

10. Towards A Set Of Transformation Measurements Within A Community From An Organisational Change And Transformational Learning Perspective

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10.1. Introduction

Traditionally, when society demands actions to achieve sustainable development goals, governments respond in a centralised way, aligning activities to influence public and private policies to attack major social problems such as extreme poverty, social inclusion, ecological sustainability, and governance for peace and

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security.⁵ However, these top-down initiatives have not shown the expected results because they are usually implemented for fixed periods, using limited resources. Real impacts remain feasible only for some people in communities, ample and sustainable initiatives being inaccessible to the majority of communities.

Since communities have been excluded from the design of initiatives that aim to improve their quality of life, these have started to propel local transformation projects where members get involved in activities and implement strategies. Thus, communities have designed small-scale experiments (niches) and developed them in collaboration with public allies such as universities and the State and the private sector, among others. It is expected that within small-scale community initiatives, sustainability transformations can be fostered, looking for new ways to address challenges, these latter eventually resulting in changes in the main systems (i.e., the regime).⁶ Still, transformational initiatives within communities remain insufficient to meet a large number of challenges.⁷

To respond to challenges and amplify the results and impacts, there is a need to understand what happens within the niche while promoting transformation initiatives. The management literature indicates that successful niche building takes place in areas where transformations at organisational and individual levels occur. Particularly, literature that studies transformational change in organisations contends that it is possible to interpret those processes that support transformations in communities. Likewise, it allows identifying elements of those factors needed to induce long-term niche changes. This literature also analyses learning processes that happen when transformational processes are

5. Juvancir da Silva, et al., 'Sustainable development assessment from a capitals perspective: Analytical structure and indicator selection criteria,' *Journal of Environmental Management* 260 (April 2020): 110147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2020.110147>

6. Nigel Forrest and Arnim Wiek, 'Success factors and strategies for sustainability transitions of small-scale communities – Evidence from a cross-case analysis,' *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 17 (December 2015): 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2015.05.005>

7. Robert W. Kates, William R. Travis, and Thomas J. Wilbanks, 'Transformational adaptation when incremental adaptations to climate change are insufficient,' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109, no. 19 (April 2012), 7156–61. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1115521109>; Karen O'Brien, 'Global environmental change II: From adaptation to deliberate transformation,' *Progress in Human Geography* 36, no. 5 (October 2012): 667–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132511425767>

implemented. Finally, it sheds light on how learning works as a catalyst for the relationship between organisational and individual levels.

The literature indicates that in a context where transformational processes are implemented at organisational and individual levels while learning happens, it is feasible to support long-term transitions. In this regard, there are calls to deepen the existing models and methods to study and understand the transformations⁸ and to identify what kinds of processes can be socially and organisationally transformational.⁹ This chapter aims to fill this gap by contributing with a novel conceptualisation of transformational change at the niche level. Thus, the next section tackles how organisational transformational change is connected to individual transformative learning, and based on this conceptual connection, it develops a set of measures to follow changes. Later, the subsequent section presents a case study where the set of measures was used as a method to understand and follow up advances regarding transformational processes. Finally, a reflection on the implemented processes and the achieved results is posed.

With these contributions, actors involved in initiatives related to niche building might improve their understanding of processes underlying transformations and have a tool to evidence advances towards long-term niche changes. The analysis presented here stems from a reflection process on the results that a transformative initiative has produced in the city of Girón, Santander, Colombia.

10.2. Organisational Transformational Change and Individual Transformative Learning

Strategic niche management literature refers to transformational change as a turn in the way organisation members perceive their roles, responsibilities,

8. Matias Ramirez, et al., *Mobilizing the Transformative Power of the Research System for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals* (Brighton: University of Sussex, 2019). <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3497623>

9. Paul Mapfumo, et al., 'Pathways to transformational change in the face of climate impacts: an analytical framework', *Climate and Development* 9, no. 5 (June 2015): 439–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2015.1040365>

and relationships.¹⁰ Said transformation involves a major shift in characteristic features and functions resulting in a fundamentally new system or process.¹¹ Besides, it implies reshaping the culture and redesigning elements of the organisation. Therefore, the target of transformation should be the entire organisation, the total system, not individual members.¹² This is because when context changes, including norms, rules, or culture, individual behaviour is modified and adapts to the new pattern.¹³

Concerning measurement, Mapfumo et al. pinpoint that ‘asking whether a transformational change has occurred in the context of a particular project cannot be answered with a categorical “yes” or “no.”’¹⁴ Regarding the cases the authors reviewed, such a question transcends that dualism because of these cases’ key attributes.¹⁵ Hence, when developing measures to verify organisational transformations, it is crucial to identify characteristics underlying transformations at the niche level that can be evidenced. In doing so there is a possible follow-up on them.

Behind successful organisational transformation processes, there are processes that foster individual transformational learning as well.¹⁶ As a transformative change in an organisation develops, context changes; as a result, members go through an internal process where their perspectives and frames of reference also change. Thus, individuals experience a process of critical reflection on their assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that, accordingly, lead to a transformation of their behaviours, practises, and skills. Brooks contends that, by combining critical reflection with action, organisations obtain a powerful catalyst for change and build the foundation of learning, which is known as

10. Gregory M. Henderson, ‘Transformative Learning as a Condition for Transformational Change in Organizations,’ *Human Resource Development Review* 1, no. 2 (June 2002): 186–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F15384302001002004>

11. Mapfumo, et al., ‘Pathways to transformational change.’

12. W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2018).

13. Ibid.

14. Mapfumo, et al., ‘Pathways to transformational change,’ 447.

15. Ibid.

16. Henderson, ‘Transformative Learning.’

action learning.¹⁷ Evidence shows that building change on action learning increases the chances for organisational transformation successfully to occur.¹⁸ Transformational processes develop through cycles that evolve in parallel, receiving influence and influencing others (see FIGURE 26).



FIGURE 26. Processes Involved in Organisational Transformational Change

Source: Prepared by authors based on Mapfumo et al.; Henderson; Brooks.¹⁹

With a transformative learning perspective, it is possible to understand individual change and how learning is linked to the organisational one. Individual change does not depend on contextual variables but rather on a personal process where perspectives and frames of reference are transformed through critical reflection, as mentioned before. However, for organisational change to

17. Ann K. Brooks, 'Critical Reflection as a Response to Organizational Disruption,' *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 1, no. 3 (August 1999): 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F152342239900100308>; Ann K. Brooks, 'Building learning organizations: The individual-culture interaction,' *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 323–35. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.3920030403>

18. Henderson, 'Transformative Learning.'

19. Ibid.; Brooks, 'Critical Reflection as a Response'; Mapfumo, et al., 'Pathways to transformational change.'

take place, critical reflection and action should be connected through practise at a group level. Regarding this point, Marquardt indicates that action learning is achieved through processes or programmes involving small groups of people solving real problems.²⁰ This happens while they focus on what they are learning and how their learning can benefit each group member and the organisation as a whole.²¹ FIGURE 27 shows the relationship between organisational and individual transformation and transformational learning generated from these two.

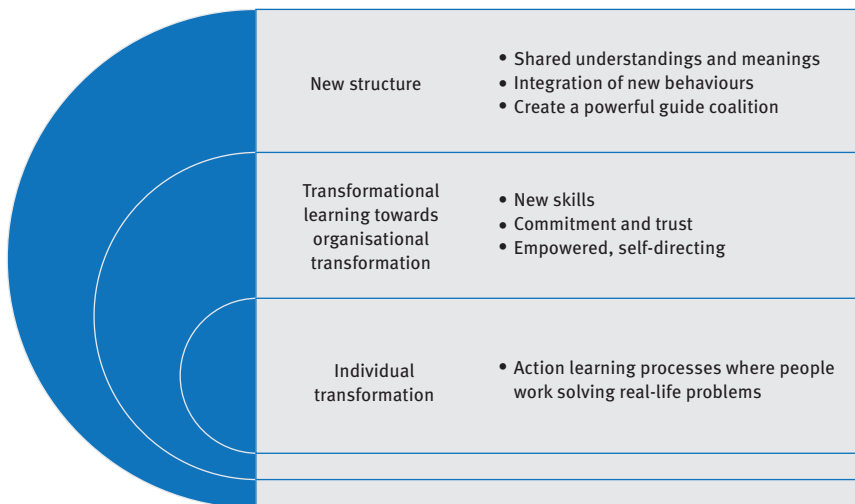


FIGURE 27. Organisational Transformational Elements

Source: Prepared by authors based on Burke; Nevis, Lancourt, and Vasallo; Kotter; Beckhard and Pritchard; Argyris and Schon; Freire; and Marquardt.²²

20. M. J. Marquardt, *Action Learning in Action: Transforming Problems and People for World-Class Organizational Learning* (Palo Alto: Davies-Black Pub., 1999).

21. Ibid.

22. Burke, *Organization Change*; Edwin C. Nevis, Joan E. Lancourt, and Helen G. Vassallo, *Intentional revolutions: A Seven-Point Strategy for Transforming Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc Pub., 1996); John P. Kotter, *Leading change*, rev. ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2012); John P. Kotter, 'Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail,' *The Magazine* (May-June 1995). <http://bitly.ws/qGxL>; Richard A. Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard, *Changing The Essence: The Art Of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1992); Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon, *Organizational learning II. Theory, Method, and Practice* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Marquardt, *Action Learning in Action*.

Based on comprehension of organisational change and transformational learning and how these relate to each other for achieving organisational transformation, FIGURE 27 introduces a summary of key elements. TABLE 17 describes each of these elements.

TABLE 17. Description of Organisational Transformational Change Elements

Elements of the transformed organisation	
'New structure' (Burke).	The organisation changes its culture and designs new elements for its structure.
'Shared understandings and meanings' (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo).	The organisation institutionalises new comprehensions of reality.
'Integration of new behaviours' (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo).	The organisation develops new ways to act or conduct, different from what it is used to do.
'Create a powerful guide coalition' (Kotter)	Develop a network of allies that support activities within the organisation.
Elements of the transformed individual	
'New skills' (Beckhard and Pritchard)	Members develop abilities to do new things for themselves.
'Commitment and trust' (Argyris and Schon)	Members show higher levels of commitment to work for goals and higher levels of trust among them and to the process.
'Empowered, self-directing' (Freire)	Members show confidence when doing things and determine what to do.
Transformational learning towards organisational transformation	
'Action learning processes where people work solving real-life problems' (Marquardt)	Learning-by-doing

Source: Prepared by authors based on Burke; Nevis, Lancourt, and Vasallo; Kotter; Beckhard and Pritchard; Argyris and Schon; Freire; and Marquardt.²³

23. Ibid.

10.3. The Endogenous Community Development Plan of Ciudadela Nuevo Girón: An Initiative for Transformational Change

In this section, we describe a case study that accounts for an application of the framework related to organisational transformation. This initiative, which started in 2014 and is still underway, has gathered academic and religious institutions and civil and private organisations together to act vis-a-vis the problems experienced by a vulnerable community, namely: *Ciudadela Nuevo Girón* located in the northeast part of Colombia. This community has more than 8,000 inhabitants (1,760 families) most of them living in a neighbourhood divided into seven geographical sectors called 'sectors,' from 1 to 7 (e.g., Sector 1).

Since *Ciudadela Nuevo Girón* struggles with serious problems like poverty, poor health, drug addiction, violence, and prostitution, among others, the initiative aims to foster social and individual transformations while boosting community welfare. After several years of work and reflection on the activities and elements that emerged from the process, researchers have concluded that the achievements evidenced up to now correspond to what the theories about organisational transformational change indicate.

This case study seeks to find social transformations in the foregoing community. To do so, this project is led by members of the community, researchers from *Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga* (UNAB), and representatives from the catholic religious community of Dominican Sisters of the Presentation (RCDSP). Plus, throughout time, eight different organisations have joined the team: four regional universities, two national NGOs, the community's school, the municipality's government, and a newly created community's NGO. In total, 11 groups are working together in a single initiative towards quality life's improvement in this community.

Originally, the objective of the project was to design a community development model based on the empowerment of the community's internal capacities. This initial process used a participatory action research methodology (PAR) and allowed the co-designing of an 'endogenous community development model' (MDCE) seeking improvements in the community's quality of life. To achieve

the expected results, leaders and representatives of the community, as well as researchers from UNAB and members of the RCDSR, have worked together on the co-design. Finally, thanks to the MDCE implementation, the community transforms itself into a more resilient community organisation. Configured as a network of actors that works for the alleviation of social problems, this community creates conditions where entrepreneurial activities can be fostered and general wellbeing can be strengthened.

The MDCE is a model that aims to improve the quality of life of the community inhabitants. This is because it empowers them to associate with external actors including alliances with government, academe, and the private sector. It also encourages them to organise and develop processes to face community issues related to health, education, income generation, and social infrastructure, ensuring active and effective participation. Under the framework of the model, actors enhance their knowledge about how they should take community actions in these areas and how to build communal capabilities to work together to achieve goals. Specifically, actors are enabled to conduct legal and public policy management; organise themselves in a democratic, inclusive, solidary, and egalitarian way; intervene in the management of social programmes for their benefit; and achieve associativity as an instrument to generate alliances with actors present in the territory. Accordingly, the MDCE calls on individuals to exercise and defend citizens' rights and create their own community culture.

Through the development of activities in this project, results have shown a strengthening of the community action, an increase in the number of alliances, and evidence of individual transformations. In 2019, eight new organisations joined the initiative: four regional universities, two national NGOs, and the community's school. In 2020, when the pandemic stopped all on-site participation of allies, community members remained together working and looking for ways to continue the initiative. Among others, up to this moment, the MDCE has revealed the following impacts regarding organisational and individual transformations:

- 1) Leadership training for more than 20 women who represent the seven sectors of *Ciudadela Nuevo Girón*, at least two per sector. Also, 15 additional women got trained in community organisation management.

- 2) Configuration of a social network that involves about 120 women, men, and children.
- 3) Constitution of four teams made up of community members who have assumed responsibility for actions related to the management of community health, education, income generation, and social infrastructure.
- 4) The creation of a community foundation (NGO) where the associates are members and leaders of *Ciudadela Nuevo Girón*.
- 5) Community members' change of expectations regarding benefits that could result from the project. Usually, these communities are used to receiving donations or subsidies from external actors (e.g., municipalities, private companies, and NGOs) without having to work to obtain them. In this project, the community is committed to hard work. This has been materialised through 250 meetings once a week without interruption (even during pandemic times).
- 6) Community's finding of a common focus by which to work on improving quality of life in *Nuevo Girón*. This emphasis has produced individual changes and has empowered people, allowing them to have a motivation to work with others. Women working on the project have nurtured a feeling of autonomy and self-confidence. It is interesting to note that now their partners or husbands encourage them to take part in the project even though at the beginning these men severely opposed their participation.

Nonetheless, the foregoing processes and results have not been straightforward. Actors have gone through many cycles that include reflection processes in meetings, which has shown an improved participants' understanding of their individual transformations and the visible achievements that working together has brought to the community. Likewise, reflection has concluded that characteristics from the literature regarding transformed organisations and individuals are clearly reified in the community processes and individuals. Lastly, while the community is transformed, the niche is strengthened and shielded, attracting important external actors to work with the group and increasing legitimacy.

10.4. Organisational Transformation and Individual Transformation in Ciudadela Nuevo Girón

The processes developed within *Ciudadela Nuevo Girón* and the results obtained regarding transformations at the community and individual levels have been evidenced by all actors involved in the project. TABLE 18 shows such evidence, which, as mentioned before, derives from a reflective process that meets the characteristics of transformed organisations and individuals indicated in the literature.

TABLE 18. Evidence Obtained from Ciudadela Nuevo Girón that Shows Organisational Change Elements

		Evidence from Ciudadela Nuevo Girón
Characteristics of the transformed organisation	The new structure (Burke)	The community learns how to self-organise around community problems creating new groups of representatives to work on the MDCE areas.
	Shared understandings and meanings (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo)	The community understands that they are responsible for their future and that welfare expectations would not solve the community problems in the long run.
	Integration of new behaviours (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo)	The community organises activities for the neighbourhood to strengthen its values and identity.
	Create a powerful guide coalition (Kotter)	A new set of alliances between academic, religious, NGOs, and the community to support transformations within Ciudadela Nuevo Girón.
Characteristics of the transformed individual	New skills (Beckhard and Pritchard)	Women and men start new small businesses.
	Commitment and trust (Argyris and Schon)	Individual permanent work to implement the MDCE. More than 5 years of continuous and uninterrupted work.
	Empowered, self-directing (Freire)	Women and men assume leadership and responsibility for the development of community activities.

		Evidence from Ciudadela Nuevo Girón
Transformational learning towards organisational transformation	Action learning processes where people work solving real-life problems (Marquardt)	Community representatives co-designing activities with the academic, religious, and NGOs towards the implementation of MDCE. In these spaces, there are reflection processes to correct problems and strengthen successful processes.

Source: Prepared by authors based on Burke; Nevis, Lancourt, and Vasallo; Kotter; Beckhard and Pritchard; Argyris and Schon; Freire; and Marquardt.²⁴

10.5. Towards a Set of Measures to Evidence Organisational Transformational Change

Through reflection, the researchers have been able to understand how the MDCE implementation has advanced and evolved through time as well as to evidence those processes developed at the community and individual levels to achieve results. Also, the reflection process has worked for all allied institutional members as a mechanism that facilitated understanding of how transformations occurred.

Concerning the literature introduced in this paper, it is possible to conclude that theoretical findings align with what the project members and community actors have lived and learned while working on the project in *Ciudadela Nueva Girón*. In fact, based on these findings, during the pandemic in 2020, the project's actors designed a set of qualitative measurements to gather more specific elements about transition processes and subsequent transformations. The measurement set classifies indicators into two levels: organisational and individual. Its instrument is a Likert-scale questionnaire that enables participants to evidence perceptions about community and individual elements (see TABLE 19).

24. Ibid.

TABLE 19. Organisational Transformational Change Measurement Set

Community-level questions (Likert scale 1-7)	Elements of the transformed organisation
Has the community organised itself into new structures that allow it to work better to achieve development goals?	New structure
Does the community understand that they must work together to achieve the proposed development objectives?	Shared understandings and meanings
Has the community been able to organise activities in the context of the initiative that they thought they were not capable of developing before?	Integration of new behaviours
Has the community developed permanent alliances with external organisations or institutions to work for the development of common objectives?	Create a powerful guide coalition
Individual-level questions (Likert scale 1-7)	Elements of the transformed individual
Do you consider that you have learned new skills that you did not have some time before?	New skills
Do you feel a greater commitment to working for the community to contribute to the achievement of the objectives? Do you trust those with whom you are working for the development of the proposed objectives?	Commitment and trust
Do you think you are capable of becoming a leader in your community or a manager of the activities that support the development of objectives?	Empowered, self-directing
Transformational learning towards organisational transformation	
Do you consider that the initiative provides spaces where we can work with others to solve the problems we are experiencing? Are there spaces where we can revise what we have done to improve them?	Action learning processes where people work solving real-life problems

Source: The project's actors based on Burke; Nevis, Lancourt, and Vasallo; Kotter; Beckhard and Pritchard; Argyris and Schon; Freire; and Marquardt.²⁵

This set of measures is designed in a way that allows second-order learning assessment among the project's participants, which is a factor that adds

25. Ibid.

to the sustainability of this transformation initiative. For future projects, these measurements can be tested within niches where transformation processes are developed and used with organisations and individuals involved in transformations.

10.6. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to study transformative responses at the community level to understand the social and individual processes that occur within it, the community studied being based in Girón, Santander, Colombia. Normally, community transformative initiatives are promoted centrally with less than encouraging results. In the case described here, a perspective of action developed by a community working together with several different institutions has proven to be more effective and achieve lasting results. This is because it has implied activities to foster transformative change at organisational and individual levels.

To do this, the organisational transformational change framework has been drawn on to understand how transformations within organisations develop and evolve. At the same time, the transformative learning framework has been applied to make sense of how individual responses support organisational changes. The analysis of these two conceptual frameworks has triggered reflective processes on the activities implemented. In this train of thought, an array of measurements including measures at the organisational and individual levels are suggested as a way to evidence transformations, which, in the long run, might serve as a tool to see processes of niche building and shielding.

In conclusion, while transformation processes have occurred at the community level, niches can be built and shielded and constitute a network of allies that work to solve real-life problems. For this reason, the application of organisational and individual transformations frameworks and the monitoring of initiatives and projects that use them are relevant if society wants to find working paths to those big challenges that it faces.

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