do and how they can help their customers, as they can do no more than is suggested in the manual. Hence, although a customer-oriented approach promotes the idea of involving customers in the formation of the service, it is not the case in these examples. These examples highlight that the idea of a results-oriented approach sometimes contradicts the idea of promoting customer participation.

Baines and Cunningham (2011) question how far a results-oriented culture and a performative model of management can go in public sector organisations. They argue that NPM not only undercuts the value of the public sector but also raises tensions in employees’

working lives, with detrimental effects on workplace culture, morale and the service quality they provide. As a results-oriented approach, the focus is on how it can benefit the organisation's financial performance. The community-based tasks of some customer-facing staff do not generate direct income. Here, financial performance is different from the idea of profit-making in private organisations, and financial performance is important for non-profit organisations in order to keep public services running.

In addition to the pitfalls associated with the results-driven approach and its consequences for customers and employees, findings also reveal a number of positive impacts of cultural change in EM. When discussing the organisational operations under the former council culture, Zara, a senior manager, recalls a good deal of power was delegated to middle or line management in each unit or team, whose efforts were coordinated by standardisation of input and output through extensive control over performance within their own teams prior to the change (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). However, after the restructuring, teams collaborated more with each other. In the example of Customer Service Team and Repair Team Zara has given, it is suggested that this collaborative working relationship allows Repair Operatives to be more efficient, with Customer Service Advisors focusing on the needs of customers and passing them on to Repair Operatives as required. This is also an example of a results-oriented organisational operation which concentrates on how to produce results in a more efficient way (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015).

As introduced in Chapter Five, EM has two offices in two different counties in England. They operated in an independent way prior to the restructuring in 2016. There were many reasons why the two offices originally operated independently. First, this is a reflection of the difference in volume of housing stock in the two areas. Head Office was responsible for approximately 6,000 homes whereas Regional Office manages 3,000 homes, as outlined in the annual report prior to the restructuring. Such differences had led to the separation of operations in Repair Teams between the different locations. At Head Office, there were approximately fifteen in-house Repair Operatives who are responsible for general repairs and voids<sup>2</sup>, as pointed out by John, a customer-facing staff member at Head Office, whereas at Regional Office, there is a small in-house Repair Team. The Regional Office must, therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> A void refers to the empty property with no customer lives in. It is commonly used by income officers in social housing associations.

rely on external contractors to conduct repairs and installations. This is confirmed by Karen, another customer-facing staff member at Regional Office.

Although EM is a non-profit organisation, the cultural shift focuses on being performance-driven, which is a key concept of NPM-related change (Walker *et al.*, 2011). Previous studies have found that adopting a more customer-oriented and competitor-oriented approach enhances organisational performance (Harris, 2001). By outsourcing services to external contractors, EM reduces the cost of having additional internal operatives in the organisation, having recognised their own short-term weakness of limited funding (Alonso *et al.*, 2015a). This example also reveals a competitor orientation where the housing association passes on the service to external contractors who, it is claimed, can provide better service with less cost (Walker *et al.*, 2011, Alonso *et al.*, 2015a). This practice is based on the assumption that external contractors can provide a more efficient service because they are motivated by extrinsic incentives to maximise profit. Such assumption undermines the impact of intrinsic “public service motivation” on work efficiency amongst employees and managers who work in public sector organisations (Francois, 2000).

Although many studies of private organisations, as well as public sector organisations, have pointed out the difficulties of establishing a clear relationship between organisational culture and performance (Alvesson, 2002), a number of studies (e.g. Diefenbach, 2009; Wynen and Verhoest, 2003) argue that culture change is important in public sector organisations. This brings us to the dimension of performance. In the council culture, the speed of the service was perceived to be slow and there was endless paperwork to complete as part of the administrative process in the council agreement. Employees relied heavily on guidelines and procedures introduced by the local council (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). By the end of housing stock transfer agreement, EM was able to remove the administrative processes from their daily operations in order to be more efficient and results-driven. In addition, performance is closely monitored so that employees and managers are held accountable for their work. This is part of performance management, where there are clear targets, monitoring, performance measurements and incentives (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015).

The last cultural dimension presented in **Table 6.1** is language change, which is recognised by management as an important dimension in the organisation. As Zara says,

*To keep the [business] terminology consistent so they understand it, something gets in the way [which] causes [an] effort then to identify it, do something about it. Zara, senior manager, EM*

Findings reveal widespread use of language that would be more familiar in private sector organisations among interviewees in both organisations. Specifically, most interviewees refer to their organisations as ‘companies’, even though both case study organisations are housing associations that conventionally categorise as public sector organisations. The term ‘company’ is more commonly associated with private sector rather than with public sector organisations. This raises the question of whether these changes in language reflect changes in how employees experience organisational reality (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Learmonth, 2006). Similar observations are revealed in the findings of other studies. For example, in a study of the changing role of academic managers in higher education conducted by Deem and Brehony (2005), a head of a department in a UK university adopted the language used in the private sector during his interview. He talked about the operation of education as a business and the public educational service as a product they had to sell to customers (students and their parents), who were directly contributing to the income of the university. Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest that such changes in professional language often involves a deep change in organisational culture.

The use of words such as ‘customer’ instead of ‘tenant’ in EM organisational business plans and annual reports, as well as in respondents’ interviews, has also come to represent the organisation as a private enterprise (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). Changes in the discourse of public sector organisations express the revolutionary transformation of public organisational culture (Learmonth, 2005). This is not only a reflection of organisational reality but also an enabler in how employees and managers construct organisational reality by changing the language (Learmonth, 2005). In some ways, such changes reflect a clash of discourse between traditional public administration and NPM.

### ***Local funding reductions***

As part of housing stock transfer agreement, the local council provided funding to support some of the customer-facing roles to provide services for the elderly and people with mental health issues who lived in sheltered accommodation schemes in order to help them live independently, instead of relying on home care or hospital. By the end of this agreement, the

local councils in both locations decided to withdraw most of their funding for this type of services. Funding withdrawal is an important representation of NPM-related change. As some scholars argue, NPM as a political movement was fuelled by a period of financial distress, societal criticism and calls for improved service quality and efficiency in the public sector (Hood, 1995; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). The funding withdrawal happened after the financial crisis in 2008 when the government imposed austerity measures, including major spending cuts in order to bring expenses closer to their revenues (Kolk, Bogt and Veen-Dirks, 2015). The austerity measures provided the context for further development of the long-term orientation of the NPM agenda to make the public sector more ‘business-like’ (Van der Kolk *et al.*, 2015). When facing major funding cuts, organisations are likely to be more inclined toward management control (Van der Kolk *et al.*, 2015), specifically as in this case, tighter budget control puts some customer-facing staff’s jobs at risk. As pointed out by Linda:

*[The] council used to give us 360,000 a year ... which paid for our wages ... maintenance of equipment and [a] call centre ... to justify that, we have [to meet] certain criteria ... then, they literally just withdrew the whole funding. We had management that spent months, knowing that this is going to happen. They spent months try[ing] to find ways to keep the service running. Without the cash, we had lots of redundancies.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

The above quote illustrates several factors that are considered relevant to ensuring successful change, even though such change is a passive reaction to the reduction of funding (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006). These factors include the need to keep the service running; ensuring that top management supports and expresses commitment (e.g. spending months discussing and planning how to react to the funding withdrawal from the local council); pursuing a comprehensive change, which involves downsizing the service teams; and introducing alternative ways to support the team financially (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006). However, Kickert (2014) argues that providing a comprehensive change plan is not essential for the successful implementation of change in public sector organisations. He presents six case studies of public sector organisational change; some organisations implemented changes in the absence of a comprehensive change plan, others did not. By comparing these organisational changes, Kickert suggests that an incremental approach to change can be taken where small, cautious steps are made in order to avoid integrative re-organisation. Kickert (2014) argues that incremental change appears to be more effective than visionary

transformation. Despite different views on how to approach change in public sector organisations, a major re-organisation is perceived as unavoidable in this case because of financial pressure imposed by the local council. An incremental change cannot achieve the amount of savings required in a short period of time.

By comparing differences between how the job was and how it is now, Linda points out that EM is trying to maintain services by introducing charges:

*We used to visit everybody every day in the scheme. Now, we only visit people who ask for us to visit because now they would have to pay for that service whereas before it used to be free. You moved to a scheme or a bungalow, you are entitled to a daily or a monthly visit from us as part of living in that property. But because our funding was withdrawn, we then have to introduce this manual ... instead, we have like [the] basic manual, where we only see them once a year ... we are just checking on people, welfare check [and] test equipment.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

The situation is similar in Head Office. The local council at Head Office did not fully withdraw their funding; instead, they reduced it, as Ann explains:

*Because [the] local council is supporting the service through us, we are in limbo at the moment because they ... extended the condition this year until next March. We don't know what happen[s] after that. We've been told there won't be any visiting service ... from next year March. Whether that would be it, we don't know because we don't know if they [will] offer to extend [the funding] again.* Ann, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

The examples of funding reductions reveal a continued change from a local council to a 'business-like' organisational culture in order to achieve an efficient and effective public sector organisation according to the vision of NPM (Buick et al., 2015). Although senior management is responsible for planning and implementing organisational change, they remain as passive respondents of political centralisation (Laffin, 2016).



## *Agile working*

A further result of ending housing stock transfer agreement has led to a continuous change in operations in Regional Office, as well as in Head Office. It involves ‘agile working’, which is a term used by interviewees to describe flexible working led by technological change. Such change is considered as an NPM-related change because it is situated under the aim of improving effectiveness and efficiency by allowing employees to work anywhere and everywhere. It draws attention to the outcome rather than where and how that outcome is achieved, which aligns with the idea of a results-driven culture (Dunn and Miller, 2007). Agile working is seen as a continuous incremental change because it not only involves “departmental, operational ongoing changes” but also “organisation-wide strategies and the ability to constantly adapt these to the demands of both external and internal environment (By, 2005, p. 372). Such change results from the introduction of new technologies, such as the ‘dashboard’ system where employees can see the operations of other teams and collaborate accordingly. Tablets and mobile apps in each department have directly changed the way daily operations are carried out.

*[The] Customer Service [Advisor] ... will put it (a work item) on what we called [the] dashboard, which is ... a computer system where they had information in it, and they can send messages to ... our [team] dashboard ... we will see all the notes. We will be [able to] open the customer's account up and see why they phone[d]. And then, we can just phone them back. Once we[’ve] spoke[n] to them, we [use to] put all of our notes onto it and then like just close it down ... then the notes will stay there with the customer account.* Flora, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

*It's on the dashboard. You can put a note and close it, or you can put a note and send [it] to another department. Then they will get a list of working items that we will say it's an inquiry. They are supposed to reply [to] the inquiry and send [it] back to you. I will get it on my work list, say, 'this is what we do, tell the customer this'.* Karen, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

The dashboard is used by nearly all departments in the organisation. They collaborate through this online system and share customer correspondence within teams and between teams in order to deal with issues and concerns raised by customers effectively. As Lindsay *et al.* (2017) suggest, collaborative decision-making processes enable creative problem-solving and

are supportive of change. Similarly, a mobile app is used between Repair Operatives and work planners to organise repairs appointments efficiently.

*It's all come through this phone. We've got an app on the phone which [is] linked up with the service here. Then, we've got [a] work planner [to] sort ... diary out on this app. It just comes through to us, where we are going, what to do next. They set out the appointments. Because, like I said, we are onsite work. You would say it's taken 20 minutes, then it's taking 2 hours ... there always be appointments. But it's set in the list, it's just gone to [the] top one, sign that through, next one. But they can take them off or add jobs.* David, middle manager, Head Office, EM

Apart from mobile phones, every member of the frontline staff has a tablet that helps them to assess the system and organise their work while they are away from the office.

*We do all the visit on tablets ... that's a change. We used to do our paperwork and now we do them all on a tablet.* Angela, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

Although there is not much direct evidence of agile working in the literature on change in public sector organisations, some studies in project management literature help to enable an understanding of agile working. It is a project management methodology that has been widely used to overcome the dangers of the traditional front-end planning method (Serrador and Pinto, 2015). The four core values of agile working in the project management literature emphasise: “individuals and interaction over processes and tools”; the promotion of “working software over comprehensive documentation”; a focus on “customer collaboration over contract negotiation” in order to allow “responding to change over following a plan” (Serrador and Pinto, 2015, pp. 1041-1042). These values are illustrated in the quotes above. Specifically, through the use of the ‘dashboard’ system, the organisation has abandoned paper documentation as a working methodology. In addition, this activates agile working among employees to work individually and collaboratively in order to promote better quality and efficient services. How and where they complete the work is less important than the result. Being able to work on-site whilst visiting customers enables more efficient working. Serrador and Pinto (2015) explain that this is because the agile method is designed to facilitate flexibility and responsiveness to the change of working conditions.

In the following quotes, interviewees outline other benefits of NPM-led technological change:

*We are out [in the community] more. We are trying to be more agile [in our] working [practices]. We are trying to work on the road. But our IT is not quite up to the expectation for us to be able to that all the time. There is another office over in our area ... we started using that as a base just to save time coming back here, between Head Office and [name of the area removed]. There is an office in [name of the area removed] which we are going to utilise just to save travel time. Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM*

In the above quote, Cathy emphasises on the reason agile working promotes NPM-led technological change in organisation-wide strategy that is intended to save costs regarding frontline staff, including office space and travelling time between the office and community. It allows the organisation and staff to do more for few resources (By and Macleod, 2009; Cresswell *et al.*, 2014). It evident changes driven by the development of technology is an important aspect of NPM (Boden *et al.*, 1998).

Moving from traditional desk-working to agile working involves a systemic change in the organisation. With the development of technology, employees can work from a community centre, their homes and other places. As part of their organisation-wide strategy, EM has developed a flexible organisational culture that is intended to be more compatible with the agile working system (Serrador and Pinto, 2015). Here, *system* specifically refers to the structure and operations in the organisation. However, Cathy's experience above indicates that the technology they have now is not sufficient to support the system change to agile working.

Agile working reflects the aim of promoting a results-oriented culture where the process of work is less important than delivering the service itself. Driven by the need to improve performance, this results-oriented approach relaxes the bureaucratic constraints and 'red tape' that are associated with council culture and are regarded as an unnecessary burden that impedes public organisational efficiency (Battaglio and Condrey, 2009; Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). This is pointed out by Zara:

*We used to have a system where people have to clock in and out of their shifts. When they stop[ped] for lunch they have to clock out, when they came back from lunch they have to clock back in again. What we establish[ed] was [something] that's actually very high effort and don't deliver much in return to the business. It tells us when they*

*are in, but it doesn't tell us how they are working ... [now] if we see how effectively we deliver the services, it doesn't matter what time they are clocking in and out, what matters is how they deliver [the work].* Zara, senior manager, Head Office, EM

Some interviewees appreciated agile working as it indicated a level of trust from management related to how they do their jobs. For example, with some customer-facing roles, there are fewer notes required in their work diary. Cathy says,

*I think it's [a] really big part of the job we were doing. Because we were covering ourselves all the time. We got to [cover ourselves]. The way we are working now, we have to be confident that our manager would take our words when we say 'no, we did not say that, this is what happened [and] how it went.* Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

Paralleling the concept of decentralisation, NPM-related change seeks to move away from hierarchies towards flatter, bottom-up driven organisations of public service management (Battaglio and Condrey, 2009). It is claimed that this empowers the voice of lower-level staff. This relies on building interpersonal trust between management and frontline workers within public sector organisations (Nyhan, 2000). As pointed out by Nyhan (2000), there are three elements of trust – fairness, confidence and risk-taking. In the example above, the perceived confidence of management in employees doing their job promotes trust between management and frontline workers.

Although some employees acknowledge benefits of using tablets, others see themselves as victims of technological change. Linda complains:

*For me, because I spend 80 per cent of my time in my car; we are on tablets all the time. None of us which were used to do. My eyesight has got worse. I have got pain in my wrists and back because of the changes in how we work ... It's actual physical changes within the job. Years ago, we would lift people. Now, for health and safety reason, you cannot do that ... because you may injure yourself. But, ironically, repetitive work like on tablets and driving has brought about joints issues anyway. You know you cannot win. It's partly because of my age. There are physical aspects to it.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

This story includes elements of irony and tragedy resulting from NPM-led technological change (Gabriel, 2000). Linda states that she will never be able to overcome the physical injuries brought about by the frequent experiences of using a tablet in her car. Ironically, due to occupational health concerns, actions like lifting elderly or frail tenants have been banned by EM because of the risk of physical injury. However, Linda's experiences of eye, wrist and back strain highlight the physical injuries that are associated with technological change under NPM. Whilst previous studies draw attention to the psychological impact of technological change on employee wellbeing (Sparks, Faragher and Cooper, 2001), little management research considers the impact of technological change on employees' physical wellbeing (with a few exceptions on the chronic disease in medical journals). Although these impacts are important to employees' wellbeing, the focus of this thesis is on how these technological changes are interpreted by employees.

In the following quote, Flora suggests that technology has failed its purpose of enabling agile working for reasons related to practicality:

*We've all got tablets. Because we've got apps on the tablets that we use...when we go out, we just put people's notes down ... We've got our Samsung tablets. They are rubbish. They just like, mine lose[s] battery really quick. They just log out stuff ... all the managers who don't actually [need tablets] ... They've all got these fine gold iPads. But actually, they are not going out and actually using them like day in and day out. I know it costs money ... I know the business only has got so much money. There's a lot more people that need the rubbish tablet ... But it just seems that all those people that don't really use them have got amazing tablets. And everyone else that actually uses them has just got rubbish. It's just things like that. It's just doesn't make sense.* Flora, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

Apart from addressing the impracticality of the technology adopted in the organisation, Flora also reveals a potential conflict between customer-facing staff members and management triggered by insufficient support over agile working. It also provides qualitative, rather than quantitative, evidence to support the claim that commitment and support from top management are important to change in public sector organisations (Kickert, 2014).

Flora continues to discuss the undesired impact of NPM-led technological change:

*If I were going to court, I could be just sitting there doing my work while I was in court waiting ... Because sometimes you could go to a court meeting at 10 o'clock, but you might not go into court until about 12 o'clock ... I sat there doing nothing. I could take my tablet and do my work. But I know the tablet is not going to work when I get there ... there is no point [to that]. Whereas, if they actually do something about it, I would be more productive as if I [could] have been doing my work in those two hours rather than just sitting there and doing nothing. But because we've got this technology that just doesn't benefit us in anyway, there's no point.*

In her dispiriting story, Flora sees the promise of agile working as having been defeated by insufficient technological support. The above quotes reveal how agile working in the form of technological change has been adopted by EM. They not only highlight how technological changes can potentially improve organisational performance through increasing employees' autonomy but also how technological changes affect employees' physical wellbeing. The aims of these changes are to further support the change from a local council to a 'business-like' culture by removing the 'red tape' and focusing on results rather than the process of work in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in public sector organisations.

### ***The major restructuring***

In 2015, the Chancellor George Osborne announced a 1% rent cut under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 for the following four years (Kelly, 2015). The Act "requires registered providers of social housing in England to reduce social housing rent by 1% for 4 years from a frozen 2016 to 2020 baseline and to comply with maximum rent requirements for new tenancies" (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2016, no page number). This is because previously, social housing rents had increased by more than 1% annually. As a result, social housing rents had increased by 20% over the previous 10 years (Kelly, 2015). It is suggested that such change would lead to a total saving of 1.5 billion pounds in housing benefit. However, at the same time, this change reduced the income of housing associations by 1%. This meant at least 27,000 new homes would not be built as a result of this reduction. EM chose to alter their organisational structure by downsizing middle management and frontline staff to make cost savings. This decision is aligned with contingency theory, which suggests that organisational structural changes are often caused by changes in the external environment (Miller and Friesen, 1977). In public sector

organisations, changes are often prompted by sharp budget cuts from central government (Van der Kolk *et al.*, 2015).

According to the organisational change plan and follow-up communication on organisational change, the restructuring began by consulting with managers in July 2016. In December, the organisation completed the management restructuring and achieved £400,000 of savings. A number of senior and middle managers were made redundant. In the same month, they implemented a new organisational structure and announced a further restructuring of the whole organisation based on the new management structure. As a result of this, 198 employees were affected in different ways. 127 employees had to re-apply for their jobs due to the limited number of roles. Those whose roles no longer existed were redeployed to a pool where they could apply for other roles in the organisation or wait for decisions. All the teams were affected in different ways during the restructuring. Most of them lost colleagues and, as a result, the workload increased significantly for the remaining team members.

In the following quote, Cathy explains that, as a result of the restructuring, the organisation lost a team of street wardens who previously had taken care of garden inspections and supported tenants during their residency. In addition, they also took on responsibilities such as sign-ups and viewings from Allocation Team, which is an example of doing more with fewer resources.

*Our teams have become bigger, but we took on a lot more responsibilities... We lost [a team] during the restructuring ... we are now doing ... inspections and picking up some [of] their responsibilities. Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM*

She continues,

*Our area is bigger and the sign-up and the viewings, they are the main things that [have] changed ... When we do sign-ups, trying to get the rent advance payment is very difficult. Because we are putting pressure on Customer Service [Team], they [are] being put under pressure to answer all these phone calls. But we cannot actually get through to take the payment ... we were in a home with our new customer. I asked them to pay us however much money they could, and we have to phone Customer Service [Team] to get them to take the payment over the phone and we cannot get through ... we could be stood there for 10 minutes waiting for someone to answer the phone.*

The above quote illustrates the negative impact of NPM on customer-facing staff having to do more with fewer resources. Specifically, increasing the workload without additional support can compromise the central idea of NPM as positively benefitting customers.

Cathy uses a powerful metaphor to describe the effect of increasing in workload and responsibilities:

*Our responsibilities are different. We do a lot more than we did before. We are running around like headless chickens, trying to keep up on top of everything. We are also trying to work in a different way.*

The metaphor of the 'headless chicken' suggests an experience of "going from one place to another in a way that is not organised at all" (Longman online dictionary). It suggests disorganisation and such lack of control is perceived to be an undesired result of NPM on employees in EM.

The aim of the organisational restructuring is to move away from standardisation and divisional workforce organisation as features of professional and bureaucratic structures, in order to improve efficiency (Verbeeten and Spekle, 2015). The way EM used to operate in some of the teams relied on the standardisation of skills in its core operation (Mather *et al.*, 2007). Such a change in structure can put new demands on managers and employees. In order to cope with an increase in work demands, every team member needs to understand the job of the others in order to cover each other's tasks in cases of emergency.

*[What] the transformation wants to achieve is to amalgamate the team so that everybody can do everything ... I understand why they want to do it. I understand the process of doing it for cover in case I break my leg. Jess, non-customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM*

Increasing work demands places heightened importance on obtaining an appropriate IT structure to support the flatter structure (Fiedler, Grover and Teng, 1996). However, this is not resolved easily in this case, especially when customer-facing staff are under pressure to take calls. As Linda says,

*They give us alternative numbers, but they don't work ... those people are not always at their desks or they turn their phones off ... you just go through to their voice mail*



*... you then ended up ringing five numbers and then went back to Customer Service [Team]. Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM*

In order to solve such problems, Transformation Team was implementing change in each department in order to remove bureaucratic red tape, which Linda refers to as ‘unnecessary steps’ in the work process. At the same time, they were keen to see if costs could be saved and to explore other ways of generating income. As Linda says,

*What they were doing was they were taking every department, and they were looking at every nitty gritty aspect of everything that they do with a view to make it simpler ... just report a dripping tap, they will detail every tiny step of the way to see what they can miss out. We had these redundancies... They created two new roles. They took existing employees ... Their job is to promote our services to [the] private sector, which we do already.*

However, such change is redundant as it leads to another undesired consequence regarding the employees’ workload. Linda continues,

*If we have an inquiry down here, they have to travel down from Head Office [to Regional Office]. What happens is, they have not got time to travel ... we ended up with doing it anyway. That’s the only change we’ve seen.*

To summarise, despite the apparently good intention of the 1% rent reduction on social housing tenants, such NPM-related change has imposed significant financial pressures on housing associations as well as employees and managers who work in these organisations. When discussing the major restructuring, employees tend to draw attention to the negative consequences in relation to increasing workload.

### Case 2: WM

WM was established in 2002 as an Arm’s-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage local council-owned properties in the West Midlands of England as part of the council service. According to the definition provided by the National Housing Federation (2018), ALMO is a non-profit organisation set up by local councils to manage its housing stock. The aim of an ALMO is to provide opportunities for more fundamental changes in the nature of council housing management and to give tenants a much greater say in how their

homes are managed. The structure of an ALMO enables the organisation to access housing expertise and retain a close relationship with parent councils. As one of the interviewees, Nadia explains that the reason for creating the ALMO programme is that in many local council housing departments, housing revenue account was often diverted to other local council services. As a result of the introduction of the Decent Homes Programme, local councils have to find an independent funding stream to afford and meet the standards of decent homes. This is a number of ways in which how people interpret the reasons for ALMO programme, here, Nidia's comment could be seen as historical claims of an empirical nature. At that time, WM remains a council-run organisation. In 2011, the organisation became a housing provider after a large-scale stock transferring from the local council. The organisation employs approximately 450 people and manages over 12,000 properties at the time of this study took place. The organisation is situated in the centre of a small town in the West Midlands. With an average score of IMD of 30 (Official Statistics, 2015), the town is known as one of the most deprived town in England.

### ***Housing stock transfer***

Like EM, WM also experienced 'housing stock transfer'. This started in 2007. The housing stock was fully transferred from the local council to WM in 2011 when their CEO finally closed the deal with 12,000 properties, which was around 60% of the social housing in the local area. By then WM had become a fully registered housing association.

Jack explains that the completion of the housing stock transfer has led to a change in the organisation's financial structure. He describes what it was like in the organisation's financial structure prior to the housing stock transfer:

*The funding formula ... [has changed]. Rent collection is just a KPI [Key Performance Indicator]. It doesn't influence your cash flow. All the rents go to [a] national account. All the amount [of rent collection] comes out and ... [redistributes] to the organisation ... [the] council had beaten us a little bit if we had poor rent collection, in essence, it made no difference to [us]. The bottom line [was], your rent collection could be 50%, you would still get the same amount of the allocated money to run the organisation from the national rent account because it's all done nationally. Essentially, it's done underground ... all the rent comes through, goes to [the] council. They strip off some I think. I think then it goes into London and London*

*slice it up and send it back to [the housing associations]. There is your grant to your organisation. You've got your grant irrespective to how rent was performed. Jack, senior manager, WM*

As a result of housing stock transfer, WM started to become responsible for their own finances. The form of organisation represents a change in the legal form that separates service delivery from traditional government agencies while keeping the organisation in public hands (Lindlbauer, Winter and Schreyogg, 2015). Jack continues,

*We have to be commercial. [If] we don't have the money, we don't have [a] cash flow. It's just going to our bank account. We own everything. We are a landlord. We are not a subcontracted landlord [who's] looking after the property for somebody else... When you stop the housing stock transfer, you own the stock. You've got all the stuff [and] you can get [a] bank loan. You have to prove the stock. But the rent goes into your bank account and wages and everything come out of your bank account ... suddenly you have to have a cash flow. There are no two ways. [If] people don't pay the rent, there is no money in the bank to pay people's wages or to do anything the organisation wants to do, which wouldn't have been the case in ALMO.*

The above quote shows a change of organisational financial operational behaviour that separates service delivery from local councils. This was the start of an incremental culture change at WM. The council culture within the organisation is deeply embedded; values, ideas and assumptions of the organisation can hardly be changed overnight through a transformative approach. Sometimes, the process is continuous, dynamic and contested. It requires ongoing accommodation, adaptation and alterations which eventually produce a fundamental change of the organisational culture, from a traditional public sector organisation to a more 'business-like' organisation (Weick, 2000). In this case, local council passed on the public assets (council-owned houses) to WM, giving management the financial freedom to pursue service innovations and make the public service more 'business-like' (Kirkpatrick and Altanlar, 2017).

### ***Re-organisation in 2009***

Alongside housing stock transfer, there was a major restructuring initiative at WM which involved cutting services and employees in order to compensate for the cost of running the organisation since they were no longer part of the local council and did not receive any

funding from it. Jack describes it as the start of a 'big changing circle'. While Jack did not use language associated with cultural change to describe the re-organisation, this is implied by alluding to the breadth and depth of the change:

*We're systematically... restructuring and re-organising the entire... organisation. I think we were about 500 ish to 600 staff at the time ... By the time we've got to [the housing stock] transfer, the heads have cut down to about 450. [It's] not just in terms of losing numbers, one of the things was also, it's quite often almost like getting [the] legacy of little project[s]... We had [a] helpline service that we operated for ... [the council] for dependent, for old people. We are doing that on contract. The amount of money coming in was barely cover[ing] the cost of running the service ... we've been on [a] big change circle.*

The above quote demonstrates three concepts of NPM. Firstly, WM was required to downsize a large number of employees to save operational costs (Alonso *et al.*, 2015a). Secondly, by downsizing the organisation, WM restructured the operation of their services in order to provide better services with less staff. The last NPM mentioned by Jack above is outsourcing services, such as the helpline, to external contractors in order to cut costs (Baines and Cunningham, 2011). Each concept of NPM closely associates with the ideas of efficiency and value for money and indicates the start of a results-oriented cultural change. This quote thereby enables exploration of a shift in cultural orientation. It also provides evidence to show how NPM influences both the local council and WM (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2005).

While Jack suggests that these operational changes were the start of cultural change, another interviewee suggests otherwise. She suggests that the organisational culture never really changed:

*WM was ALMO...I think sort of my perception of looking back ... I think it never really changed from being a council run service, council run organisation ... that kind of ethos, mentality stayed with us right the way throughout. Nadia, senior manager, EM*

While cultural changes are illustrated in both organisations, there are differences between the two case organisations in terms of how employees and managers felt regarding whether they had achieved a cultural change. This is possibly associated with the histories of both organisations. Specifically, EM was a housing association which had taken on housing stock

from the local councils, whilst EM had retained staff, as well as some council culture, and was bound by the agreement they had signed with the local council as part of the housing stock transfer, the organisation had an established culture as a housing association. However, local council culture was more deeply embedded in WM because they were part of the local council. They became a fully independent housing association after the end of housing stock transfer agreement. Therefore, it would be more difficult for employees to initiate cultural change at WM as compared to EM.

The embedded local council culture was picked up on by many other interviewees who had worked at WM for a long time and who had witnessed the cultural change:

*When I first came here, we were sort of involved with the council and the culture was pretty much the same. The work practices ... I don't think there's [any] difference if you went back or something like that ... very similar.* Lucy, non-customer-facing staff, WM

*Anybody who has experience in housing associations, private organisations, government [and who] walk[ed] through the door through WM and ... [spent] three hours with us nine years ago would think, 'this is [a] local authority. It feels like [a] local authority. It smells like [a] local authority' ... [Today]the culture is completely changed. It is a housing association. I think somebody were struggling with the increasing need to be commercial. I think [these] are some of the things we have to go through now.* Jack, senior manager, WM

While Lucy suggests that the current organisational culture has not changed much compared to their previous one based on the work practice, Jack suggests otherwise from the point of the view on organisational strategy. Jack acknowledges that WM had to change culturally to fit with changes in the organisation's objectives and financial structure at the time. However, there was a sense that cultural change was either slow or just not being faced up to with sufficient determination. This is because local council culture was seen as lying 'beneath the skin' of each member in the organisation; it required a continuous incremental change of the beliefs and behaviours of those who worked in the organisation (Wollmann, 2001).

Same as in the previous case, **Table 6.2** below categorises changes in WM using three dimensions of cultural change under NPM.

**Table 6.2** *Dimensions of cultural change: from council to business-like culture at WM*

Cultural dimensions	Council culture	Business-like culture
Values and beliefs	<p><i>WM was ALMO... I think sort of my perception of looking back ... I think it never really changed from being a council-run service, council-run organisation ... that kind of ethos mentality stayed with us right the way throughout. Interview with Nadia, senior manager, WM.</i></p>	<p><i>We listen to customer feedback using a range of methods, face to face, by phone, email, text message. We will then use your comments to improve our service. We act to provide a speedy, efficient, knowledgeable and consistent customer service experience offering options to access our services. We provide simple-to-use online facilities to deliver information and allow customers to access services. We take ownership and responsibility for the enquiry made and aim to resolve this quickly by providing a “right first time” service. We can learn from customers by working with them to help shape our services and how they are delivered. This includes ensuring our services are accessible to all. Extract from WM Annual Report.</i></p> <p><i>Providing excellent landlord services. Extract from WM Annual Report.</i></p> <p><i>We became a housing association...we have...a new chief executive, new management team, new ways of working... Different values in the organisation. Interview with Betty, customer-facing staff, WM.</i></p>
Behaviour patterns	Approach	<p><i>Providing customer service excellence is our aim by providing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week access to services which empower our customers to use services at a time and by a method that suits them. Extract from Customer Access Strategy.</i></p>
	Operation	<p><i>The green book and terms and conditions were the first thing we sort of ended ... They were allowed to have strange interpretation of the rules to claim for evening subsistence meals. You go on a training course. If I go to London and I am getting back on a train at 7 o’clock at night, I can claim up to £15 for an evening meal. That’s what it’s intended for. Because they were coming to the office and they had their meeting at 8 o’clock at night, and they were claiming £15 for their evening meal without providing a receipt. They were just claiming £15. We were paying it. It was one of the first things that we stopped. Interview with Jack, senior manager, WM.</i></p> <p><i>Agile working ... we did not have to stay in the same desk every day. If you were busy and it was quite noisy, you can work from home, you can go to a breakout area within this building. You can book a meeting room and go in. Whereas when we had the scattered offices, you did not have an option to do that ... it’s got more flexible definitely. Interview with Betty.</i></p> <p><i>I’d say X’s values are better than [the] previous chief exec because she’s more customer focused. And obviously, what we were aiming to do in all of our aims and plans were aiming at customers, [more] than [with] the previous chief exec. Interview with Betty.</i></p>

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*“Obviously, at this point, they still have a big budget, there’s still a lot of funding. So, you could produce, you could start producing that service that really did provide for the tenants and provide for the colleagues.”*

Interview with Ben, middle manager, WM.

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Performance

*They would be [a] bit resistant to doing things at speed sometimes ... Local government employees, you could almost read their minds, their mission today was to get into the office, get out, and [get the] maximum amount of income for the minimum amount of work. It was that bad in some of the areas within the business, really bad.*

Interview with Jack.

*I mean, it [was] more like [a] council job. You know, like people just with [an] amount of stuff ... They’ve just played it along. They’ve just got on with it. There’s no urgency. There’s not [a] real drive for people. It was quite laid back ... you were not sorting out the issues.”*

Interview with Ben.

*We caught quite a few people out. Repair Operatives were fishing down the Rochdale canal in the middle of the working day, when, according to our system, they were fixing doors and things like [that].*

Interview with Jack.

*They made changes... things [are] better, run smoother, better and more efficiently.*

Interview with Julie, middle manager, WM.

*What we do here is we monitor performance really closely ... every week we look at how much people were in their previous weeks as to how they are now in productivity. And we send that information to them every week. If they started to not hit their targets, they will be invited for a conversation with their manager. And that conversation is to say that you haven’t done [what you did] before and that’s not good enough. You need to sort it. It’s around [a] discussion about why your performance is down.*

Interview with Nadia.

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Language

*Really, it’s all down to the government obviously. [They] cut a lot of funds and reduced the rents... all those stuff had negative impact ... obviously, it did [have] impact on tenants massively.*

Interview with Ben.

*It depends on the customer ... some customer you can visit or contact on a monthly basis just to check if everything is still ok.*

Interview with Rachael, customer-facing staff, WM.

By comparing the dimensions of culture change between the two case organisations, **Table 6.1 and Table 6.2** reveal similar organisational values and beliefs changes under NPM. Whilst WM did not have much evidence on how they approached customer prior to the culture change, change in organisational operation reflect a different story in WM compare to EM. Instead of having a community-focused organisational culture prior to the culture change as described by employees and manager at EM, WM's employees and managers offer a different story of a council-like organisational culture, using examples of 'green book' for claiming expenses and fishing during working hours to highlight the reasons for slow speed and inefficient services. There was a lack of standard procedure and monitoring in the organisation which some employees took advantage of. After the first re-organisation, 'green book' was removed. Close control of performance was introduced as a way of driving up performance efficiency (Hood, 1991). In this case, control over performance is an internal measurement of performance which is based on the views of senior managers and other stakeholders in the organisation (Walker and Boyne, 2006). In addition, the introduction of external assessment also enables public sector organisations to keep a close eye on organisational performance. The example given by Nadia places an emphasis on the performance monitoring.

As part of the organisational culture change, a number of employees who took advantage of the organisation were targeted during the re-organisation. Jack reflects on how this was done:

*[They were the] perfectly candidates[for redundancy] ... The people [who were made redundant] were better off not [working] here. They were the long-standing [burdens] that [made our] work stop. It was [for] that [reason] they [were] on [the list for being made redundant]. They would be on everybody[']s list [to leave]. Jack, senior manager, WM*

To summarise, as the start of the cultural change, the re-organisation in 2009 has removed bureaucratic work practice in order to improve organisational efficiency and promote better professional work practice. Unlike employees at EM who believed that they have suffered from identity loss, increasing workload, and occupational health hazards, cultural change was generally welcome by the employees and managers at WM. This is possibly due to the different types of employees and managers that I interviewed at the two organisations. Findings from EM mostly emerged from customer-facing staff members who appreciate the community-focused culture they had prior to the cultural change. Customer-facing staff



appear to value the impact of a community-focus in their work as well as social tenants' lives. However, most of the findings from WM emerged from non-customer-facing staff members and managers who focused on the impacts of cultural change on organisational operations and strategy.

### ***Changes in technology***

In the past ten years, there have been many technological changes within WM: from the operational system for Repair Operatives to housing allocations.

*We were on the tip of automation ... There are some areas we were all exploring. If you get this software programme do things this way, we can do it [with] half of the staff.* Jack, senior manager, WM

These NPM-related technological changes were not only intended to increase organisational productivity but also reduce the cost of running the organisation by reducing staff (Boden *et al.*, 1998). The purpose of these changes was to eventually achieve a 'business-like' culture. An example concerning the system change in Repair Team was given by Nadia.

*We have a big new IT system ... we identified [that] our previous IT system did not deliver [an] efficient service ... We did not get work electronically or [only a] small number of people did. But we had people going out every day with piles of paperwork to go and do repairs ... We procured a new one [IT system] during 2013 ... that brought a lot of changes. As part of that process, we looked at the workflow ... we did a lot of work in terms of those processes and procedures ... Everybody has been given an electronic device to do the work on ... we have [a] workforce [that was] probably the most digitally equipped, certainly at the time, [when] lots of people [were] struggling to even use [a] mobile phone.* Nadia, senior manager, WM

The electric devices also enabled closely monitoring of Repair Operatives' work (Hood, 1991; Walker and Boyne, 2006). They are presented as a solution to the previous story of Repair Operatives fishing in the middle of a working day.

*Obviously, [with] less people, you got to make sure you still got through the jobs that are coming in. So, you're just making sure the vans and trackers<sup>3</sup>, we knew where they are up to, knew which job we'd put in PDA [Personal Digital Assistant]. Nadia*

A PDA is a digital tracking device used by Repair Operatives to check their repair tasks and upload any progress of repair tasks. It not only allows Repair Operatives to take photos on their tasks and save it as the record for future reference but also enables information sharing with other teams. Similar findings are also revealed by Pritchard and Symon (2014) in the study of how smartphone photography bridges the physical distance between management and engineer in National Rail through knowledge sharing. This is also used by some other customer-facing staff members at WM.

The following is a short story about what it was like to work at WM prior to the changes in technology.

*I remember in the early days, I['d] hear [a] shout because I used to sit upstairs and looked out [and] somebody was running around after a piece of paper that was disappeared. No idea whose repair that was going to get done. That was an example, everything was handwritten. It would be brought back to the office. If it was brought back, and then somebody will sit in and put it into an IT system. It did not capture any cost information. So, we had no idea how much things were cost[ing], basically.*

Nadia

The above quotes show that the technological change not only has enabled performance monitoring and information sharing but also save additional costs of paperwork as a consequence. This aligns with the idea of value for money as a key concept of NPM (By and Macleod, 2009).

Technological change is not limited to Repair Teams, it also extends to every aspect of the organisation. In the following quote, Nadia provides an example of technological change in the Service Centre.

*[In] the Service Centre, we've got a specific piece of software called [a] repair finder that gets used ... we are what we are with these things. Sometimes there is [a] view*

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<sup>3</sup> The tracking devices WM used to monitor job progress of Repair Operatives.

*that it's long-winded using [the] repair finder. It's easier [to] just work out what the repair is and give [it] the priority that I think it should have.*

Like the technological change at EM, the above quote shows how technology enables collaborative work between Repair Teams and Customer Service Centre in order to improve work efficiency and achieve better customer satisfaction (Boden *et al.*, 1998; Walker *et al.*, 2011).

A recent IT change - the introduction of an online service for customers, also aims to improve the efficiency of customer-facing roles, as Victoria explains,

*We've got a new website called 'my WM home' and it's all online services ... [customers] can actually register on there ... They can view their rent accounts. [It's] just like online banking; they can set direct debits up; they can make payments on that website as well ... they can contact the neighbourhood officer that way. It's called 'my WM contact'. It comes through to the service centre and ... [service centre] forward it on [to other teams] ... they can report repairs online anyway ... The allocation as well, for re-housing, that's all self-service as well.* Victoria, customer-facing staff, WM

Technological changes support cultural change from a bureaucratic council department that was loosely controlled to a more performance-oriented culture (Hood, 1991; Walker and Boyne, 2006). As mentioned earlier, within the council culture, employees were free to leave from work at any time. In the earlier example, Repair Operatives went fishing in the middle of the day when they were supposed to be fixing someone's door. However, changes in technology enable closer monitoring of Repair Operatives, which then enables the change to a 'business-like' organisational culture. As Nadia says,

*What we do here is we monitor performance really closely. So, every week we look at how much people were in their previous weeks as to how they are now in productivity. And we send that information to them every week. If they started to not hit their targets, they will be invited for a conversation with their manager.*

The use of technology to support cultural change can also be seen in one of the non-customer-facing teams. In the following quote, Chloe reflects on the user-friendliness of council run service to 'business-like' system which requires less labour and knowledge to

operate. It emphasises the effectiveness of the service and those who use it rather than the format of the system.

*The new system was a big change, but more in terms [of] the previous system we inherited from the council, and it was too big for what we needed ... it was set up by the council ... it needed like [a] specialist kind of, not accountant, a systems person to administer the system. It wasn't very user-friendly ... There are all these reports on the background that a lot of people, because they [are] kind of inherited, they know what they did, we did not turn them off, that kind of thing ... a lot of focus for the system we got is, can administer the obvious things quite easily. You know, we can add the users, we can dictate the coding and if it needs relinking, we can do that quite simply. It's quite user-friendly.* Chloe, senior manager, WM

The above examples continually demonstrate technological changes in public sector organisation led by NPM. This is because the aim of these changes was to improve service quality and performance transparency through close monitoring of the service (Chandler *et al.*, 2002; Lorenz, 2012). It is worth noting that changes in technology made in one team could also have an impact on other teams. As Julie says,

*One of the things[s], the business brought in was [the] 'locator'. That's like that allocation policy side of thing[s] ... the office applications are going to a locator. All the voids and all the properties are on the 'Northgates'<sup>4</sup> and they [the 'locator' and the 'Northgates'] don't particularly talk to each other ... we do a lot [of work] on the locator. The problem is that [the] locator was brought in as an allocation tool. What they did not do was speak to people like us to see how that would impact on our role and it's impacted on us massively ... And that's one of the really frustrating things about this business, [it] is that people and areas of the business bring in changes and procedures but don't reflect on how this [is] going to affect other areas of the business.* Julie, middle manager, WM

To summarise, findings on technological change at WM depict a public sector organisation that closely monitors and measures its employees' performance in order to achieve efficiency as proposed by NPM. This is opposite to the findings in EM where some employees describe that they have gained a level of autonomy through technology-led changes such as agile

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<sup>4</sup> A system WM used to monitor all their housing stocks.

working and the removing of clock-in and clock-out system. Whilst these findings reveal a level of trust between management and employees at EM, WM reveals a different relationship between management and employees. Again, the difference is possibly due to the different types of the respondents in the two housing associations. Specifically, findings on technological change at EM emerged from interviews with customer-facing employees, whereas findings in WM mostly emerged from interviews with non-customer facing staff and managers.

### ***Restructuring in 2015***

In preparing for the announcement of the 1% social rents cut based on the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 announced in 2015, WM enacted an early response by restructuring their organisation. The restructuring included service cuts, personnel cuts, changes in contracts and continued cultural change.

*We lost 90 people...about 38 people left [mandatorily]. Most of them, they all left on an agreement. They got a reasonably good package...It was done over the Christmas ... that seem [ed like it] was a bit [of an] odd timetable.* Jack, senior manager, WM

*I think it was 120 operatives that actually carried out the repairs. We shrank the area just for a variety of different reasons over the year ... now [there are] about 80 operatives.* Nadia, senior manager, WM

*You've got 450 members of staff and all of sudden you get rid of 50 of them. But the other 400 left having to do their hours, while they just keep on [doing] that work [that was] needed.* Ben, middle manager, WM

*Two years ago, when the government announced the 1% rent cut...we had actually to make quite a lot of cost savings ... WM ... decided to protect investment in its properties. Repairs, maintenance and investment works were largely untouched. However, we were expected to make some efficiency [cuts] to contribute to that ... we got to a point...where we've been running our new IT system for over a year...where we had too many people anyway for what we needed to do. We could manage with less...we were able to, as part of that, to reduce our workforce...we were left with [the] number of people that we needed to run the service...it all came around the right time as well.* Nadia, senior manager, WM

These quotes continue to illustrate an NPM-related change through expenditure reductions. By improving efficiency, such change helped to facilitate value for money in public service (By and Macleod, 2009). This is strong evidence to counteract Lapsley's (2008) claim that NPM was not introduced as a direct response to expenditure cuts in public sector organisations. In addition to this, findings of NPM-related technological change also support the claim that NPM is concerned with expenditure cuts. By introducing technological change in Repairs Team prior to the announcement, they were able to do more with less staff in order to cope with the rent reduction.

While some employees see the benefit of the restructuring, this was not the case for all the teams at WM. Betty mentions that her team was one of the first to be targeted for restructuring.

*Obviously, you know, from the government, we then have to make [a] huge cut within the organisation. Our team, in particular, was picked out as one of the team[s] that has to be cut. We lost three team-members. Betty, non-customer-facing Staff, WM*

She continues by talking about how losing colleagues affected the team by increasing their workload.

*The past years, we were not having the capacity to push ourselves out there more... I am part-time ... The job-sharing went voluntary which was part of the restructuring. That job sharing has never been replaced ... when I finished work half [way] through the week. I came back on Monday, or if it's urgent, I[d] have to put it on another officer because I would already get a lot of workloads.*

Work intensification is seen as “an inevitable consequence of the capital accumulation imperative, with employers seeking out ways of increasing both the absolute and relative surplus value generated from labour” (Mather *et al.*, 2007, p. 115). Applying this logic to housing associations, there is an expectation of an increase in the absolute value generated through a lengthening of the working day or week, which is a manifestation of intensification. Another expectation is an increase in the absolute value generated through an intensification of the work undertaken within the working hours, based on the idea of doing more with less (Mather *et al.*, 2007). Similar evidence of an intensive workload can be found in the studies of NPM changes in universities and health care organisations (Chandler *et al.*, 2002; Mather

et al., 2007). However, losing people during the restructuring was not always perceived as negative. Lucy expressed an alternative viewpoint:

*It was because of her [the previous transformation director] leaving ... [a] few years ago, she was really interested, to a point ... It was[a] bit too much pressure ... She used to take [it] out on the team. It wasn't fair. It was a sort of relief when she left us alone* Lucy, non-customer-facing staff, WM

Another change as part of the restructuring relates to the increase in contracted hours from thirty-five to thirty-seven. Jack illustrates the effects of this change by telling the story of the trigger point of why the CEO was so persistent on changing the contract hours. He says,

*When the Chief Executive [Officer] started in 2011, I formalised her contract with her. When she found out ... the hours [were] in 35 hours ... When she saw that [she asked], 'why 35 hours? 37 is standard. That's not right.' And I knew, I knew in 2011, it was mildly a matter [of time] before the Chief Executive [Officer] push the bottom on ... We are going to 37 [hours a week] ... I saw it in her tone ... I experienced it as I caught argument after argument. It was like throwing arguments [in]to war with [a] smile. A smiling war. It was polite and kind. Nevertheless, they won.* Jack, senior manager, WM

The following quote is an example of how contract change affected customer-facing staff.

*What we have to do now is because I was always contracted for 35 ... what I have to do is I have an hour lunch ... I have to reduce my lunch now because I've got to make those hours up, haven't I? The 37, which is two hours a week, isn't it? I reduce my lunch to 40 minutes. And I worked till 4:15 ... I have to make it every day to [reach] 37.* Victoria, customer-facing staff, WM

The impact of contract change was widely recognised by the higher level of management.

*We went from 35 hours a week to 37 hours a week ... obviously, the decisions have to be made but it didn't sit particularly well with the team ... it did seem [to] have, the two hours did seem to have a significant impact on the team. They almost took it quite personally ... because other teams weren't performing. They needed the extra two*

*hours. They were being punished for the teams that weren't performing ... People did seem [to] take that very personally. Chloe, senior manager, WM*

Did the change in contract improve employees' performance by adding an extra two hours a week? Did it improve customer satisfaction overall? The answer is unclear. However, the CEO was promoting private managerial techniques. By adding two hours, this creates an additional performance input to the organisation and presumably generates additional output based on the concept of efficiency (Lorenz, 2012).

Following the first restructuring, the organisation continued its commercially-driven cultural change. The traditional local council culture was still embedded within the organisation after the completion of housing stock transfer. Chloe, who used to work in a private organisation before joining WM, shares her experience of working in the two different sectors.

*In terms of culture, it's so different. When I first came to this, I was like, 'when do you need that? I might be able to look at it tomorrow'. And they were like, 'you can do [it] next week.' And I was like, 'oh, right, ok' ... yeah, it's quite different in terms of not, like I don't have a lot of work [to] keep me busy. But just the pressures [were] different. Chole, senior manager, WM*

The above quote highlights that in order to achieve a 'business-like' organisational culture, a continual change in culture was WM's priority to provide be more efficient in what they are doing. As Nadia says,

*We really need to improve the value for money that we delivered. But also, the customer satisfaction and how we delivered the things, [the] process and procedures ... it's been a big journey for improvement. And the organisation has been on a long journey, generally. Nadia, senior manager, WM*

She continues to emphasise the result-oriented culture. She talks about value for money, which again focuses on the cost effectiveness of the organisation's operation.

*The service we delivered just wasn't good enough. We couldn't demonstrate value for money ... We needed to improve how we delivered service and get better at doing that, drive out of waste ... the organisation needed to deliver better value for money anyway, regardless of how we did things ... start to build on all the information that*



*was given [to] us ... Even to look at things like how long did it take them to travel from one place to another. Could [this] be [done] more efficiently to reduce travel time ... it's actually helping that person to work better and to be more productive and more efficient and for us to provide more value, better service to customers... The whole organisation needed to improve efficiency ... the organisation needed to deliver better value for money anyway, regardless of how we did things. The whole organisation needed to improve efficiency.*

Nadia carries on talking about the other main aspect of the cultural change, which relates to the customer-oriented service.

*We need to provide services that our customers said they felt were good. Because it's one of the, there are [a] number of things that customers say are most important to them, which would encourage them to pay their rent. On the top of the list is how well repairs were done ... we also focused a lot on customer services as well ... focused on what we want to get to. Thinking yourselves in customer's shoes, and how you would feel about that. We did a lot of work on that as well.*

Whether this is an indication of a results-oriented culture or customer-oriented culture, both are key concepts of NPM, which aim to provide better public services to the needs of end-users (By and Macleod, 2009). The following quote suggests that such a cultural change from a traditional public sector organisation to a 'business-like' organisation enables employees to take greater initiative in their jobs.

*The company has changed a lot ... when I first started, which was quite a bureaucratic organisation ... it was with [XX] council. It's now much more forward-thinking. You are able to work a lot more on your own initiative. [You are] trusted a lot more just to get on [and]do your job without [the]constant need for [reporting] [on], 'what do I do now, how do I do this?' Debby, customer-facing staff, WM*

Although Debby explains that these changes have given her more autonomy in terms of how she does her job which is similar to some of the comments made by employees at EM, there is not much evidence to support her claims of a general increase of autonomy among employees since most studies interested in managerial autonomy resulted from NPM (e.g. Bezes and Jeannot, 2018). In addition, studies of public sector organisation changes have indicated a decrease in autonomy due to the standardisation of job tasks (Mather *et al.*, 2007).

The role of NPM on employees' autonomy may be a point worth exploring in future studies. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Nevertheless, a few interviewees told different stories about autonomy in their jobs at WM. They suggested that autonomy had declined as the organisation sought to streamline work tasks and standardise the service in order to be more efficient (Mather *et al.* 2007). Rachael says,

*Trying to streamline and making sure that we were all doing the same thing ... we now have a process for everything. It takes away some of that free-thinking ability ... everything's been process-mapped ... We are very much process-driven now, whereas [before,] we had the ability to act on our feet.* Rachael, customer-facing staff, WM

During the restructuring, WM also experienced an office move. The introduction of open-plan working space was a further indication of NPM change, i.e. placing emphasis on transparency (Lorenz, 2012). Says Laura,

*That was strange because everybody used to have their own private space with just their team in it ... coming here to an open-plan [office space] was a big shock to the system. Just [imagine] how loud it was ... everybody talking and moaning at the same time. But I think, it brought teams closer together.* Laura, customer-facing staff, WM

In addition, moving to the new office building also enables the cultural change in the organisation. It brought all the teams together so they could work more collaboratively. At the same time, it enables flexible working, promoted by NPM (Lorenz, 2012). As Betty says,

*They introduced a ... modern way of working ... agile working ... we did not have to stay in the same desk every day ... you can work from home ... go to a breakout area within this building ... book a meeting room ... whereas when we had the scattered offices, you did not have an option to do that ... it's got more flexible, definitely.* Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM

Findings related to the restructuring in 2015 continuously evidence a cultural change through downsizing and office moving. Different from the previous re-organisation in 2009, the aim

of this restructuring is not only to cope with rent reduction imposed by the central government under NPM.

### Conclusion

The findings from this chapter addressed the first research question: how do housing associations manage organisational change under NPM and filled the gap concerning the limited understanding of change in housing associations at the organisational level. By adopting a narrative approach, I identified a number of key events that led to cultural change in both organisations. These events included housing stock transfer, funding reduction, technological change, and a recent restructuring in response to the 1% rent cut imposed by central government.

Three dimensions of organisational culture change were merged from interviewees' description of changes based on the key dimensions of organisational culture by Alvesson (2002). These dimensions included values and beliefs, behaviour patterns, and language used in the organisation within these change events. In addition, there were three themes within the organisational behaviour pattern; these were the operational structure, the approach to customers, and the organisational performance. Examples were given in relation to each theme.

I also evidenced a combination of planned and incremental approach to change under NPM. Specifically, as pointed out by many interviewees, NPM-related changes are often imposed by local authorities or central government. In response to these financial pressures, organisations planned and implemented changes in order to cope with income reduction as a result of policy changes and funding reduction. In addition, evidence suggested that both organisations were trying to engage with employees in order to overcome potential conflicts resulting from previous organisational change. For example, at EM, employees were consulted prior to the restructuring. However, it was also found that suggestions from these consultations were not taken into consideration during the organisational change. As a result, some interviewees stated that they felt their opinions on and participation in organisational change were not taken seriously. In other words, planned approach to change did not achieve its full potential in these organisations, particularly in EM. In addition, findings in both organisations evidenced an incremental approach to cultural change under NPM. It is suggested that cultural change, especially in the case of WM where many organisational

members were deeply embedded within the local council culture, requires an incremental change.

Last but not least, based on the evidence provided, I argue that NPM is not 'dead in the water' (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2006) in public sector organisations, at least in the social housing sector. In fact, key concepts such as 'performance measurement', 'customer-orientation', 'efficiency' have been identified in each aspect of cultural change in both case studies. Hence I argue that NPM involves fundamental cultural change in housing associations.

## Chapter 7

### **How do people feel about change? Mixed, conflict and ambivalent emotions in housing associations**

#### Introduction

In Chapter Six findings from two organisations illustrated cultural change from a traditional local council to a ‘business-like’ organisation by connecting to concepts of NPM identified by previous studies. However, organisational culture change is infused with emotions as well as meanings. When the organisational culture is challenged and questioned, employees can experience intense emotions associated with the loss of organisational power, status, or job security (Barner, 2008). This chapter builds on the idea introduced earlier, that ambivalence is a common response to organisational change, and addresses the issue of the lack of empirical evidence concerning employees’ and managers’ experiences of emotional ambivalence during organisational change. In addition, by investigating employees and managers’ emotional experiences in the two organisations together, I develop a greater appreciation of emotional ambivalence where these emotions are fused in a co-existent and co-dependent fashion. I suggest that one category of emotion, either positive or negative, cannot fully account for people’s responses to organisational change in the absence of the other. I also evidence the reasons for and coping strategies emotional ambivalence, which suggests that organisational members often focus on negative emotions during organisational change. This could be interpreted as implying that negative emotions, as part of the experience of emotional ambivalence, should be managed and resolved. However, it is argued that emotional ambivalence can be beneficial to organisations as it can result in sense-making about change through considering both its positive and negative aspects.

The chapter is organised as follows: first, I reviewed a number of different negative emotions among employees and managers induced by organisational change in both organisations are reviewed. These emotions include fear and worry, distrust, anger, stress and grief. This supports the argument made in Chapter Three, that negative emotions are often interconnected. This is followed by examples of positive emotions experienced by employees and managers during organisational change. However, positive emotions experienced by employees and managers in both organisations are not as frequent or common as suggested by previous studies (Kiefer, 2002b; Kirsch *et al.*, 2010; Saunders *et al.*, 2002). This is

possibly due to the previous negative experiences of organisational change and the high level of distrust between management and employees in these organisations. Although the structure of the findings on positive and negative emotions might seem to contradict my previous argument that we should not treat emotions dichotomously, this does not neglect the complexity of emotions during organisational change. Organising the findings into positive and negative emotions helps to better illustrate the important feature of duality in the findings of emotional ambivalence, which is defined as a simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotions. I then move on discussing the identified reasons for emotional ambivalence during organisational change in order to better understand this experience. This chapter ends by discussing some coping strategies of emotional ambivalence as interpreted by the researcher, even though the interviewees did not explain them in these terms.

### Negative emotions toward change

The following section presents five main themes under negative emotions. These themes are fear and worry, distrust, anger, stress and grief. By analysing quotes concerning these themes, I intend to explore the role of these emotions in shaping employees' interpretation of change.

#### ***Fear and worry***

As suggested by previous studies (Kiefer, 2002b), fear is one of the most frequent emotions expressed by interviewees in both EM and WM. There are several sources associated with fear of change. These include concerns over feelings of worry, uncertainty and job insecurity (Kiefer, 2002b). The reason worry is seen as a representation of fear of change is based on one of the working definitions from Brosschot, Gerin and Thayer (2006); that is “[w]orry is a chain of thoughts and images, negatively affect-laden, and relatively uncontrollable. It represents an attempt to engage in mental problem solving on an issue whose future outcome is uncertain but contains the possibility of one or more negative outcomes...consequently, worry is related closely to fear.” (pp. 113-114).

In the following quotes, interviewees express feelings of worry. They suggest that such a feeling is associated with the possibility of job losses.

*“[I feel] worried ... You might be out of your work. Everybody has got bills to pay, mortgage[s] to pay ... I did not give a permanent role as a ... [customer-facing staff].”*

*[It was] just an extension as a customer-facing staff ... that's where the insecurity comes as well.*" Pippa, customer-facing staff, EM

*"I was very worried because I [had] already been made redundant once. I did not want it to happen again ... the way it was announced was that everybody within the organisation was put on notice on redundancy or potential redundancy ... Nobody knew who's going to stay, who's not going to stay ... those posts would be in deleted... it was very difficult."* Racheal, customer-facing staff, WM

The word 'worry' is revealed in almost every transcript. Worry is a common response to stressful events like change. However, it has been overlooked in studies of organisational change. Whilst worry does appear in many of these studies of organisational change (e.g. Kiefer, 2002b), it is often seen as a stress-related issue and thus fails to recognise the role of worry in sense-making of organisational change. The evidence below suggests that the feeling of worry can induce other sorts of negative emotional responses, including fear and uncertainty.

*"We are meant to be finding out this week [about] what our job's shapes [are] going to be ... if we've got a job ... it's been like that ... for five years. And it's worrying. You cannot see yourself in the organisation when you are tired. Because it's just constantly worrying that your jobs are going to go."* Linda, customer-facing staff, EM

*"I think people are worried because we only got funding until next March ... nobody knows what's happening there."* Angela, customer-facing staff, EM

The above quotes show a connection between the feeling of worry and job insecurity because they explain how they are afraid of losing their jobs. Meanwhile, they also suggest an association between worry and uncertainty. In the examples, funding of one of the customer-facing teams at EM is threatened by the possibility of full withdrawal by the local council. If this happens, they face the possibility of posts being removed from the organisation. However, this is not confirmed by the council or the organisation. Employees in the team are constantly worried about what is going to happen. They are concerned about whether they should be looking for another job. A similar experience is also expressed by Betty, a non-customer-facing staff member at WM,

*I [am] still a little bit bitter ... I do worry. Obviously, universal credit could be coming in. I reckon we will be the first team to [be] hit again because ... you don't [need us]... You could... outsource it ... I do worry. I don't think I am going to be here for another 10 years, definitely not, because I don't have that stability. Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM*

A strong feeling of job insecurity is revealed by the quote above. Betty worries that the introduction of UC would result in removing the whole team and outsourcing the service to an external company. This is because the introduction of UC will directly affect customers' rent payments. The organisation needs to make additional savings to cope with shortages in rent collection. By comparing her team and other teams in the organisation, she explains that other teams are more important than hers. This shows her vulnerability and insecurity.

Betty continues to suggest that the whole team has been a constant target for change. She expresses her feelings of how they have needed to constantly prove their team value to the management in order to keep them as a team and secure their jobs.

*We are constantly catching up... in my eyes, we [are] still trying to prove ourselves as a team, establish ourselves as a team... I feel, personally, it's like you've been beaten up a little bit.*

Here, the phrase 'beaten up' is used as a metaphor for change. Metaphors are frequently studied by organisational scholars as a way of unfolding managers' and employees' emotional experiences of organisational reality (e.g. Barner, 2008). Metaphorical language provides evidence of one's feelings about an event, object or people. The meanings of emotions are conveyed through metaphors through implication (Zembylas, 2004). This is particularly true during a disruptive organisational change where employees and managers sometimes are reluctant to directly express their emotional fear of organisational change (Barner, 2008). Therefore, the use of metaphors becomes an important way to express emotional experiences.

Betty conveys her complex emotional experience of change by providing a meaningful link to a broad array of interrelated thoughts and feelings (Barner, 2008). She believes that management was forcefully and repeatedly attacking the team. There is a possibility that she sees herself and her team as victims of change because they were harmed by the change. Perceiving herself as a victim is associated with a strong feeling of fear (Barbalet, 1998).



Based on the examples of fear presented above, it is reasonable to argue that fear is associated with the employees' perceived inability to deal with a threat (Barbalet, 1998); in these cases, the employees see themselves as powerless victims and organisational change as a threat to their jobs, their lives. In addition, feelings of worry are not only revealed by employees, but also by managers. In the example below, Eva, the senior manager at EM, also adopts a metaphor to describe change. As a manager, she also experience worry as any other team members. Coming from a different perspective, she is not worried about her job security; instead, she is concerned about whether the change is going to affect the team in a positive way.

*It was [a] bit of [a] gamble. It was [a] gamble because it was kind of like I did not know what to expect. I did not know very much about the process of transformation ... my transformation facilitator, at the beginning, I was totally in his hands because I was learning the methodology around how we do a transformation and what it all meant. We went thought sort of discovering what already existed in the system, which was really [needed].* Eva, senior manager, EM

Here, the word 'gamble' is used as a metaphor to express Eva's experience of organisational change. As in Betty's quote, the use of metaphor in Eva's quote also conveys her complex emotional experience of change by providing a meaningful link to a concept that can be easily related to and explained (Barner, 2008). Specifically, the use of 'gamble' sets into play an interpretive framework that construes her experience of change as a risky action that aims at achieving success (Barner, 2008). It reveals a sense of uncertainty about the outcome of change. The use of the word 'gamble' also reveals that her perception of the organisational change was that these actions were ruled purely by chance, and she had no control over the situation. In addition to the feeling of uncertainty, the word 'gamble' can be interpreted as a feeling of hope for a particular desired outcome. Although it may seem that there is a combination of positive and negative emotions towards organisational change, the positive emotion is based on my interpretation of the metaphor. Eva's positive emotional experience of change is incomplete in her own words. Therefore, the above quote is categorised as fear and uncertainty rather than emotionally ambivalent towards change.

## ***Distrust***

The following example shows a slightly different narrative of worry, one that is associated with a high degree of distrust towards management.

*It's not annoyed us but worried us more because everything was so secretive. Nobody would tell you anything. Like, our manager was not around. He worked from home a lot ... You think is he not around because he doesn't want to be around people that he needs to get rid of ... the fact that he's working at home a lot made us all think a lot of things.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, EM

The feeling of distrust is another common response to organisational change in both organisations. This is mainly related to the employees and managers' previous experiences of organisational change. This is pointed out by Jack at WM, who organised the restructuring in 2009 and 2015.

*People [were] ... a bit ... pissed off. [People were saying that] 'you put me through all this [restructuring in 2009] when you knew I wasn't even a target [of it]? You gave me months of ambiguity, uncertainty just to achieve a, b and c, and I know that ... you're never going to hide that from me.'* Jack, senior manager, WM

As suggested by Isabella (1990), organisational members tend to contrast organisational reality during change with references to previous similar experiences. In this case, past organisational changes are perceived and interpreted as negative experiences and the negative emotional experiences are used as a reference to the later restructuring in the organisation.

Employees who feel distrust towards management as a result of change often perceive themselves as being treated disrespectfully and unfairly (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015). In Ruth's example, she suggests that they were not given a fair amount of information about organisational change. At the time, the lack of information was also associated with experiences of fear and worry. In addition, the fact that her manager was not around during that time raised more speculation and concerns within the team. By saying that everything was being carried out under the table, she believes that the management was being dishonest about what was happening. This might suggest that the trust between management and employees was diminished because of the way they were treated during the changes (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003). A similar comment is made by Carrie:

*How they did the restructuring, I felt that was wrong. It was not honest. They said it was honest, but it was not honest ... even now, I still feel they were making it up as they go along.* Carrie, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

By describing the management not being honest about the restructuring and using the phrase ‘making it up’, it almost suggests that she thinks the management was lying about how the restructuring would go. This indicates a strong emotional distrust of management that associates with the organisational changes. A similar comment is also made by Betty at WM; she believes that the management was dishonest about the restructuring. She suggests that the management arranged consultations to seek their opinions about it. However, their opinions were quickly ignored.

*I just feel that higher management will do what they see fit, have a consultation for consultation[’s] sake. But [ they do] not take [the opinions received from consultation] on board ... It’s not just fair.* Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM

By saying the process of consultation was not fair, Betty reveals a feeling of distrust towards management that associates with the procedural injustice related to change (Bernerth *et al.*, 2007). Fairness is frequently brought up in relation to the emotional expression of distrust between management and employees (Bernerth *et al.*, 2007). In the following example, Lucy from the non-customer-facing team at WM also talks about fairness.

*We did sort of feel they were sort of maybe try[ing] to get rid of us on cheap. Again, one of the members of the team, he was threatened with a discipline for a very minor thing that [had] happened a few years ago ... [Other employees in the organisation] were talking about it and talking about us. You’ve got a sense that people we used to chat to sort of then become closed off ... one of the members of the team said, ‘we cannot trust anybody else’ ... We also got very paranoid. We were like making sure that everything [was] in writing emails, keeping everything just really [to] cover our backs.* Lucy, non-customer-facing staff, WM

Lucy believes that her team member who was threatened with discipline over a very minor mistake was treated unfairly. Such perceived fairness is also associated with procedural injustice (Bernerth *et al.* 2007). She believes that the reason they were being treated this way was that the management wanted to get rid of them without giving them an opportunity to consider a redundancy package. Unfairness becomes one of the sources of the feeling of

distrust which was why they became paranoid and kept everything on record. The example also shows a high level of distrust of the management associated with change. In addition, feelings of distrust also repelled others outside of their team, forcing them to distance themselves from Lucy's team. As a result of being isolated from other teams, the people in her team shared their feelings and created a strong social bond which might be seen as a behavioural outcome of emotional distrust (Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007).

The following is another example of distrust between management and employees associated with fairness. Betty suggests she felt that people were promoted because they were friends with the manager of Human Resource.

*So, since the last bit [of restructuring] ... I don't see how they saved money in terms of the new recruits ... I think there were two posts for the newest Assistant Director... they were just created ... it's like it's not fairly done ... How it looks was when two of the directors were promoted this year, [they were] very close to the Human Resource manager. You kind of think, 'I wish I am best friends with him, see what I get' ... I know that's not the procedure. It's not how it goes. It's how it looked. Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM*

Fairness and procedural justice are often perceived as antecedents for a successful organisational change. A number of studies have demonstrated that employees' perceived fairness is associated with commitment to organisational change (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015; Bernerth *et al.*, 2007; Matheny and Smollan, 2005). Some studies even suggest that perceived unfairness by employees may generate negative emotions such as anger (Lind and Tyler, 1988; Matheny and Smollan, 2005; Mikula, Scherer and Athenstaedt, 1998). However, none of these studies sees injustice in relation to the feeling of distrust or sees distrust as an emotional response to organisational change. The above examples from both organisations provide evidence of a link between feelings of distrust and unfairness that none of the previous studies has addressed. The following example continues to provide evidence that distrust is an emotional response to change. It is taken from a narrative about a pre-Christmas party immediately following the restructuring.

*I think they probably turn up. But the thing is, to be fair on them [top management], a lot of them are very approachable ... They won't be watching or reporting on you. But they will think yeah ... oh ... if I have a bit drink, you know. They will make a*

*comment on me ... NO ONE TRUSTS ANYONE ... nobody trusts anyone ... [if] I was drunk, they will have me ... if you'd been there for so long, and you'd been through every change, you don't trust anyone ... you do constantly worry. Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM*

Saying that 'no one trusts anyone' not only indicates a feeling of distrust between management and employees but also between employees themselves in the organisation. Betty suggests that the feeling of distrust is associated with fear of job losses. The strong atmosphere of distrust is also confirmed by a senior manager at WM.

*There was a lot of distrust within the rest of the organisation as well ... changes sort of happened around them. They had a feeling of being done to as opposed to having any ownership of things or being [in] control of it. Where change had come [about] in the past, it generally [had] been imposed upon them ... I suppose it was also about fear of what was going to happen. Nadia, senior manager, WM*

As a top management team member, Nadia also recognises the distrust between management and employees associated with organisational change. She explains that the possible reason is uncertainty. In addition, she continues to say that the management has done a lot to try to build trust between management and employees.

*We also identified we needed to do some work ... building trust between managers, staffs, operatives. And also, between different teams as well ... We'd done surveys at various points... that identified [that] trust had improved between colleagues and managers and so on. That was good. That was [a] challenge as well.*

Although Nadia suggests that the relationship between management and staff had improved significantly, evidence from other interviewees suggest otherwise. In addition, as part of the fieldwork, I noted that many of the staff in both organisations were reluctant to discuss their experiences of change. As noted out in Chapter Five, the coordinator from WM explained that this was because of the feeling of distrust within the organisation. In addition, findings from Chapter Six concerning the close-monitoring of employees performance also provides a potential source of distrust between management and employees at WM. There was a possibility that the employees perceived me as a 'spy' sent by the management.

Aligned with previous studies of distrust during organisational change that see organisational injustice as one of the sources, the findings above suggest that such perceived procedural injustice is accompanied by the feeling of distrust. However, rather than seeing distrust as an attitude or perception, this thesis argues that it is an emotional response to change. In addition, the findings also suggest negative emotions such as uncertainty and fear are related to feeling of distrust.

### ***Anger***

As pointed out earlier, distrust and perceived unfairness during change implementation can be a source of anger (Lind and Tyler, 1988; Mikula, Scherer and Athenstaedt, 1998). This is because a violation of justice is often perceived as a violation of basic or individual values (Matheny and Smollan, 2005; Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007). In the following quote, Ruth expresses her feeling of anger in relation to unfair treatment during change:

*The thing is, lots of people have been made redundant ... then lots of new people have joined since then. So, I suppose you are feeling a bit angry for those people you are close to that they've lost their jobs.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

There is a violation of her basic assumption of change that those redundancies were made in order to save money (Matheny and Smollan, 2005; Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007). She perceives changes as a necessity when it is about saving money. However, when the new recruits join the organisation, she feels angry because it violates this assumption. Ruth also feels angry for those who left the organisation because she believes that they were treated unfairly (Matheny and Smollan, 2005).

In the following example, Betty reveals similar anger in relation to perceived injustice. As explained earlier, the feeling of anger is sometimes related to a violation of basic values. Here, the basic value prior to the change regarding the hours of work was 35 a week. By changing it to 37 hours a week, it violated the agreed value or psychological contract between the organisation and the employees.

*Everyone was asked to do the 37 hours without having to pay [any additional hours]. I know people are quite angry about that ... people feel like sometimes they've been backed into a corner.* Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM

In the last sentence of this example, when Betty and her colleagues felt that they had been ‘backed into a corner’, with no other choice but to accept the contract of 37 hours a week, they were worried and felt helpless. This aligns with Brosschot *et al.*’s (2006) argument that “worry serves as an alert of problem-solving which may lead to constructive problem-solving strategies, or alternatively, to nonconstructive perseverative thoughts regarding the sources of anger” (p. 114). By not being able to do anything about these feelings, Betty and her colleagues became angry toward such change. A similar comment is made by one of the senior managers regarding the change in flexible leave. However, it seems that his anger is directed towards the CEO rather than the change.

*People are still complaining [about] how [the CEO] carried out the five days annual leave in every staff survey. Is that what you want? [Is that] best for the company ... Do you really want [that]? If you really want [employees] positive[ly] engaged [with the company], isn't that more important to you than this particular bad morale you had about people carrying over leave? Take it to the leadership if you want. You only manage them. You don't manage anybody else. It's not even your problem. The only people you manage are the four directors. So, take it off the directors if you want. Maybe she has reasons I simply cannot comprehend. Maybe she's had experience in a different place where this [has] happened, and it caused all sorts of problems. I just couldn't, myself, get to the bottom [of it]. I don't really see why this is an issue of this magnitude. Compared to rewards and pay-offs, you just piss people off.* Jack, senior manager, WM

Although previous researchers (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015; Matheny and Smollan, 2005) have demonstrated a connection between procedural injustice and anger using quantitative studies, there is still lack of understanding of how anger is developed as an emotional response to change. The examples above provide some evidence on how people make sense of change through feeling of anger as a response to change. These examples also reveal employees’ and managers’ anger towards the restructuring in both organisations. They suggest that perceived injustice and feelings of worry are reasons for anger during organisational change. In addition, these examples also imply that transparency of decision making on organisational change may potentially improve organisational members’ perceived procedure injustice, which then reduces the feelings of worry and anger during organisational change.

## **Stress**

Another frequent negative emotion expressed by interviewees is stress. This is mainly associated with an increase in workload as a result of staff reductions (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005).

*[The] staff level was reduced massively ... the impact on your capacity to work was quite stressful. You cannot work to the same level as you did before. We haven't got the support anymore ... It's hard. You just do it ... You are kind of on your own and just managing 1,200 [properties]... The fact [is] that all these people [as in some of the customer-facing staff] are now gone, the responsibilities [are] with you, to make sure that you do things right.* Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

*Everything that nobody else does. The thing with ... [my] team is [that] we seem to pick up everything that nobody else know[s] how to deal with, which is quite frustrating.* Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

As a result of the restructuring, a number of the customer-facing posts were removed. However, with the expansion of property development at EM, the workloads for each officer increased significantly. The above examples confirm that the increase in stress-levels was directly associated with the increase in the workload among the officers (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005).

*Very busy, stressful place to work ... very stressed. That's my favourite word at the moment, 'stressed'. Yesterday, I worked 8:30 till 5, I only had half an hour break because we were so busy. We were supposed to have an hour [break] ... again, today I only have half an hour [break], and I've got to do overtime for the rest of the week.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

In the above quote, Ruth directly expresses her feeling of stress as a result of her workload. She repeats the word 'stress' in the conversation in order to emphasise how it is associated with her high workload. Similar experiences are also pointed out by interviewees at WM. The following example shows that there was an increase in workload as a result of losing people during the restructuring. Betty explains how the current workload frustrates her and her team.



*The past years, we haven't helped ourselves because we were not having the capacity to push ourselves out there more ... I mean ... I am part-time ... I used to have a job share. The job share went [through] voluntary [redundancy], which was part of the restructuring. That job share has never been replaced ... we [are] constantly firefighting. That's frustrating.* Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM

The following quote provides a different view of stress. Lucy, a non-customer-facing staff member at WM suggests that her team members were stressed over pressure from others:

*We knew the restructuring was coming; [it] started with our manager left. She left in ... not very nice circumstance. That was very hard on the team. It was very stressful to keep coming to work, even though she's being investigated. You knew that people knew ... they were gossiping about us. It was quite ... I know one member of the team, he was in his car, he phoned me and said, 'I cannot get [out] of my car, I feel a little off to come in'. And me and another girl went and encouraged him [to] come in. That sort of pressure [was] put[ted] on the team.* Lucy, non-customer-facing staff, WM

The departure of their manager had a big impact on the team. Like Betty's example in the early part of this chapter, Lucy's team member also felt that they had been targeted when the manager was investigated. They also believed that people from other teams were gossiping about them, which led to an increase in their stress levels.

### **Grief**

The last frequent negative emotion revealed in both organisations is grief. Grief is “a subjective emotional response to irretrievable loss” (Bell and Taylor, 2011). In this case of organisational change, it is often associated with personal or colleagues' job losses (Friedrich and Wustenhagen, 2007) and identity losses.

*We've gone through a restructuring ... we lost a lot of people as well, try[ing] to save money. I think it's 35 that lost jobs. We lost one whole team.* Marie, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

*You know from the government. We then have to make huge cuts within the organisation. Our team, in particular, was picked out as one of the teams that has to be cut. We lost three team members.* Betty, non-customer-facing staff, WM

The above quotes reveal emotional grieving as a result of losing colleagues. By providing the number of losses in the team, Ruth and Betty demonstrate permanent loss of those colleagues. In addition, in the following quote, Sarah also explicitly points out that losing colleagues has had a direct emotional impact on her.

*I think losing people you work with for a long time affects you emotionally as well.*

Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM.

Similarly, Jess also expresses a strong emotional reaction to losing her original position as a team leader. She reveals her anger towards such change, particular when she is doing the exact same job as she was as a team leader.

*I am very angry about it ... I've been demoted as well. I lost my position.*

Jess, non-customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM.

Here, her emotion is seen as a form of grief rather than anger. This is because she is experiencing loss. Anger is one of the stage of grief, as suggested by stage models of grief (Castillo *et al.*, 2018; Kubler-Ross, 1969).

In some examples, grief is also associated with loss of organisational identity, as expressed by employees at EM.

*Now, all that is gone. One of the biggest parts of our job was the social aspect of living in sheltered accommodation. We ran bingo [for] every British sort of celebrations. We had Easter, Halloween, Christmas. We had parties. If someone had a significant birthday, we would have teas; we would have entertainment; we'd play games. Now we cannot do that. We are not allowed to do that. We[re] certainly not allow[ed] to handle anybody's drugs, whereas before we used to pick ... [tenants' drugs] up regularly for them. We cannot do that anymore ... Certainly, from my point of view, I don't really have [a] sheltered scheme anymore ... The job is kind of unrecognisable in many ways.*

Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

From the above quote, it can be seen that there is a loss of meaning in her work as a result of a withdrawal of funding by the council. She explicitly expresses that she doesn't recognise her job. As a customer-facing staff member, she can no longer organise social activities for tenants who enjoyed the social aspects of their support. She uses the word 'support' instead

of 'service' in the later conversation. She sees her job before the funding withdrawal as 'public' social support rather than a 'private' service. Now, in order to keep the service running, they have to make change. Similarly, Liz describes how a change of Chief Executive Officer led to a loss of organisational identity.

*Our old chief executive ... she was the Chief Executive [Officer] when it was M Ltd, she was very community-focused ... She has a very big personality. She has very strong ideas. When she went, our business almost lost its identity a little bit because we have been really community-focused. We were not aware of changes from community to financial, whereas now we are quite financially-oriented. But in those days, we work[ed] with charities. We do nice things for the community... I would say that's probably a major factor actually in the history when we lost our Chief Exec[utive Officer]. That had a quite big impact ... I think she could see the way the company was going. It's going to be financially driven. It did not sit with her moral self really. She was very flamboyant, quite out there, very vocal, very interested in helping the community. Like I said, that's not [what the company needs now]. The company is now moving to quite financial objectives. Liz, middle manager, Regional Office, EM.*

Although these examples do not reveal a clear stage of grief, they demonstrate that employees and managers in both organisations were affected by change emotionally by the loss of personal positions, colleagues and organisational identity.

The above quotes describe negative emotions presented in this section suggest that such emotions are commonly expressed by employees and managers during organisational change. In addition, it also suggests that these negative emotions relate to each other. Specifically, employees who are worried about their job security tend to have a feeling of distrust towards management. These feelings of distrust result from lack of information and perceived procedural unfairness, which are also seen as one of the sources for anger. Employees who experience grief as a result of losing colleagues and who also face an increase in their workload often express feelings of stress. In other words, employees and managers often experience a combination of interrelated negative emotions during organisational change.

### Positive emotions toward change

Although previous studies have demonstrated that organisational change can induce negative emotions associated with job insecurity and ambiguity, changes are also associated with positive emotions linked to opportunities for personal and career progression, an increase in salary and an improvement in working conditions (Harris and Gresch, 2010). A number of studies have suggested that positive emotions serve as positive facilitation of organisational change outcomes (Avey *et al.*, 2008). Positive emotions also supply energy for employees to help them adapt to new environments and cope with change (Avey, *et al.*, 2008). These studies tend to draw attention to the causal relationship between positive emotions and their impact on the outcome of change, yet there is a lack of understanding of how positive emotions occur and how these emotions influence employees and their experiences of change. The following section, by revealing employees' expressions of passion, intends to show how positive emotions influence their interpretation and sense-making of organisational change.

Aligned with the findings from previous studies of emotions (e.g. Harris and Gresch, 2010; Kiefer, 2002), positive emotions are expressed by interviewees in both case organisations.

*I like change. Personally, I really like change ... I think most people would agree with this. Change is good if it's beneficial to yourself ... I do like change.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office EM

In the above quote, Linda repeatedly emphasises her passion for change. She likes change when it's beneficial at a personal level. The perceived benefits in her case can be seen as career progression and improvement in working conditions (Harris and Gresch, 2010). It reveals a positive feeling of hope for a desirable outcome of change (Kiefer, 2002b). Similar comments on the improvement of working conditions are also made by other interviewees regarding their move to a new building.

*This building where we are now ... it's the first time [that] the organisation is actually being together as one ... be[ing] able to work together ... I would say people are closer and working together in this building.* Jack, senior manager, WM

*The other reason the office is easy and good [is] because we're all communicating. There's a bit vibe.* Julie, middle manager, WM

Although interviewees did not directly express a positive emotion towards the change in the working environment, being able to work closely with other people is perceived as a way of fostering positive emotions by employees. In addition, the word ‘vibe’ reveals a feeling of energy and enjoyment.

*I like change[s] to the routines. It's nice to just come out [of] what you do and do something different.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In the early quote, Linda expresses her passion for change. The above quote continues to explain why she likes it. By saying that she is looking forward to new experiences, it shows her feelings of curiosity and excitement about change; these are seen as positive emotions (Kirsch *et al.*, 2010). In addition, similar comments were also made by other employees and managers at EM and WM.

*I love to do training days, to learn things. I like to kick on new things ... you broaden your knowledge on things. It is good in that way.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

*I just think change is good. Change is refreshing. It is good. Change[ing] things up, doing things differently.* Julie, middle manager, WM

*The other thing is change is always a good thing. You know, like [it] makes it more efficient, always a good thing ... We are working better. People are working better together. It's building relationships with different teams.* Ben, middle manager, WM

These positive emotions, such as hope, passion and excitement, are commonly revealed during organisational change in different types of organisations in the private sector (Avey *et al.*, 2008; Harris and Gresch, 2010; Kiefer, 2002b). These organisations included a large service company, two banks, and a wide range of different organisations across the U.S. However, the following quote also reveals a distinctive excitement regarding change.

*There are some things that impact customers ... [and] we want to be able to communicate those change to customers ... I still think it's going to be a big impact ... yes, it's been exciting. I ['ve] obviously loved every minute of it. Even now, when it's the hard part.* Eva, senior managers, Head Office, EM

Her excitement is associated with a key feature of public sector organisations – public value. Many employees in public sector organisations are driven by promoting better public services, being helpful to others and meeting the expectations of society rather than by personal motivation (Brewer *et al.*, 2000; Colon and Guerin-Schneider, 2015). Since personal motivation is commonly seen as a source of emotion during organisational change (Harris and Gresch, 2010), it is important to note that public value may also influence employees in public sector organisations emotionally. Yet, this is often neglected in the literature.

Overall, in both organisations, positive emotions are not expressed as frequently as noted in previous studies. This is possible because of the previous negative consequences experienced by employees and managers, and the high level of distrust that exists between employees and management in these organisations. In addition, it is also important to consider the possibility that when interviewing employees and managers in an organisation, asking them about their emotional experiences during organisational change might encourage them to focus on negative emotions since there is already a common perception that the expression of emotion in organisations is irrational and negative (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). As a consequence, they may have been more likely to explore negative emotions during organisational change when interviewed for this research.

### Emotional ambivalence

In addition to the experience of positive emotions and negative emotions separately, change is an unfolding process characterised by conflicting feelings – before, during and after the event (Fineman, 2003, Klarner *et al.*, 2010). Conflicting emotions are common during organisational change. As Fineman (2003) suggests, “fear can coexist with exhilaration, liking with disliking, loving with frustration, and suspicion with delight” (p. 115). These simultaneous positive and negative emotions toward the same event - organisational change, in this case, are seen experiences of emotional ambivalence (Pratt and Branett, 1997; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). Emotional ambivalence has been revealed by many interviewees when talking about their experiences of organisational change:

*I was quite positive about that [change] ... I felt that, actually, [it] could be a good thing ... I was really positive about it. But there were parts of change that were awful ... they've got these new contracts; if we did not sign them, we would be made redundant. So, we were literally forced to do a part of [the] job which I honestly*

*couldn't think how I was going to do. You know, to be called out in the middle of the night when I've got children ... I quite like the idea that I can go out in the community more and see more of the scheme and learn all the differences and everything. And that became the biggest enemy of the whole thing. And we all have to go on call. It's stopped now. It was distressing.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In this quote, Linda expresses her positive feeling toward change; she thinks that change is a good thing. When there is a perceived benefit of change, such as an improvement in the way they work so they can become more efficient in what they are doing, employees tend to feel positive emotions, such as hope, towards change (Harris and Gresch, 2010). At the same time, parts of the change also induce negative emotions, such as feeling of fear of losing one's job and lack of control (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Kiefer, 2005). For example, Linda suggests that the tasks they are doing now require fewer people on the job, which leads to fear of job losses. Both types of emotions are 'real' to Linda. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Linda experiences emotional ambivalence, which is the simultaneous, conflicting emotions experienced toward change, and not that she is continually changing her mind about how she feels about change.

In the following quote, Linda continues to reveal emotional ambivalence:

*You can see, as sad as it is, that people have been made redundant, the organisation can cope perfectly well without that ... clearly, they were not being used to their full potential. I think in this company ... it's very difficult to put a positive spin on it because we did lose quite a lot of staff. I feel the organisation is suffering for it ... since the redundancies, they are not keeping on top of things. I mean it's undeniable. You can wait on the phone for Customer Service [Team] for 15 minutes. It's difficult to come up with a real positive spin on recent changes... it's difficult to come up with a positive spin on the change ... it's quite difficult.*

At the beginning of the quote, there is an evaluation of the organisational capacity to cope with such change. Linda believes that the organisation is capable of coping with the reduction in staff. Her belief reveals a positive emotion regarding the change at organisational level. In the second part of the quote, she considers the fact that the extended waiting time with Customer Service Team has had a negative impact on customers. She describes how that change has created a negative emotional atmosphere around the organisation. In fact, she uses

words such as ‘suffering’ and ‘loss’ to navigate the strong negative emotions in the organisation. Her emotional ambivalence is revealed after an in-depth interpretation of the organisational situation in terms of the employees’ ability to cope with heavy work demands. She adopts working experiences prior to the change as an interpretive reference for the current organisational operation. This not only aligns with previous studies (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Pratt and Doucet, 2000) that suggest the involvement of interpretation prior to the experience of emotional ambivalence but also work in concerns with Isabella’s (1990) idea that employees and managers’ interpretation of change happens before any response to organisational change.

*We’re just so stretched, very stressed ... We were supposed to have an hour [break] ... today, I only have half an hour, and I’ve got to do overtime for the rest of the week ... I think personally, I thrive on being busy. I am used to it. I can take [the] fast pace. I quite like it. It like adrenaline, I quite like [it]. I love being busy.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

At the beginning of this quote, Ruth displays a negative emotion by saying that the organisation is a stressful place to work. She explains that this is mainly because of the increased workload resulting from the restructuring. An increase in workload has already been identified as one of the sources of negative emotions in previous studies (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). In the latter part of this quote, she demonstrates a contradictory emotion towards change by describing how she loves being busy. She also suggests that being busy is a direct result of the restructuring. Again, simultaneous yet contradictory emotions are evidence of emotional ambivalence felt towards the organisation and change (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014).

Unlike the quotes above, which require more analysis of hidden emotions, the following quote shows an obvious emotional ambivalence towards change. Alice articulates her simultaneous love and hatred of change, an experience which is often seen as emotional ambivalence in psychological studies (Greenspan, 1980).

*I hate change ... But when it happens, I’m probably better than some people. I think, ‘this is what’s happening, and I have to deal with it. So, you just have to get on with it and make the best out of it. Because there is no point coming into work and being negative about things all the time ... I actually enjoy the new role. I am busy. The*



*days fly by. So, there is [a] positive as well, I suppose. You've got [to] find them ... I actually enjoy learning new things because I think when you've been going the same thing over and over, when I am saying that I don't like [change], I don't like not knowing what I am doing. And then you've got to follow notes to do something. That drives me mad. Once you've done it for a few times, you get [it] into your head. You can do it without the notes. And I actually like it. I do like to be like that... I am quite good walking out of it at the end of the day and forgetting [about] it. Some people cannot do that. But I can.* Alice, non-customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

In the above quote, Alice explicitly states that she hates change but then she moves on to say that she enjoys the outcome of change that associated with her new role, and she enjoys learning new things. Organisational change always involves learning new things, and this results in a clear conflict in her statements. This suggests that Alice is emotionally ambivalent to her situation. Such emotions are confirmed by her in the following quote, where she recognises her own emotional ambivalence.

*You have to learn new things. Yes. I do say I don't really like it. But when it comes to that I haven't got a lot of choices, then I get on with it. I quite enjoy it really.*

In addition, there was a consultation stage in the process of organisational change in EM, which intends to enable employees to critically reflect of the current organisational values and practices (Badham, Claydon and Down, 2011).

*We did not have to wear a uniform, once ... now we have to wear [one]. I mean, it's things like that [which make] you feel demoralised. From [the] company point of view, they are really positive changes. They thought we are great to have a uniform because we are easily recognised and all ... customers [would] know who we were straight away. But from our point of view, they know who we are because we visit them every day. We thought the uniform is a barrier. We see the uniform as a stand-offish thing. But nobody listened. So, it's difficult to stay positive because the changes ... all felt detrimental to us. Surely, from a company point of view, it's all been good. But for us, it's a lot of different.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In the above quote, Linda also reveals an interpretation about change by recognising that wearing a uniform is a positive change for the organisation. However, from a personal point

of view, she feels that her identity as a public servant has been diminished, which is a negative emotion towards change related to how they dress to work. She also explicitly suggests that the uniform has created ‘barriers’ between her and her customers. The use of this word ‘barriers’ suggests a negative emotion towards change because it positions the emotion as an obstacle that the employee needs to overcome.

Similar emotional ambivalence is also revealed by employees from WM.

*There was a restructuring [a]couple [of] years ago. My job was under threat at that time as well. I lost a number of colleagues through that, through voluntary redundancies and different things. That was very difficult on [a] personal level because if you are knowing people for an awful long time [and] they have to leave their organisation. It was an extremely worrying time. However, I think ... the job roles change ... I think they need to change for the better ... we also have to bear in mind the financing moving forward as a company as well. That it could not run with that extra staff. I'd say that was really difficult.* Debby, customer-facing staff, WM

The term ‘under threat’ is a metaphor adopted to describe her experience of restructuring. Clearly, it describes how something dangerous or unpleasant has happened or is happening. It shows her fear of losing her job. She then continues to describe other negative emotions, such as grief. This is associated with losing her colleagues during the restructuring. All these experiences are perceived as negative emotions towards change. However, in the following sentences, she also recognises the need for change. She believes that the role change is for the better, which implies a positive future-oriented emotion of hope (Fineman, 2006). Yet this contradicts the emotions expressed in her previous statements. These contradictory emotions toward the restructuring suggest she is emotionally ambivalent towards change.

In the following example, Ruth shows an interesting way of expressing her emotional ambivalence by describing her understanding of the discourse of change.

*Yes, I think you do need to change. You cannot stay the same forever, can you? You've got to grow. You've got to introduce new things ... society [is] changing all the time...we are all going more forward ... we're all getting technical, aren't we... people have got to move with the times, haven't they ... we've got to move with technology, haven't we ... that's the way of the world ... we cannot stay [put]... all [the] other housing associations will take over and move along with the times ... it's*

*about re-educating people, isn't it? ... we do need to change, and it is good to have fresher faces in business, so people bring different ideas ... I am not saying you shouldn't have changes within the organisation. I just think there are different ways to do it.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

In the beginning, she makes a declarative statement about change. She is certain that there is a need for change in the organisation. However, this is immediately followed by four question tags (e.g. *you cannot stay the same forever, can you?*). According to linguistic studies, the question tag is a grammatical structure that is used to request confirmation or express curiosity (Nikolic, 2018). In Ruth's example, the use of question tags shows her lack of certainty about the statement she has made (Kirstanti, 2015). It seems like she is trying to convince herself that change is necessary by using the question tags. She is seeking confirmation that change is necessary and, therefore, the organisation ought to change, and she personally needs to change in order to fit into the changing environment. These contradictory emotions of certainty and uncertainty towards change can be seen as an example of emotional ambivalence.

*The thing is, the manager thinks [that] we don't want to change, and we do. We just haven't got time, we [are] just too busy, we haven't got the time. So, I think people have got negative views of [us] because we've done it this way and we carry[ied] on this way because it seems to be working. But there [is] probably another way to do it, but we haven't got [the] time to change it and do it. And I think that sometimes [it] comes across as we have been [seen as] the barriers and a lot of the time we're not. We do want things to change, improve for the better, improve for the customers, but it's not that easy.* Carrie, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

The above quote is another interesting expression about change that shows potential emotional ambivalence. Carrie suggests that they want to change as a customer-facing staff, but they don't have the time to. It might sound like an excuse for not wanting to change. But then, later on, she expresses positive emotions towards change through the hope that it will improve the service for their customers. While this quote shows an example of Carrie being emotionally ambivalent towards change, it also illustrates that the lack of time and resources as reasons for her emotional ambivalence.

*We've been told to embrace it, which we are doing. We are hoping that things are going to settle. But we've only just got those two people we were talking about. So, we are only just got to a point where we are almost full [of] staff. So, the first six-months is about fighting [the] fire and keeping things tick[ing] over. So, the next six months, hopefully, [will] be more about settling [in] to our roles and looking at what we can do.* Cathy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM

The above quote reveals an emotional contradiction between embracing change and fighting fire in the first phase of change, as experienced by Cathy. The word 'embracing' reveals a positive emotion of hope and passion towards change, whereas the word 'fighting' is less positive. In addition, when thinking about fighting, there is always a rival. It involves a violent struggle that could cause harm to both sides. Therefore, it implies a range of negative feelings, such as fear and anger.

Not all conflicting emotions are categorised as emotional ambivalence. In the following examples, interviewees express an emotional dissonance which has been defined as "the discrepancy between emotions felt and those required by the job role" (Diestel and Schmidt, 2011, p. 643) within the emotional labour literature. It suggests that interviewees felt they had to display a positive emotion that contradicted their true feelings.

*It's very difficult you know. The word around is to be very positive, you cannot be negative in the organisation. Don't be negative, stay positive. It's quite hard to stay positive when you're not told anything.* Ruth, customer-facing staff, EM

Although it might seem that Ruth is expressing contradictory emotions, she is forced to stay positive as required by the job or organisation even though her real emotions are negative. The positive emotions are contrived. Therefore, this example of emotion is seen as emotional dissonance rather than emotional ambivalence.

### Reasons for emotional ambivalence

This section addresses the research question on reasons for emotional ambivalence towards change. There are three themes: ambiguity, lack of support and emotional surroundings.

## *Ambiguity*

Ambiguity is commonly seen as one of the sources of attitudinal ambivalence (Piderit, 2000; Randall and Procter, 2007). It arises from a lack of clarity or from irreconcilable contradictions (Meyerson, 1990). This argument is based on the assumption that attitudinal ambivalence involves an evaluation process. Such a process is often associated with a lack of clarity or contradictory information (Meyerson, 1990). The idea of having a lack of clarity or contradictory information also indirectly suggests that there is an evaluation or interpretation about change involved in the experience of emotional ambivalence.

In the following example, a connection between emotional ambivalence and a lack of clarity about change is revealed. The lack of clarity results from poor communication.

*Again, it's communication. If there was better communication, the change wouldn't be half bad ... you were not told things. So, one team [was] doing something, and one day you send them an email, [and] they say, 'Oh no, we are not doing that now'. But they don't know who is dealing with it. So, we don't know who is dealing with it either. So, who is? Nobody knows. Ruth, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM*

In the above quote, Ruth suggests that poor communication was the main reason for her negative emotions, such as worry and uncertainty, even though she expresses that she really liked to change in one of her earlier quote in the previous section. She was experiencing a combination of conflicting emotions simultaneously. In addition, she explains that because of the poor communication, the team was lacking information and directions about change. This was a conclusion she had drawn after an evaluation of change, and was a way to interpret her ambiguity to it. The experience of ambiguity was associated with her emotional contradictions, which in turn can be seen as a reason for emotional ambivalence. A similar experience is also evidenced by a customer-facing staff member at EM.

*I don't feel that the management from ... [my] team is the best at the minute. You know, there's frustration there ... There is always going to be something I don't know, and I am willing to learn and move on with that. But if I ask a question because I really don't know what to do next and all you get is they throw back at you and says, 'what do you think you should do?' And if I know what to do, I won't be asking... if you've got a question...you need to ask someone, the manager ... you just don't feel you're getting that support you need. Especially with the changes, you just don't feel*

*that support is there at the minute ... They say it is. But when you actually need it. You think, 'that's not really help at all.'* Carrie, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In the above quote, Carrie is emotionally ambivalent towards change. On the one hand, her active engagement with it reveals her willingness to learn new things and suggests a positive emotion towards it. She asks questions about it, which is a way to resolve uncertainty. On the other hand, she is frustrated about the lack of a clear direction. In this case, emotional ambivalence not only associates with ambiguity but also links to a perceived lack of support.

### ***Lack of support***

As suggested in the examples above, ambiguity experienced by employees is one of the reasons emotional ambivalence occurred among them, and it is often associated with a lack of support. In the quote below, Linda not only reveals emotional ambivalence towards change but provides evidence to support the argument that lack of support is a reason for this.

*As a whole, I try to look at thing positively. But it did not go positively. It was awful. It really was ... We had no training. They were just like; you were all going to be there and off you go. One day, I would never forget. It's funny when you're looking back. Me and my colleagues sat in the office and we were all just crying because we just didn't know what we were doing. The management was like, 'oh, just get on with it. You will be alright'. The support was poor. And we've got over with it and we started to find out our feet ... Nothing can match that...we had months and months just being headless chickens and not knowing what was going on.* Linda, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In the above quote Linda explicitly suggests that she wanted to feel positive towards change. Such emotion is also revealed in Linda's earlier quotes where she articulates that she loves new experiences and likes to learn new things. But because of the lack of support and resources, she and her team felt helpless. It seems that they were crying for help when she talks about crying in the office. Here, the lack of support is not only seen as one of the sources of negative emotions (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003), such as sadness and helplessness, it also induces emotional ambivalence in her case because she is also feeling positive towards change.

In addition, she adopts an interesting metaphor of 'headless chickens'. This phrase is an informal British way of saying disorganised and uncontrolled. In her case, the term 'headless chickens' describes the feeling of lacking control of her job. A similar expression is used by Carrie, another customer-facing staff at EM.

*We work completely differently. I don't know, rather it's the restructuring or that it's to do with the fact we had [a] change in management through the restructuring. But our responsibilities are different. We do a lot more than we did before. We are running around like headless chickens, trying to keep up, on top of everything.*

In the following quote, Carrie continues to reveal her emotional ambivalence towards change.

*If everything they said was going to happen happened. I think it's going to be some benefits ... they said the way the restructuring is, there are two people for each post. Often, [for] some posts, they have two people ... That's a good idea ... they keep saying we will get the technology and we will get the Wi-Fi spots, at which point we can go on ... but we haven't got Wi-Fi. The key thing is that the technology is coming. They will be there ... But you can't expect the job to be done how they want it to be done without the support ... they've been saying that for three or four years. And we are still in the same position as we were [in].*

Carrie reluctantly acknowledges the potential benefits of changes in her job role. She suggests that if everything had gone as the management planned, everything would have been alright. This shows the positive emotion of hope towards change. However, she also reveals a strong doubt that the organisation will acquire the technology required for the job.

It is worth noting that sometimes we might be confused about the reasons for emotional ambivalence. For example, some interviewees express his/her love for the organisation and the job he/she does but dislike the organisational change for the outcome it brings. Although this reveals a conflicting emotion, the perceived conflicting emotions are not emotional ambivalence. This is because these emotions are not generated from the same event or object. The positive emotion is generated from the organisation and the negative emotion is generated from change. It is important to note that emotional ambivalence takes place only when the contradictory emotions are experienced towards the same event, object or person.

Returning back to the quote above, the positive emotion is toward changes in Carrie's role. The negative emotion is also towards change in her current role. Hence this example shows an emotional ambivalence toward the same event which is change in her job. The lack of technological support for their new roles becomes the reason why she does not like such change.

### ***Emotional surroundings***

Whether emotions are feelings that are associated with job insecurity at an individual level, feelings of grief and anger related to loss of colleagues at a group-level, or feelings of hope for the betterment of services at an organisational level, emotions are socially complex combinations of "individual motivations and aspirations, dyadic interactions and relationships and group-level processes" (Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007, p. 277). This is because expressing one's emotions about change can evoke reciprocal emotions in others, and influence their experiences of change (Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007). Such socially influenced emotion is defined as emotional surroundings (Hareli and Rafaeli, 2008). The idea that emotion can influence others has been studied in the form of emotional labour which suggests that people intend to influence others by displaying certain emotion as part of their work role. However, the aim of displaying certain emotions as part of emotional labour is to promote sales and increase customer satisfaction (Pugh, 2001).

As suggested by Hareli and Rafaeli (2008), we all have experience when our emotions are shaped by the expressions of others around us. This is not a completely new idea as it has been studied through the concept of emotional contagion (Harfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1994). Emotional contagion refers to the process in which someone automatically converges in his/her emotion to those around them (Harfield *et al.*, 1994). As pointed out above, the idea also appears in studies of emotional labour where one's displayed emotions are intended to influence others, particularly with customers in order to improve customer satisfaction and sales (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). However, we often neglect the fact that the social influence of emotions involves two-way communication, and overlook the consequences of emotional exchange on those who have been influenced (Hareli and Rafaeli, 2008; Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007), particularly during organisational change. To address the shortage of evidence on emotional surroundings during organisational change, the following examples show how employees' emotions are affected by others around them.



*I mean, emotionally, I am quite resilient. But when other people around [me] have been impacted in a negative way by restructuring, it's very hard [for it] not to impact you. So, emotionally, at that time, it's been quite difficult. To try to disengage from that was very hard because you cannot completely separate the two issues. You cannot not get involved ... So, there is impact emotionally on us all, I think. Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM*

In the above example Sarah believes that she was emotionally resilient, which is seen as a positive emotion. However, when the people around her were feeling negative towards the restructuring, it was hard for her to stay positive. In other words, others' negative emotional responses to change became an information channel between her and them (Hareli and Rafaeli, 2008; Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007). It might seem that it is socially inappropriate to feel happy when others feel sad. She started to develop negative emotions towards change, even though she felt positive about it. Here, she expresses a combination of conflicting emotions which is perceived as emotional ambivalence, the negative feelings of others become a reason for her emotional ambivalence.

A similar experience is described by Nancy in relation to job losses.

*Obviously, when somebody is your friend as well, you want them to get a job. If they did not, it's like you feel bad if you've got one. Do you know what I mean? It was just like, obviously everybody wanted to have a job. So, it was difficult really. Because you actually have to think about yourself but then you've got people close around you. It's hard to just think about yourself. Nancy, customer-facing staff, Head Office, EM*

In this example, Nancy felt happy about securing her job after the restructuring. At the same time, her friends lost their jobs because of it. They probably experienced negative emotions, such as anger, fear and grieving. Again, for her, it would be socially inappropriate to feel happy towards change. Nancy's experience of change was socially influenced by her friends' negative emotional expressions, resulting in contradictory emotions towards it. Thus, the social influence of her friends becomes one of the reasons for her emotional ambivalence.

## Coping strategies for emotional ambivalence

Although the interviewees did not explicitly discuss coping strategies for emotional ambivalence, during the course of analysis, I identified two implicit responses to emotional ambivalence: disengagement and compromise.

### ***Disengagement***

This behavioural response to emotional ambivalence is recognised in Ashforth *et al.*'s (2014) model of organisational ambivalence across levels and Rothman *et al.* (2017) when discussing the outcome of ambivalence. They call such response as distraction or disengagement. While previous studies argue that emotional ambivalence could potentially lead to disengagement from the sources of it in organisations (Rothman *et al.*, 2017), there is limited empirical evidence to support such claim in the context of organisational change.

*Emotionally, I am quite resilient. But when other people around [me] have been impacted in a negative way by [the] restructuring, it's very hard not to impact [on] you ... try[ing] to disengage from that was very hard because you cannot completely separate the two issues. You cannot not get involved ... So, there is impact emotionally on us all I think. Sarah, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM*

In the quote above, Sarah suggests that she tries to disengage herself from her sources of emotional ambivalence, which is the relationships she has with her colleagues who are negative toward change in this case. And the relationship is commonly recognised as a major source of ambivalence in psychological studies of parent-child relationships (e.g. Greenspan, 1980); and the work relationship is even more complex than other relationships as work relationship involves multiple relationships such as personal and professional relationships (Rothman *et al.*, 2017). This example supports the claim that people may disengage with sources of emotional ambivalence during organisational change (Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Rothman *et al.*, 2017).

### ***Compromise***

Compromise is another coping strategy recognised by Ashforth *et al.* (2014) and Rothman *et al.* (2017) and it is also evidenced in the findings in this study.

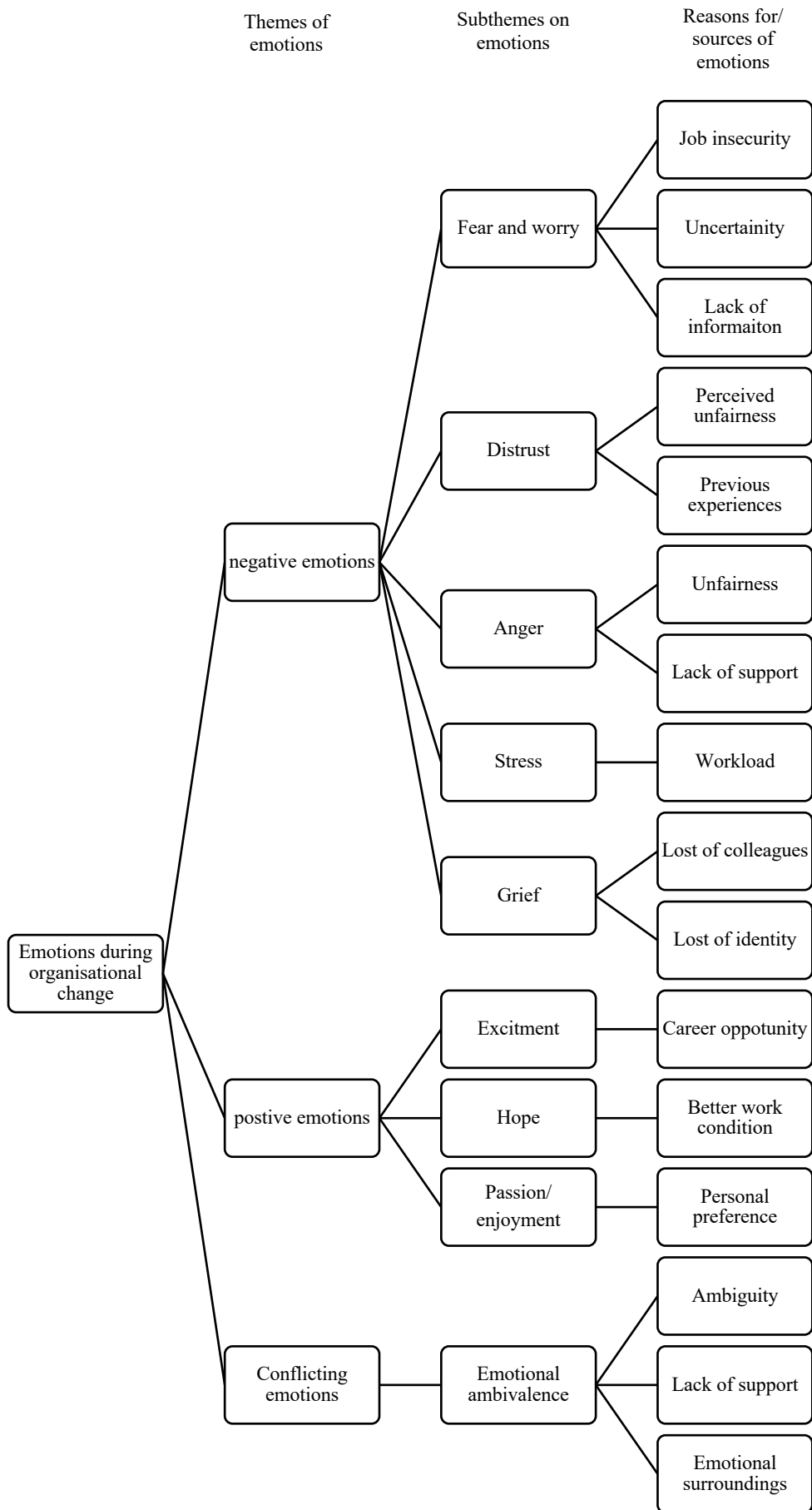
*I've got to stay quite positive about the change because, at the end of the day, everything changes. Everything has to change. You know, we are getting more technology... I accept the change. But sometimes it just takes [a] long time to get there... the journey there can be little difficult at the time... for me, it's just not a very nice thing to go through.* Karen, customer-facing staff, Regional Office, EM

In the early part of this quote, Karen expresses the need to stay positive. However, later on, she describes change as a difficult journey, which implies a negative emotion. There is a conflicting emotion revealed here which exhibits emotional ambivalence towards change. In addition, it also reveals a coping strategy for emotional ambivalence, which is compromise. The above quote suggests that Karen compromises her negative emotions by displaying her positive emotions. Compromise is recognised by Ashforth *et al.* (2014) as a response to ambivalence. They suggest that it is an intentional coping strategy for ambivalence because the person needs to acknowledge their emotional conflict and identify a desirable response. In this case, Karen recognises that she needs to stay positive, which she perceives as the desirable response to change because she believes that everything has to change eventually.

### Conclusion

To conclude, by analysing the emotional experiences of organisational change, a number of themes and subthemes have emerged from the data which answered the second research question on how managers and employees in housing associations experience organisational change, and what emotions are associated with these experiences (see **Figure 7.1**).

**Figure 7.1** *Different emotions experienced by people during change in the two organisations*



Specifically, this study has revealed a number of negative emotions such as fear and worry, distrust, anger, stress, and grief. It is suggested that these negative emotions are related to each other. This is possible because they share the same sources such as uncertainty and lack of information. Similarly, employees who show emotional grieving also tend to express a feeling of stress by the increase of workload resulting from the loss of colleagues. Similarly, a number of positive emotions were identified by the interviewees. These emotions include passion, hope, excitement and enjoyment. However, the findings suggest that positive emotions are not as frequently experienced, as pointed out by previous studies. One potential explanation is that any previous negative consequences of change are still affecting the employees and managers in both organisations. The second explanation is related to the high level of distrust between the employees and management in these organisations. In addition to the dichotomous positive and negative emotions, this chapter provided evidence of the presence of emotional ambivalence during organisational change, particularly through analysing emotional metaphors. It also provided empirical evidence to support the claim that emotional ambivalence is an unfolding process that involves a deep interpretation of change.

The findings of this study have identified three main reasons for emotional ambivalence: ambiguity, lack of support, and emotional surroundings. It is suggested that ambiguity as one of the sources of attitudinal ambivalence is also seen as a reason why interviewees experience emotional ambivalence during change. In addition, as a source of ambivalence, ambiguity is seen as one of the reasons why employees experience emotional ambivalence in both organisations; ambiguity is associated with the perceived lack of support from management. This is possible because the lack of support is also seen as one of the sources of ambiguity in previous studies (Randall and Procter, 2008). It is interesting to note that although previous studies have recognised a connection between support and successful change in the organisational context, there is little evidence on how lack of support affects employees' emotional experiences to change. The last source is the emotional surroundings or social influence during organisational change. It is also an interesting concept in the literature on emotions that has been overlooked by previous studies.

Although coping strategies of emotional ambivalence were not explicitly discussed by the interviewees, the study evidenced two responses to emotional ambivalence, namely disengagement and compromise which could be categorised as coping strategies. These two

coping strategies have been recognised as behavioural outcomes of ambivalence in previous studies (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017).

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have adopted the lens of ambivalence to critically explore employees' and managers' emotional experiences of organisational change in housing associations under NPM. My decision to focus on ambivalent emotions reflects the relatively recent turn towards studying mixed emotion and emotional ambivalence by organisation studies scholars (e.g. Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Piderit, 2000; Rees *et al.*, 2013; Rothman *et al.*, 2017; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). This research calls for a move beyond the dualistic representation of emotions as either positive or negative in studies of organisational change. My arguments are based on qualitative empirical research from two case studies of English housing associations, involving thirty-five semi-structured interviews across hierarchical levels and supported by the organisations' change documents and research fieldnotes. The research has addressed the following research questions:

- How do housing associations manage organisational change under NPM?
- How do managers and employees in housing associations experience these organisational changes? What emotions are associated with these experiences?
- How do people experience emotional ambivalence? What are the reasons for emotional ambivalence to change and how do people cope with it?

This chapter is organised as follows: I begin by summarising the main findings of my research and discussing how they relate to the literature. Then I bring these findings into an overarching discussion in which I argue that emotional ambivalence is inherent in organisational change and it unfolds over time, and that it has many potential benefits to the persons who are responsible for the change. I move on to highlight the theoretical contributions of my research which arise from seeking to understand emotional ambivalence as a complex response to change in housing associations under NPM, and highlighting the practical implications of my research for managers in public sector organisations. I conclude the thesis by considering the limitations of my study and providing suggestions for future research on NPM change in public sector organisations

## NPM change in public sector organisations

In Chapters Six I provided a foundation for understanding people's emotional responses to change in the two organisations by providing rich descriptions of organisational changes in the two housing associations. I addressed the first research question (How do housing association manage organisational change under NPM?) by looking at how changes happened and how the housing associations approached change. By adopting a combination of thematic and narrative analysis approaches, the chapter identified a number of organisational change events that, taken together, led to a culture change from 'traditional local council' to 'business-like' organisations. These events included housing stock transfer, re-organisation after the completion of 'housing transfer', reductions in central government funding, technological changes and recent restructuring in response to rent cuts from central government. The findings in Chapter Six revealed a clear, incremental cultural change in these public sector organisations as a result of NPM. Specifically, organisational changes were initiated in order to cope with funding reductions driven by political agendas led by the central government. These included the withdrawal of funds from local councils, social rent cuts and the introduction of a new way of paying social housing allowance.

By providing detailed descriptions of the history of both organisations, the findings indicated that prior to the changes driven by NPM, the culture of these two housing associations was characterised by values of local council. Specifically, at WM, a number of interviewees who worked in the organisation from its beginning recalled examples of the local council culture, such as the interpretation of expenses rule and work inspection. Interviewees at EM recollected community-focused benefits of the culture, which included close interaction with tenants and the social aspects of the service. Interviewees from organisations expressed the view that operational features of the organisation placed emphasis on the compliance of rules and regulations. Hence they suggested that the two organisations had been inefficient in their use of resources and unaccountable in terms of organisational performance (Litton, 2006; Wynen and Verhoest, 2015; Zalami, 2005). In other words, interviewees articulated the features of the local council culture of public sector organisations in a manner which reflected the need for 'value for money' as promoted by NPM.

In order to cope with financial pressures from local councils and central government, interviewees recognised that there was a need for a change from a local council culture to a more 'business-like' culture through introduction of privatisation and marketisation methods



(Buick *et al.*, 2015; Cresswell *et al.*, 2014). These pressures included the complete withdrawal of local council funding for Neighbourhood Services, the introduction of a 1% rent cut and UC that directly affected the income of the housing associations. This cultural change is characterised by an incremental yet fundamental shift in the beliefs, values and identity of public sector organisations that enabled by radical structural change, day-to-day operational and technological change, and the adoption of a new professional language that matches the proposed organisational values and beliefs. These changes were associated with the concepts of privatisation or marketisation. For example, the findings presented in Chapter Six reveal that there was a change from a ‘community-focused’ organisational belief to a ‘customer-focused’ organisational value in EM. Specifically, evidence from EM’s business plan indicated that the main purpose of the organisation is to provide a continuous social housing service to enable the needs of service recipients by focusing on the experience of customers (Walker and Boyne, 2006). This requires employees in customer-facing roles to adopt the new professional language and new ways of approaching customers (e.g. prior to the change ‘customers’ were called ‘tenants’). This in turn involves a loss of a community-focused organisational identity for EM employees. This has been discussed in relation to the emotional experience of grief associated with organisational change in Chapter Seven.

These cultural change are associated with three themes that align with the structure of the organisations – approach to service users, organisational performance and operational structure. First, my findings identify a shift from a community-focused approach change to a results-driven, marketised culture. For example, one of the customer-facing staff members at EM pointed out, the most important aspect of their service is to build close relationships with social tenants, whereas now they are not supposed to get too close to customers. Some customer-facing staff members have standard guidelines that they must follow in relation to each customer. They also need to complete their duties within a limited, fixed timeframe. In doing so, the officers maintain a certain level of productivity with each customer and therefore they can attend to more customers. The organisations chose to standardise their service because the number of customer-facing staff are limited and team members are continually reduced as a result of financial pressures. In the meantime, the number of social housing customers has increased because government has pressurised housing associations to achieve the NPM ideas of efficiency and value for money by building more houses and taking on more customers. Therefore, in order to maintain the functionality of the service,

both organisations have had to make a shift to a results-driven approach with less resources and limited funding and income (Manzi and Morrison, 2018).

Second, following a clear guideline of job tasks, customer-facing staff at EM also adopted performance measurement as part of the privatisation process. For example, they were given specific guidelines to follow when visiting customers. The guidelines recommend that internal performance is measured in order to ensure that targets are achieved by customer-facing staff members. The basis of high performance is determined by the number of customers attended within a given time period. This system converts the numbers of inputs, such as hours of work, into measurable outputs, which is the number of customers attended. This system provides an example of internal performance measurement based on the view of internal stakeholder (Walker and Boyne, 2006). Whilst this system determines what a 'good' performance is, based on the number of customers attended, there is no measurement of the quality of service received by the customer, apart from seasonal customer satisfaction surveys distributed by the organisations, which some customer-facing teams tend to overlook.

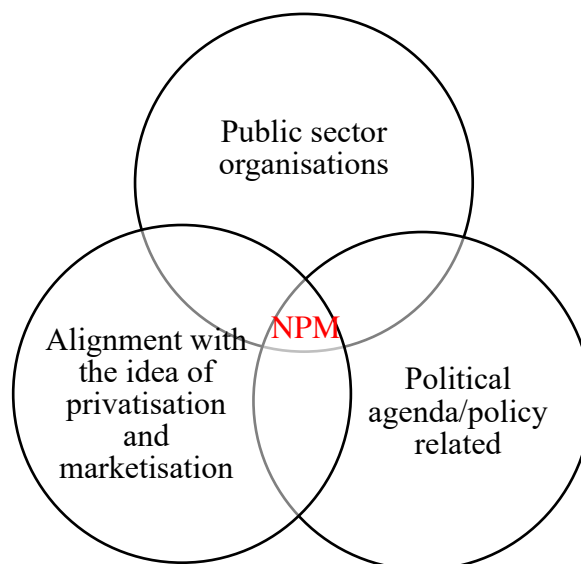
Third, findings from both cases show examples of technological innovations being used to drive behavioural culture change. This is a further illustration of the concept of privatisation. For example, Repair Operatives at WM were tracked on their job progress through mobile devices which were used to standardise services and monitor employee performance. The purpose of these changes was to improve 'efficiency' and achieve 'value for money' for the service by removing unnecessary steps, such as filling out forms before and after attending repair jobs. In addition, mobile devices allow Repair Operatives to take photos before and after the job to show if the job is complete. They also allow for job process tracking to keep customers and the service centre informed.

The last dimension relates to a change in professional language. For example, many interviewees in both organisations refer to their organisation as a 'company' which situate themselves in the private, commercial, for-profit sector, even though both housing associations are conventionally categorised in the literature as public sector organisations. In addition, the use of words such as 'customer' in EM organisational business plans, annual reports and interviews demonstrate that they are representing the organisation as a 'business-like' culture (Karlsson *et al.*, 2016). These changes in the discourse of public sector organisations reflect the revolutionary transformation of public sector organisational cultures

(Learmonth, 2005). Not only does this discourse reflect organisational reality, it also enables the construction of organisational reality through changing the language (Learmonth, 2005).

The above examples reveal the presence of concepts of NPM in each case study, and demonstrate that there is a need to integrate different concepts of NPM identified in the literature through the lens of cultural change. This argument is grounded in the identification of three main features of NPM, based on the types of change that emerged from my findings in the two organisations (see **Figure 8.1**). These features are partially recognised by previous studies, but they are not articulated as main features of NPM, nor do these studies show how NPM changes are different from other types of organisational change. Differentiation between NPM and other types of organisational change is important because this enables better understanding of how to manage NPM-related change. The first feature of NPM relates to cultural change in public sector organisations. Public sector organisations are formed to deliver public services to wide populations. The term ‘public service’ refers to the general services offered to publics to protect citizens from inadequate knowledge or information (Rainey, 2009). Housing associations can be understood as public sector organisations because they provide social housing service to citizens based on a principle of equality so that everyone has a place to live despite of incomes.

**Figure 8.1** *Features of NPM change*



Second, NPM change is often related to political agendas that are associated with the introduction of new policies related to fiscal and resource constraints by central and local governments. For example, in the last few decades, governments in the UK have continually

reduced their expenditure, bringing in new policies that reflect this, such as by introducing student fees for higher education institutions (Broucker and De Wit, 2015). In social housing organisations, the introduction of a 1% rent cut by the central government directly and significantly affected housing associations' income. These organisations have had to make adjustments in order to compensate for this reduction in income (Manzi and Morrison, 2018).

The last feature of NPM aligns with the purpose of NPM changes. The purpose of NPM is to encourage public sector organisations to become more efficient, dynamic, entrepreneurial and responsive to market forces through the idea of privatisation and marketisation (Cresswell *et al.*, 2014). The idea of privatisation is associated with a performance-driven approach which places emphasis on controlling resources and maximising output. The idea of privatisation also draws attention to the role of managers and the accountability of their positions (Deem and Brehony, 2005). The concept of marketisation encourages service providers to engage with customers to empower recipients of public services and lower the cost of provision. These concepts of NPM are detailed in the findings of Chapter Six. Although some of these features of NPM are commonly recognised in previous studies, they are rarely summarised as the main features of NPM-related change. By explicitly outlining these features of NPM change, my research has filled a gap in this literature.

### Approaches to NPM change

In addition to identifying how NPM shapes cultural change at an organisational level, the findings in Chapter Six provide strong evidence of a planned approach to change in both organisations. Managers in both organisations recognised that the choice of a planned approach to change has been shaped by NPM, as it was imposed by the central government and authorities, rather than arising from the initiative of managers in the organisation (Sminia and Nistelrooij, 2006; Van der Voet *et al.*, 2015). In other words, NPM change at an organisational level, requires top-down planning. This is because top-down planning is a practical way to make significant savings in a short period of time in order to cope with income reduction. Hence a number of interviewees expressed that NPM-related change often required a planned approach in order to cope with radical changes (e.g. funding reductions) imposed by the central government. Emergent change is unable to bring about the major changes in strategy, structure and people that are required by NPM in order to cope with financial and market pressures (Cresswell *et al.*, 2014). When policy changes are introduced by central and local government, there is a need to undergo a deliberate change that breaks

the current organisational strategy and structure and transforms how people operate in the organisation (Cresswell *et al.*, 2014).

However, as a top-down approach to change, NPM creates social conflict between employees and managers in organisations (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b; Hal, 2009). Social conflict refers to the potential conflict of interests between social groups of employees and managers. For example, employees in the two housing associations are likely to be more concerned with the practicality of imposed change and how it affects their current workload and work conditions, whereas managers may be more interested in how the change will improve team and organisational performance while reducing operational costs. Sometimes, increasing organisational performance means increasing the workload, which is contradictory to employees' interests. The primary focus of the planned approach to change should therefore centre on resolving social conflicts and improving operational effectiveness on the human side of an organisation through a participative change programme (Burnes, 2009b).

Although social conflict can be reduced by engaging employees and giving them a voice to improve the change programme as part of the planned approach (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b), employee engagement had not been used to its full potential in the two housing associations. The lack of "real" consultation with employees at EM, sometimes left them feeling betrayed or disrespected. Employees revealed that they asked for the opportunity to give feedback on the change programme, but their voices were neglected or quickly dismissed. The lack of employee empowerment methods used in both organisations increased conflict between management and employees. This is an example of what Greenberg (1987) views as perceived interaction injustice. Consequently, employees expressed a strong distrust towards management as a result of unfair procedures during organisational changes (De Clercq and Saridakis, 2015; Saunders *et al.*, 2003).

Interviewees also expressed distrust towards management in relation to distributive justice. Distributive justice is concerned with the perceived outcomes of change in relation to resource distribution. Specifically, employees suggested that they did not receive sufficient information about the changes, stating that this was carried out "*under the table*". Similar results were evidenced by Saunders *et al.* (2002) when investigating the relationship between trust and organisational justice. Although previous studies have recognised the relationship between distrust and different types of justice during the change process, there is limited understanding of distrust as an emotional response to change.

Although the planned approach to change accelerated social conflict between management and employees in both organisations, it is important not to diminish the power of the planned approach when resolving social conflicts. The planned approach to change can offer opportunities for open discussion and participation among employees and professionals in public sector organisations, which in turn reduces resistance to change (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006; Hal, 2009). This is not to reject alternative approaches to change in favour of the planned approach. Instead, the findings of my research on NPM change suggest that there is a need for a deeper understanding and evaluation of the planned approach to change in housing associations.

### Emotions during organisational change

The findings of Chapter Seven address the second and third research questions, and fill in theoretical gaps that enable understanding of emotional ambivalence as an unfolding process that changes over time. The chapter also adds to understanding of employees' emotional responses to NPM change in housing associations. To answer the second research question (How do managers and employees in housing associations experience organisational changes? What emotions are associated with these experiences?), Chapter Seven reveals a group of negative emotions, including positive emotions and simultaneous conflicting emotions (see **Figure 7.1** p. 192). Although separating the organisation of the findings into positive and negative emotions might appear to contradict my previous argument in Chapter Three where I argue that researchers should move beyond the dichotomous representation of emotions, this helps to illustrate the duality of emotional ambivalence, which is defined as the simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotions toward change.

Interviewees in both organisations revealed a number of negative emotions, such as fear and worry, distrust, anger, stress and grief. Specifically, employees expressed feelings of worry and fear in relation to losing their job as a result of a long period of uncertainty. Isabella (1990) argues that these types of uncertainties are associated with disruptions to organisational values and assumptions. Both organisations in this study had experienced significant change to their public sector values and belief as a consequence of NPM-influenced cultural change. Among the interviewees who experienced fear and worry during change, many revealed emotions of anger and distrust towards management as a result of previous, negative organisational change experiences and perceived procedural unfairness during organisational change. My findings align with previous studies on the issue of trust,

organisational fairness and the relationship between employees and management (e.g. Bernerth *et al.*, 2007). The perceived unfairness and dishonesty of management are seen as potential sources of anger among employees in both organisations (Mikula *et al.*, 1998). This suggests a possible connection between the emotional response of distrust and anger towards change. This is evidenced in the findings that many interviewees who expressed distrust towards change and those who implemented it, also revealed anger towards a specific person or event.

Similarly, a number of interviewees expressed emotional grief as a result of losing colleagues through the voluntary redundancy scheme, identity losses as well as job losses for these public sector professionals – even though the grieving stages among these interviewees were not as clear as the stages suggested by previous studies (e.g. Kubler-Ross, 1969). In addition, interviewees expressed feelings of stress as a result of an increased workload. The increase in workload was directly associated with losing colleagues through job losses and voluntary redundancies. For example, a number of interviewees revealed that although their team became smaller, the workloads of their team remained the same. Some interviewees suggested that they had to work overtime as a consequence, and push themselves to get the work done, which they described as stressful. Some expressed high levels of stress as a result of the uncertainty and fear of losing their job. Aligned with the idea of mixed emotion proposed by Koch (1989), the above findings on negative emotions show that during organisational change, employees often experience two or more different emotions simultaneously, such as employees who experience fear of losing their jobs also express the feeling of anger and distrust toward management, yet these emotions are not necessarily contradictory.

Although previous studies identified a group of negative emotions during change (Kiefer, 2005; Kirsch, Parry and Peake, 2010), they overlook the connections between these emotions. This gap has been partially addressed by a group of studies that examine the stages of grieving sequentially during organisational change (Christensen and Hammond, 2015; Friedrich and Wustenhagen, 2017; Liu and Perrewe, 2005). The reason this gap has only been partially addressed is that the negative emotions identified in these studies are seen as an evolving process of grief throughout organisational change. Whilst these studies identify different negative emotions experienced at different times during organisational change, they neglect the possibility that organisation members can experience different negative emotions

simultaneously during organisational change. In contrast to these earlier studies, my findings suggest that employees and managers experience several negative emotions simultaneously during organisational change. The coexistence of different negative emotions is also seen as mixed emotion in this thesis. This is aligned with Koch (1987)'s idea that mixed emotion does not necessarily need to be conflicting emotions. Identification of non-conflicting emotions helps us to differentiate mixed and ambivalent emotional experience by suggesting that mixed emotion can be non-conflicting emotions or a group of conflicting emotions evolve over time, whereas emotional ambivalence only refers to the simultaneous, conflicting emotions. In other words, the classification of different emotions experienced during organisational change enables us to make sense of ambivalent emotion, which is the focus of this thesis, by identifying the features of emotional ambivalence and showing how it is different from other phenomena (McAuley et al., 2007).

Similar to the findings on negative emotions, this study suggested that employees and managers experienced several positive emotions during organisational change in both organisations. These emotions included passion, hope, excitement and enjoyment. For example, interviewees who express a passion for change also revealed positive emotions, such as hope and excitement for a better future. Some interviewees expressed enjoyment in relation to having better working conditions as result of the changes, such as having closer relationships with colleagues and improved communication between teams. These positive emotions are related because they share similar emotional sources. These examples evidence the combination of positive emotions is also a form of mixed emotion under the idea of non-conflicting emotion as proposed by Koch (1987). Again, such classification helps us to make sense of mixed and ambivalent emotions by identifying their common features.

While previous studies recognise that positive emotions are commonly revealed by employees during organisational change, the findings of this study reveal that positive emotions were much less frequently in both organisations compared to how they were perceived in the previous studies (e.g. Saunders *et al.*, 2002; Stanley *et al.*, 2010). One potential explanation that positive emotions are not as frequently expressed by the interviewees in the two housing associations is that previous negative consequences of change were still affecting employees and managers in both organisations. There were high levels of distrust between employees and management in these organisations as a result of previous change experiences. Isabella (1990) suggests that during organisational change,



previous experiences of change are often seen as “a conventional frame of reference” to people’s interpretation of current change (p. 17). When people have been through previous organisational change and perceived these experiences as negative, it is unlikely that they will view current change positively because their assumptions are informed by what they have experienced in the past. In other words, negative emotions are more frequently expressed by interviewees in both organisations compared to positive emotions.

### Emotional ambivalence during organisational change

Whilst findings on emotional responses in my study reveal interesting interpretations of different positive and negative emotions, their sources and potential consequences, the range of emotions experienced by the people involved during organisational change are much more complex than their dualistic representations in the literature suggests. Therefore, I argue that there is a need to move away from the dualistic representation of emotions when studying organisational change. Organisational change, particularly NPM-related change often involves a cultural change, requiring organisational members to constantly balance contradictory work demands and values and beliefs as part of the transition (e.g. Litton 2006; Zalami, 2005). These contradictory values and beliefs under often induce organisational dualities as well as individual dualities within organisational members (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). As noted in Chapter Three duality refers to “the twofold character of an object of study without separation ... it retains the idea of two essential elements, but it views them as interdependent rather than separate” (Farjoun, 2010, p. 203). For example, both housing associations in this study aim to provide decent houses and valuable public services to people in need. However, they are tied by a limited budget to support community services that social tenants/customers value the most. They have to adopt business values that in many ways contradict the values of being a public service provider. At an individual level, customer-facing staff in both organisations suggested that they needed to complete a certain number of visits during a day, which leaves them with very little time for each visit. Time spent during each visit influences the quality of the service and impacts on customer satisfaction. The quality of service they provided needs to meet customer needs. In these cases, dualities are likely to induce emotional ambivalence towards change by fostering seemingly oppositional imperatives, such as offering a better service with less cost or committing less time to achieve a better service.

Whilst we know little about ambivalent emotions experienced by organisational members during change, there is a small but growing literature that has focused on the experience of emotional ambivalence in organisational contexts by investigating its sources (e.g. Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Rothman *et al.*, 2017); these sources include individual difference, membership dualities, role conflicts, emotional labour during organisational change. However, the evidence on emotional ambivalence as a response to organisational change is limited. Here, sources of ambivalence are different from the reasons for ambivalence identified in Chapter Seven. The term ‘source’ refers to the initial place where emotional ambivalence arises. It is situational and amendable to framing by organisational leaders, whereas the term reason is specifically referred to as the interpretation of interviewees as to why they experience emotional ambivalence. Aligned Ashforth *et al.* (2014) and Rothman *et al.* (2017) who view organisational change as one of the sources of organisational ambivalence, my findings also evidence that emotional ambivalence is a common response to organisational change. This is particularly true for NPM-related changes because they induce organisational and individual dualities as a result of changes in organisational identity and roles (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014).

Through inductive analysis of the findings, this study reveals that employees often experience emotional ambivalence as a result of organisational change under NPM. Although most interviewees did not explicitly suggest that they were feeling ambivalent towards change – at least, no one used the phrase ‘emotional ambivalence’ to describe their emotional response – conflicting emotions expressed by interviewees suggests that they experience emotional ambivalence, based on the definition adopted in this study. Emotional ambivalence refers to the experience of having simultaneous positive and negative emotions towards change. For example, a number of interviewees revealed positive emotions, such as a passion for change or the hope for better working conditions, but at the same time, they also expressed emotions of fear in relation to losing their jobs, or stress about the increased workload, and were angry at the lack of support and information they received in relation to the changes. They showed conflicting emotions toward organisational change at the same time. Both types of emotions were real to the interviewees, thus their experiences of conflicting emotions are seen as emotional ambivalence toward change.

To expand my earlier point on duality, I argue that we need to understand emotions experienced during NPM-related organisational change as inherently ambivalent. This is because introducing concepts of NPM such as privatisation in public sector organisations induces organisational as well as individual dualities through culture and identity change from a public sector organisation to a 'business-like' organisation. In a general sense, there are obvious differences between public and private sector organisations (Schraeder *et al.*, 2005). Concepts such as 'privatisation' and 'value for money' adopted from private sector organisations have devalued the services provided by public sector organisations, and at the same time have reduced the core administrative values of equality and social fairness (Walker *et al.*, 2011). In addition, the traditional culture and identity of public sector organisation are deeply embedded within these organisations and cannot change overnight. In other words, during such change, public sector organisations and their members engaged in both cultures and identities that often contradict each other. These cultures and identities of public sector organisation and 'business-like' organisation are two opposite tendencies within an organisation; they are independent yet relational within the organisation (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014). Such oppositional imperatives (public versus private) as a duality resulted from NPM, may induce emotional ambivalence toward change because of the potential membership dualities change brings (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014).

The experience of organisational change is followed by a stage of interpretation against previous experience of change. The term 'interpretation' is taken from Isabella's (1996) model of organisational change where she draws attention to the action of comparing current organisational change with previous experience. Previous experiences contribute to the 'interpretive frame of reference' of an individual who experiences organisational change. The meaning of 'interpretation' in this study also relates to similar concepts, such as 'sense-making' or 'sense-giving', which involves someone creating new meaning in relation to the organisation based on their past experiences of change in the organisation. The term 'interpretation' is adopted in this thesis rather than 'evaluation' (which has often been used in previous studies relating to ambivalence to change) because the idea of evaluation does not align with the social constructivist, interpretive research paradigm adopted in my research. *Evaluation* is a cognitive process of how individuals make sense of information about change, analysing the strengths, weaknesses and perceived consequences of change (Liu and Perrewe, 2005). The term suggests that information is processed within from an individual

perspective, whereas social constructivists or interpretivists would suggest that such a process is shaped through social interactions with significant others.

The findings show that the meaning of organisational change is often shaped by contrasting the various interests regarding individuals' social roles. Specifically, employees and managers in both organisations make sense of current change by comparing it to previous experiences in order to create new meaning in relation to the current change (Isabella, 1990). Here, previous experiences not only refer to previous change experiences, but also draw attention to the social, educational and organisational experiences. For example, Linda at EM, expressed the view that the organisational change involved a move away from a community-focused approach to a results-driven approach in order to improve organisational efficiency and reduce the cost of the service. Whilst she understood the importance of reducing service costs and recognised the benefits of such change, she really enjoyed the community-focused approach where she could interact with tenants as part of her social and organisational experience.

In addition, change is meaningful to organisational members if it is related to their personal interests, including their future career opportunities, personal preferences and job security. Some interviewees make sense of change through personal and organisational interests, others make sense of change via organisational and public interests. Concerns relating to organisational interests are associated with performance and financial difficulties in the organisation. Public value is associated with promoting better public services, being helpful to others and meeting the expectations of society (Brewer *et al.*, 2000; Colon and Guerin-Schneider, 2015), which might only be relevant to employees and managers in public sector organisations. From a sociological perspective, the contradiction between these interests are manifestations of role conflicts and membership dualities (Ashforth, et al., 2014). For example, some interviewees in my study suggest that re-organisation is characterised by tension between personal and organisational interests. On one hand, at a personal level, they feel sad that their friends are losing their jobs during the re-organisation. On the other hand, they feel optimistic about the re-organisation because it introduces greater efficiency into the organisation. As this suggests, there are potential role conflicts between being a good friend and a good organisational member. Similarly, NPM-related change also brings membership dualities between the public professional and organisational membership. Emotional ambivalence is likely to occur when there is a conflict between personal and organisational

interests, or sometimes when there is a conflict between personal, organisational and public interests.

These interpretations of roles conflicts and various interests suggest that employees and managers engage in a critical interpretation of organisational change *before* they experience emotional ambivalence in my findings. This aligns with previous research on attitudinal and emotional ambivalence (Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010; Rees *et al.*, 2013) which suggests there is a deeper evaluation or interpretation prior to the experience of ambivalence. Some studies suggest that the ambivalence experience happens after evaluation. For example, Piderit (2000) sees the individual's ambivalence as the beginning of a rational sense-making process toward change. In other words, the interpretation of change or what she refers to as 'sense-making' happens *after* the experience of ambivalence. Similarly, Randall and Procter (2008) argue that the interpretation of change, which they call 'evaluation', happens *after* the experience of ambivalence. Randall and Procter suggest that ambivalent experience can be reconciled by evaluation because ambivalence often results from ambiguity. By resolving ambiguity during change, it is possible to eventually reconcile the experience of ambivalence among organisational members.

However, other studies of ambivalence suggest it is not associated with ambiguity (e.g. Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Plambeck and Weber, 2010). They suggest that ambiguity is often associated with vagueness and uncertainty of evaluation, whereas ambivalent evaluation assumes the essence of an issue is a clear and known contradiction. These known contradictions may be seen as sources of ambivalence. For example, in their multi-dimensional model of organisational ambivalence, Ashforth *et al.* (2014) suggest that experience of contradictory goals, role conflicts or membership duality can be seen as sources of ambivalence. In other words, these studies suggest sources of ambivalence are characterised by duality rather than ambiguity. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

### ***Reasons for emotional ambivalence: ambiguity, lack of support and emotional surroundings***

Whilst the findings of my research align with the argument that interpretation happens before experience of emotional ambivalence as suggested above, they also work in concern with Randall and Procter (2008), suggesting that ambiguity is one of the reasons that emotional

ambivalence occurs during organisational change. This implies that there will be an interpretation of change after the experience of emotional ambivalence once additional information of change is provided to resolve ambiguity. As evidenced in Chapter Seven, examples of emotional ambivalence often start by expressing positive emotions to change such as hope for better working conditions, or excitement for new career opportunities. At the same time, these interviewees expressed the view that ambiguity and vagueness about change are caused by lacking information. This emotional ambivalence is accompanied with negative emotion, such as worry and fear of losing their jobs, which is a result of uncertainty. Many of them suggested that they were unclear about what had changed, and who they should go to with certain work-related issues. While the study could not confirm any causal relationship between ambiguity and emotional ambivalence, the findings suggest that ambiguity could be one potential reason for the experience of emotional ambivalence in organisational change.

In addition to ambiguity, which has been previously identified as a source of ambivalence (Randall and Procter, 2008), there are two further reasons for emotional ambivalence that emerged from the findings: lack of support and emotional surroundings. Similar to ambiguity, they provoke negative emotions when they are accompanied by positive emotion. This reinforces the point that emotional ambivalence arises from multiple sources and has contradictory emotional elements. Lack of support is seen as a reason for emotional ambivalence because, while interviewees revealed reasons for positive emotions, such as hope for improvement in their work conditions, they were also stressed from not having enough support to cope with the proposed changes. For example, some interviewees at EM expressed positive emotions towards the idea of agile working, but the technological support they had, such as tablets (currently used by some customer-facing officers) were insufficient and incompatible with the system they used. Consequently, they could not use the tablets to login into the system to complete their work.

The final reason for emotional ambivalence relates to emotional surroundings or social influence during organisational change. The idea of emotional surroundings suggests that people's emotions are often influenced by the emotions of others. For example, some interviewees at EM expressed the view that they enjoy changes. However, colleagues in their team and others around them expressed negative feelings about the changes. Such emotions quickly spread among members in the team much like viruses. They are positive toward change but quickly develop similar negative emotions, which contradict their 'own' emotions

through emotional contagion (Hareli and Rafaeli, 2008). While previous studies suggest emotions are socially influenced, few studies recognise the association between emotional surroundings or social influence and emotional ambivalence (for an exception see Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007).

Whilst previous studies attempt to examine the complex emotions experienced at different times during organisational change (by studying mixed emotion), they overlook the potential for conflicting emotions to be experienced simultaneously. The complexity of emotion experienced at different times during organisational change is also known as the ‘changing experience of organisational change’ (Fineman, 2003). These emotions have been evidenced in organisational change by previous studies (e.g. Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017) where they have been termed as mixed emotion. While the term ‘mixed emotion’ overlooks the time dimension of emotional complexity (see **Figure 3.1**, p. 81), these studies provide empirical evidence for sequential conflicting emotions throughout organisational change. The above findings signal that employees and managers in both organisations experienced simultaneous, conflicting emotional responses to change, which is defined as emotional ambivalence in this thesis. Theoretically, it is important to recognise the possibility that emotions experienced during organisational change are inherently ambivalent; this is because organisational change has been recognised as one of the important sources of emotional ambivalence in the organisational context. In addition, emotional ambivalence arises from multiple sources and has contradictory emotional elements.

### ***Coping strategies of emotional ambivalence: disengagement, compromise and reinterpretation***

Although the interviewees did not explicitly discuss coping strategies for emotional ambivalence, through inductive analysis, I evidenced some examples of how people deal with emotional ambivalence that align with previous studies (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Pratt and Doucet, 2000; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). These coping strategies involve disengagement and compromise. The interviewees suggested that when experiencing conflicting emotions, they would try to ignore them and focus on their present tasks. This is known as disengagement, which is a behavioural response to emotional ambivalence (Rothman *et al.*, 2017). A similar strategy is evidenced by Bushman and Holt-Lunstad’s (2009) study of friendship maintenance, where they reveal how ambivalence can lead people to disengage from the person who they feel ambivalent towards. A combination of positive and negative sources of

emotion can yield conflicting emotions and distancing oneself from the reasons of ambivalent emotion (such as emotional surroundings) is a way that employees can disengage from the experience of emotional ambivalence.

The findings on disengagement in this study are different to the idea of what we might call a 'escape mechanism', which is a behavioural response to ambivalence, as suggested by Ashforth *et al.* (2014). Ashforth *et al.* (2014) draw attention to the behaviour of someone who has withdrawn from a situation that they feel discomfort with. Here, the situation refers to organisational change and the discomfort relates to the feeling of emotional ambivalence. It suggests that employees may want to quit their jobs as a result of organisational change. This type of avoidance behaviour was not evidenced in the findings. Instead, in this study, disengagement acts as a temporary distraction from the sources of emotional ambivalence. Rothman *et al.* (2017) describe this as rational disengagement.

The other coping strategy described by interviewees involves deliberately seeking to overlook negative emotions, in order to try to force themselves to stay positive. This behaviour is a form of compromise, which is more common than disengagement (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). This is because it is difficult to disengage from the sources of emotional ambivalence in situations of organisational change. Compromise refers to the idea of sacrificing one type of emotion for other more dominant emotions (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Rothman *et al.*, 2017). For example, interviewees at EM expressed the view that while they were experiencing simultaneous, conflicting emotions towards change, they had to stay positive in relation to the change. Negative emotions were compromised for positive emotions in this case. In other words, employees suppressed their negative emotions because the experience of these negative emotions quite often reflected the management or change agents' interpretation of the employees' resistance toward change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015).

The last coping strategy for dealing with emotional ambivalence relates to reinterpretation. Although this is not directly evidenced in my findings, the idea that ambiguity can be identified as a source of emotional ambivalence might indirectly support the existence of reinterpretation as a coping strategy. This suggests that there is a possibility that employees will engage with reinterpretation after emotional ambivalence. As pointed out early paragraph when discussing reasons of emotional ambivalence in this chapter, ambiguity is associated with a lack of information about the implemented changes. When additional information



about the change is provided, interpretation of change may re-occur (Randall and Procter, 2008). In addition, previous studies argue that people who experience emotional ambivalence are likely to reconsider complex problems (such as organisational change in this study) and to use alternative perspectives provided by others to make better decisions (Rees *et al.*, 2013; See *et al.*, 2011).

To bring the above discussion to a conclusion, I argue that we need to go beyond the idea of 'mixed emotion' as a way to address the dualistic representation of emotion in the literature on organisational change. This is because studies on organisational change only examine the conflicting emotions that are experienced by those involved in change in a sequential time order (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017), overlook the simultaneous conflicting emotions experienced during change. While both types of emotions are commonly experienced during organisational change, emotional ambivalence may have more detrimental consequences on employees distress and burnout compared to mixed emotion (King and Emmons, 1990). Although this study does not directly concern about how emotional ambivalence affects the psychological and physical well-being of organisational members, it recognises the potential consequences and seeks to further explore such phenomenon by examining the experience emotional ambivalence during change.

I argue that we need to understand emotions experienced during organisational change, particularly in NPM-related change as inherently ambivalent. This is because organisational change is seen as one of the collective sources of ambivalence and change brings organisational sources of ambivalence such as organisational duality and individual sources of ambivalence such as role conflicts and membership dualities (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014). This is evidenced in my study where many employees and managers who experience emotional ambivalence tend to discuss such experience in relation to the contradiction between personal and organisational interests, organisational and public interests as a reflection of role conflicts or membership dualities. In addition, as a contextual background of change, public sector organisations are ambivalent in the purpose of NPM-related change as a result of the tension between public service and 'business-like' value. Therefore, I argue that emotions experienced by organisational members under organisational dualities, role conflicts and the tension between public and private value resulted from NPM-related change are inherently ambivalent.

I argue that we need to see emotional ambivalence as an unfolding process of emotions that change over time. Whilst early studies see ambivalence as a relevantly static response because people who experience ambivalence are less susceptible to change (Armitage and Conner, 2000; Krosnick and Petty, 1995), findings from my study show otherwise. This is evidenced in some of the examples of the coping strategies of emotional ambivalence, such as disengagement and reinterpretation. Specifically, these responses to emotional ambivalence imply that emotional ambivalence is a dynamic rather than a static response to change because it can be changed by disengaging with sources of emotional ambivalence or reinterpreting change. The experience of emotional ambivalence arises from multiple sources and has contradictory emotional elements that cause certain discomforts for employees and managers in the organisations.

I argue that we need to transcend the positive/negative dualism that positions negative emotions as a barrier to organisational change. This idea resonates with previous studies that suggest ambivalence may be seen as dysfunctional in organisations (Rothman *et al.*, 2017; Pratt and Doucet, 2000). This is evidenced in the findings that emotional ambivalence should be avoided by engaging with coping strategies such as compromise. Such coping strategy implies that organisational members often see the consequences of the negative aspects emotional ambivalence bring to employees and the organisation during organisational change. By examining emotional ambivalence as an unfolding process to change, the findings point toward the direction that emotional ambivalence can be beneficial to individuals and organisations in the management of change because it enables them to critically engage with oppositional orientation which can enable better decision-making about change (Rees *et al.*, 2013; Rothman *et al.*, 2017).

Having considered the potential benefits of emotional ambivalence, I argue that we need to find ways of working productively with emotional ambivalence in situations of organisational change, rather than seeking to resolve or eradicate it. I suggest that change managers need to engage differently with emotionally ambivalent employees and to see them as a positive resource when critically evaluating alternatives at the planning and implementing stage of organisational change (Rees *et al.*, 2013). This is only a speculation emerged from this study; however, more research is needed to further explore the association between members with a high level of emotional ambivalence and their ability to manage change. However, it is possible to speculate that since emotionally ambivalent employees constantly engage with

ambiguity and emotional uncertainty during change, they might be more flexible when it comes to change. They can thus act as important change agents in a group because they understand members who are resistant to change as well as those who promote and support change.

It is important to note that the findings on emotional ambivalence in the two housing associations are suggested to be broadly representative of public sector organisations under NPM because they share similar features as many other public sector organisations, such as the NHS, higher education and local authorities. These features include providing social services to a public population, regulated by the central government and experiencing NPM change. However, they also have distinctive characteristics and features which this thesis has sought to represent.

### Contribution

#### ***Theoretical and empirical contributions***

The findings of my study have made five theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on emotion ambivalence and NPM. First, while previous studies on emotions and change tend to follow a dualistic logic, which groups emotions into positive and negative categories, my study proposes a way of overcoming this bifurcation by drawing on the emotional ambivalence literature to study emotions during organisational change. Although previous studies have attempted to address this bifurcation by studying ‘mixed emotion’, which is a term often referred to as the experience of sequential, conflicting emotions, they concentrate on emotions experienced through an evolving process rather than throughout organisational change (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). They evidence conflicting emotions experienced by organisational members at different times during organisational change. Hence we know little about simultaneous conflicting emotions experienced during organisational change. The findings of my research advances understanding of emotions by concentrating on the idea of emotional ambivalence as a way of addressing the dualistic emotion literature in the organisational change context.

Second, guided by the literature on ambivalence and mixed emotion, my study expands understanding of emotional ambivalence by identifying relevant concepts such as ‘mixed emotion’, ‘conflicting emotion’ and ‘attitudinal ambivalence’, which previous studies often use interchangeably (e.g. Saunders *et al.*, 2002). Specifically, align with Koch (1989)

suggestion that mixed emotion does not necessarily need to be contradictory, findings from this study identified groups of simultaneous, non-conflicting emotions that are categorised as mixed emotion. In addition, previous studies also evidence mixed emotions in relation the experience of sequential, conflicting emotion towards the same event (Giaever and Smollan, 2015; Vuori *et al.*, 2017). Hence I suggest that there are two types of mixed emotion: simultaneous, non-conflicting emotions and sequential, conflicting emotions. Emotional ambivalence as an emotional experience of simultaneous, conflicting emotions is related to the concept of mixed emotion. Such identification enables classification of mixed emotion by grouping “together phenomena in terms of their perceived similarities and differences [in order] to make sense of the world” (McAuley *et al.*, 2007). This allows me to define the phenomenon of emotional ambivalence and make sense of it through similar phenomena of interest (McAuley *et al.*, 2007). Although such classification does not make a theory in its own right, it helps to explain how emotional ambivalence can arise during organisational change (McAuley *et al.*, 2007).

Third, this thesis expands knowledge on emotional ambivalence by moving away from the positive/negative dualism that positions negative emotions as barriers of organisational change. Early studies on emotion saw negative emotions as a dysfunctional reaction that can result in resistance to change among employees, and therefore needs to be minimised or eliminated (Cartwright and Cooper, 1994). Although this claim has been critiqued by many authors as overly simplistic (Bryant and Cox, 2006; Kiefer, 2005), it is commonly experienced and expressed by interviewees that they need to suppress their negative emotions and stay positive when describing the negative aspect of emotional ambivalence in both case study organisations. By examining how employees and managers engage with the experience of emotional ambivalence during change, the findings suggest that there are critical interpretations of change during the unfolding process of emotional ambivalence. Such interpretations allow members of the organisation to systematically engage with information about change and promote better decision-making which then leads to better organisational change (Rothman and Wiesenfeld, 2007). In addition, by presenting emotional ambivalence as an unfolding process to organisational change, my research views emotional ambivalence as a dynamic experience that can change over time. It transcends the traditional view of emotional ambivalence as a linear and static response to change (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014) and enables the exploration of the complex emotional experience of change.

Fourth, this study has also expanded understanding of emotional responses to organisational change by arguing that emotional ambivalence is inherent in organisational change, particularly in NPM-related change. By expanding how employees and managers in public sector organisations engaged with change and how they experience emotional ambivalence, this thesis argues that membership dualities and role conflicts as sources of emotional ambivalence are deeply embedded in organisational change, particularly in NPM. This is evidenced as part of the experience of emotional ambivalence where members of the organisation engage in interpretation of change against their personal, organisational and public interests. For instance, the change from community-based to a results-driven culture has partially changed the role of employees who work in these organisations. Their values, as public professionals, sometimes contradicts the values of business-like organisational members. Whilst some interviewees express feelings of optimism about improving their working methods, they also reveal feelings of grief as a result of losing their identity as public professionals. Findings such as this allow this thesis to expand the previous claim that change is a collective source of emotional ambivalence (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014), and to argue that emotions experienced during organisational change are inherently ambivalent.

Fifth, this study has expanded our understanding of organisational change under NPM within English housing associations. Previous studies have examined the impact of NPM in the NHS, higher education and local authorities from sector, organisational and individual level perspectives. However, there is limited research that investigates how housing associations manage NPM-related organisational change. This is because most of our knowledge about change management in the housing sector exists at the sectoral level. Hence we know little about the nature of housing management, the influence of the individual responses and the impact of changes on performance (Walker, 2000). Pollitt (2013) argues that this position still holds true for many studies of change in the UK public sector. By exploring employees and managers' experiences of change in two housing associations, my research provides empirical evidence to enable understanding of how housing associations organise change under NPM through a number of events, including housing stock transfer, re-organisations, funding reduction, technological changes and restructuring in 2016. These events show that NPM-related change not only focuses on changing organisational structure and operations, but also involves cultural changes in values, beliefs and shared organisational language.

### ***Practical implications***

This thesis also seeks to contribute to the practice of managing change in public sector organisations. Specifically, it suggests that managers should engage with those who experience emotional ambivalence toward change in the consultation when planning and implementing change. Introducing elements of employee engagement and participation in the planning of change could potentially help to reduce conflict between employees and management. Although similar approaches such as consultations took place before the restructure at EM, employees express concern that their opinions were not fully considered. In addition, engaging with those who are emotionally ambivalent toward change could potentially promote better outcomes from change because these individuals engage in critical interpretation of change before and after the experience of emotional ambivalence. Hence it is possible to speculate that emotionally ambivalent employees are beneficial to managers who are responsible for planning and implementing a change programme because they can engage with and critically evaluate opposite perspectives and reconsider alternative aspects at different stages of the change. Further exploration of the potential association between the experience of emotional ambivalence and individuals' ability to manage change could be the focus of future research. In addition, future research might explore how emotionally ambivalent employees and managers can promote better organisational change through practice-based intervention.

### **Limitations**

#### ***Empirical generalisability***

There are epistemological and methodological limitations associated with this qualitative study that must be noted. The first is related to the empirical generalisability of the findings on emotional ambivalence presented in this thesis. The term 'generalisation' has often been avoided or limitedly used in qualitative inquiry (Parker and Northcott, 2016; Williams, 2000). For example, Williams (2000) argues that studies using interpretive methods tend to make generalising statements about their findings whilst not commenting upon the basis of such generalisation and how they can be justified. To appreciate the nature of this limitation, it is important to differentiate between empirical generalisation and statistical generalisation (Rapley, 2013). The former focuses on generating localised expositions of situations or phenomena, and then generalising the conclusions beyond the scope of the situations (Parker

and Northcott, 2016), whereas the latter is concerned with sampling error against the total population (Rapley, 2013). In this thesis, empirical generalisation is concerned with whether the arguments concerning emotional ambivalence based on the findings from the two housing associations are potentially generalisable to other public sector organisations under NPM. Although these arguments are developed under the assumption that housing associations share similar features of change as other public sector organisations, findings based on one type of public sector organisation may not be sufficient to support a generalisation of theory (Robertshaw, 2007). In order to address the issue of empirical generalisability, there needs to be more research to investigate how emotional ambivalence is experienced in other types of public sector organisations under NPM in order to enable empirical generalisability to be tested.

### ***The absence of evidence of escaping behaviour***

The second limitation is also related to findings on emotional ambivalence in public sector organisations under NPM. As previously noted, previous have suggested that escaping behaviour, such as quitting a job, can be seen as a coping strategy for dealing with emotional ambivalence (Ashforth *et al.*, 2014; Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Similarly, a number of interviewees in this study have confirmed that large numbers of employees decided to take voluntary redundancy as a result of the organisational restructuring introduced in 2015 and 2016 in both organisations. However, there was no direct evidence to support the claim that these quitting behaviours were associated with the experience of emotional ambivalence. This is because employees who had taken voluntary redundancy before the restructuring were not interviewed as part of this study. It would be impractical to access these people for two reasons. Firstly, for data protection reasons, the organisations may not share information about people who no longer work there. Secondly, if the information were obtained through other employees, it would be difficult to arrange interviews if they were working in other organisations.

### ***Openness and honesty***

The last limitation in this study is concerned with whether people are able to talk openly and honestly about their feelings in relation to change, which are usually private and sensitive. Those interviewed might be concerned about whether our conversation might be passed onto management in the organisation. In other words, they might see me as a management ‘spy’

for the organisations. For example, before discussing what were perceived to be the negative aspects of change, Ruth repeatedly asked me if the interview was confidential. She explained that she was worried that our conversation might be made available to the management afterwards. She was possibly worried about expressing the negative aspects of change that could potentially involve losing her job. Similarly, many interviewees were reluctant to talk about their emotional responses to change. Future studies may consider building better relationships with interviewees by taking a longer time to get to know them prior to interviews.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Information sheet for gatekeeper

#### **Study Information for Managers** **Study Title: Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations**

##### **Researcher contact details**

This study is being undertaken by:

Linna Sai  
PhD Student  
Department of People and Organisations  
The Open University Business School  
Michael Young Building  
The Open University  
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA  
Tel: +44 1908652545  
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Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

##### **What is the study about?**

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study 'Organisational change in the social housing sector'. This study explores employees' experience of organisational change in UK social housing organisations.

##### **Why am I being invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a manager of a social housing organisation that has experienced significant change. Your participation will help us to understand how employees respond to organisational change.

##### **How will my organisation benefit from participation in the study?**

Understanding how employees experience organisational change, including its emotional effects, can be helpful in enabling effective management. This has the potential to enhance wellbeing and improve job satisfaction. At the end of the study, the researcher will provide the organisation with a report and/or presentation on request based on the findings.

##### **What does participation in the study involve?**

The case study research will involve semi-structured interviews (approximately an hour on change of employees' work role, challenges they face and other experience of organisational change) with managers and employees at a private room in the organisation (maximum 20 interviews per organisation), and access to internal documents (maximum 10 documents), including organisation policy, guidance and results from employee survey where applicable

with approval from the gatekeepers. The researcher will also undertake limited participant observation, such as shadowing employees' work (maximum of 8 people), observing in meetings (maximum of 2 meetings), with the consent of all individuals involved. The data collection will be done by Linna Sai, a PhD student from the Open University Business School.

### **How will we consult employees and protect your organisation?**

The researcher will ask you to identify potential research participants in your organisation who will be provided with an information sheet about the project to enable them to decide whether or not they wish to take part. The research interviews will last approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded. Interviewees will be asked if they would like to receive a copy of their own interview transcript once the interview has been transcribed to see if there is anything they would like to reinterpret. The responses provided will be used solely for the purposes of this study. Before the interview, participants will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for them to keep and the other is for the researcher's records. Participants are free to withdraw from the study without giving reasons. Should individuals decide to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview/observations, or up to one week following these events, the data will not be used and will be destroyed. The research will also ask for access to internal documents such as organisation policies, and results from employee surveys with informed consent from you.

To minimise any risk to your organisation and its employees, no personal information relating to participants, including names and addresses will be used. The description of participants will not contain details which enable them to be identified. The same confidentiality and anonymity measures will be applied for the case study organisation, including the use of a pseudonym and removal of identifying details which could enable the organisation to be identified.

### **What will happen to the information I give?**

The data will be stored securely on a password protected computer, and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes, by the researcher for a period not exceeding five years after which point it will be disposed of securely. Once collected, the data may form the basis for articles and chapters in peer-reviewed scholarly publications, authored by the researcher, in order to enable better understanding employees' experience of changes in the housing sector.

### **What can I do if I have concerns about the study?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher's Lead Supervisor Professor Emma Bell, Open University Business School, [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk) who will do her best to answer your questions.

Appendix B: Information sheet for interview

*Contact the researcher:*

**Linna Sai**

Email: [linna.sai@open.ac.uk](mailto:linna.sai@open.ac.uk)

Tel: +44(0) 1908 652 545

**Department of People and Organisations  
The Open University Business School  
Michael Young Building  
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**

*Contact the supervisor:*

**Main contact: Professor Emma Bell**

Email: [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk)

**Department of People and Organisations  
The Open University Business School  
Michael Young Building  
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**



Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study 'Organisational change in social housing organisations'. This study explores how employees' experience organisational change in the UK social housing organisations. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

### Why do you want to interview me?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a(n) manager/ employee in a social housing organisation that has experienced significant change. your participation will help us to understand how employees response to organisational change.

### What does participation in the study involve?

The case study research will involve interviews (approximately an hour on change of your work roles, challenges you face and other experience of organisational change) with managers and employees at a private room in the organisation (maximum 20 interviews per organisation). At the end of the interview you will be asked if you would like to received a copy of your interview transcript once the audio recorded interview has been transcribed to see if there is anything you would like to reinterpret. The data collection will be done by Linna Sai, a PhD student from the Open University Business School.

### What will happen to the information I give?

The data will be stored securely on a password protected computer, and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes, by the research for a period not exceeding five years after which point it will be disposed of securely. Once collected, anonymised research data may be made available to other members of the research community authorised by the researcher during this period. The data may form the basis for articles and chapters in peer-reviewed scholarly publications, authored by the researcher in

order to enable better understanding of employees' experience of change in the social housing organisations.

### what can I do if I have concerns about the study?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study you may wish to speak to the researcher's Lead Supervisor Professor Emma Bell, the Open University Business School, [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk) who will do her best to answer your questions.

### Our responsibilities to you:

- **We guard your privacy:** no personal information relating to participants, including names and addresses will be used, and the description of participants will not contain details which enable them to be identified.
- **We respect your wishes:** participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without giving any reasons. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time during or one week following the interview, the data will not be used and will be destroyed.
- **We answer your questions:** we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.

Appendix C: Information sheet for observation

Contact the researcher:

**Linna Sai**

Email: [linna.sai@open.ac.uk](mailto:linna.sai@open.ac.uk)

Tel: +44(0) 1908 652 545

**Department of People and Organisations  
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Michael Young Building  
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Contact the supervisor:

**Main contact: Professor Emma Bell**

Email: [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk)

**Department of People and Organisations  
The Open University Business School  
Michael Young Building  
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**



Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study 'Organisational change in social housing organisations'. This study explores how employees' experience organisational change in the UK social housing organisations. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

### Why do you want to interview me?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a(n) manager/ employee in a social housing organisation that has experienced significant change. your participation will help us to understand how employees response to organisational change.

### What does participation in the study involve?

The case study research will involve observation. The researcher will undertake limited participant observation including shadowing people's work (maximum 8 people), observing in meetings (maximum 2 times), with the consent of all individuals involved. The researcher will make notes base on her observation, observation will NOT be audio or video recorded. The data collection will be done by Linna Sai, a PhD student from the Open University Business School.

### What will happen to the information I give?

The data will be stored securely on a password protected computer, and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes, by the research for a period not exceeding five years after which point it will be disposed of securely. Once collected, anonymised research data may be made available to other members of the research community authorised by the researcher during this period. The data may form the basis for articles and chapters in peer-reviewed scholarly publications, authored by the researcher in

order to enable better understanding of employees' experience of change in the social housing organisations.

### what can I do if I have concerns about the study?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study you may wish to speak to the researcher's Lead Supervisor Professor Emma Bell, the Open University Business School, [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk) who will do her best to answer your questions.

### Our responsibilities to you:

- **We guard your privacy:** no personal information relating to participants, including names and addresses will be used, and the description of participants will not contain details which enable them to be identified.
- **We respect your wishes:** participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without giving any reasons. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time during or one week following the interview, the data will not be used and will be destroyed.
- **We answer your questions:** we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.

## Appendix D: Interview schedule for manager

### **Introduction**

Discussion of research project (refer to information sheet), ask for informed consent and check whether they would like to receive copy of their transcript. Turn on recording.

### **Background**

- What is your role in the organisation?
- How long have you worked in the organisation? How long have you worked in the sector?
- Why did you choose to work in the sector?

### **About change**

- What kind of changes are you experiencing/have you experienced in the organisation?
- When did these changes happen?
- What is your role during organisational change? / How do you describe your role during organisational change? (Prompt: Change agent? Facilitator? Or else?)
- Can you give me an example of what you do?
- Can you give me an example of change that experiencing/have experienced in different departments?
- What is the most important aspect about these changes to your organisation?

### **Emotions**

- How does changes affect your everyday job/ how has your everyday work changed as a result of changes? How does it make you feel?
- What challenges/struggles have you experienced as a result of changes? How do you deal with them?
- How can you benefit from the changes (use the example given in the previous answer)?
- What challenges/struggles have your team/department experienced as a result of changes? How do you deal with them as a team? How do others deal with them?
- How can your team/department benefit from the changes?
- What are/were the supports available for employees and managers when dealing with changes in the organisation? How useful are they?

### **The end**

Turn off recording, thank interviewee.



## Appendix E: Interview schedule for employees

### **Introduction**

Discussion of research project (refer to information sheet), ask for informed consent and check whether they would like to receive copy of their transcript. Turn on recording.

### **Background**

- What is your role in the organisation?
- How long have you worked in the organisation?
- How long have you worked in the sector? Why did you choose to work in the sector?
- About change
- Can you tell me what types of change you have experienced/experiencing? (e.g. reduce team member/ change in job role/ move to different department/ move from efficiency to effectiveness)
- When did these changes happen?
- What is the most important about these changes?

### **Emotions**

- What is your first reaction to change?
- How do changes affect your everyday job/ how has your everyday work changed as a result of changes? How does this make you feel?
- How did you benefit from changes in your organisation?
- What challenges/struggles have you experienced as a result of changes? How do you deal with them?
- How do changes affect the way of working in your team/department?
- What benefits did changes bring to your team/ department?
- What challenges/struggles have your team/department experienced as a result of changes? How do you deal with them as a team? How do others deal with them?
- What are/were the supports available for employees and managers when dealing with changes in the organisation? How useful are they?

### **The end**

Turn off recording, thank interviewee.

**The Open University Business School**  
**Consent Form for Participating in a Research Project**  
**Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations**

Name of participant:

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Name of researcher: Linna Sai

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1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with an information sheet.
2. I understand that my participation will involve interview, and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.
3. I acknowledge that:
  - a. I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the research
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time during, or one week following participation without giving any reasons, and the data will be destroyed
  - c. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored securely on a password protected computer and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes and will be destroyed after 5 year
  - d. I have been informed that anonymized research data may be made available to other members of the research community authorized by the researcher for a period of 5 years
  - e. I have been informed that any identifiable information will be removed in future publications arising from the research

I consent to this interview being audio-recorded  **yes**  **no**

I wish to receive a summary of the project findings  **yes**  **no**

I wish to receive a copy of my interview transcript  **yes**  **no**

If yes, please put your email address below in CAPITAL LETTERS for future correspondence.

Participant email address:

Other contact detail (optional)

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

Research contact detail

Linna Sai at Department of People and Organisations, the Open University Business School, Michael Young Building, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Telephone: +44 1908652545

Email [linna.sai@open.ac.uk](mailto:linna.sai@open.ac.uk)

**This research has been reviewed by, and received a favorable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: HREC/2596/Sai (<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>).**

Appendix G: Consent form for observation

**The Open University Business School**  
**Consent Form for Participating in a Research Project**  
**Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations**

Name of participant:

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Name of researcher: Linna Sai

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1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with an information sheet.
2. I understand that my participation will involve observation and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.
3. I acknowledge that:
  - a. I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the research
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time during, or one week following the observation without giving any reasons, and your data will be excluded from the fieldnotes and research
  - c. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored securely on a password protected computer and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes and will be destroyed after 5 years
  - d. I have been informed that anonymized research data may be made available to other members of the research community authorized by the researcher for a period of 5 years
  - e. I have been informed that any identifiable information will be removed in future publications arising from the research

I wish to receive a summary of the project's findings\_\_  **yes**    **no**

If yes, please put your email address below in CAPITAL LETTERS for future correspondence.

Participant email address:

Other contact detail (optional)

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

---

Research contact detail

Linna Sai at Department of People and Organisations, the Open University Business School, Michael Young Building, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Telephone: +44 1908652545

Email [linna.sai@open.ac.uk](mailto:linna.sai@open.ac.uk)

**This research has been reviewed by, and received a favorable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: HREC/2596/Sai (<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>).**

**The Open University Business School**  
**Consent Form for Participating in a Research Project**  
**Understanding Change in Social Housing Organisations**

Name of participant:

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Name of researcher: Linna Sai

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1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with an information sheet.
2. I understand that my participation will involve access to internal documents including organisation's policy, guideline, and results of employee survey on organisational change where applicable, and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.
3. I acknowledge that:
  - a. I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the research
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time during, or one week following my consent without giving any reasons, and my data will be excluded from the research
  - c. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored securely on a password protected computer and in hard copy in a locked filing cabinet at the Open University, in Milton Keynes and will be destroyed after 5 years
  - d. I have been informed that anonymized research data may be made available to other members of the research community authorized by the researcher for a period of 5 years
  - e. I have been informed that any identifiable information will be removed in future publications arising from the research

I wish to receive a summary of the project's findings\_\_  **yes**    **no**

If yes, please put your email address below in CAPITAL LETTERS for future correspondence.

Participant email address:

Other contact detail (optional)

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

---

**Research contact detail**

Linna Sai at Department of People and Organisations, the Open University Business School, Michael Young Building, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Telephone: +44 1908652545

Email [linna.sai@open.ac.uk](mailto:linna.sai@open.ac.uk)

**This research has been reviewed by, and received a favorable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: HREC/2596/Sai (<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>).**