

# Prevailing Perspectives on Change

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## 1 Introduction

In this article we summarize a meta-theory on theories of change (in five colors), which we published elsewhere more extensively (De Caluwé, 2002; De Caluwé and Vermaak, 2002). We summarize the basic concepts and assumptions and describe interventions of change agents on two levels: micro-interventions and macro-interventions in the framework of the colors. Next we examine the different roles and competencies of change agents (or interventionists) that correspond to the interventions and colors in our framework. This creates a typology of clusters of assumptions, interventions, roles and competencies of interventionists. We conclude the article with some remarks on the use of this typology and implications for interventionists.

Why is this relevant?

The first reason lies in a need for a common and clear language to discuss change processes, interventions for change and roles of interventionists. This can facilitate and promote clearer communication among practitioners, among academics and between both. The colors haven proven to be a convenient shorthand language for a complex subject matter.

Secondly, the world of consultants and change agents is diversifying at an incredible speed. That means that the interventions they use are of a great variety as are the roles that they take. We need to be able to define these interventions and roles along with their effectiveness more clearly, and we need to be able to see the differences within the variety.

Lastly, there are evident implications for training of change agents as well as implications and developments in regard to the design and execution of change processes. We will touch on this in the last section.

## 2 Summarizing the perspectives

The word 'change' can be characterized as a container-concept. A whole range of meanings appears to exist supported by a steady stream of experience, research and publications. In this article we characterize dominant theories of change that have surfaced in the management- and consultancy profession. We have branded them by means of five colors. There is a world of difference between the five colored views. There are differences in their underlying assumptions, their ideals and pitfalls, their type of interventions, the competencies and roles of their change agents, the predictability of their result or outcome, the nature of their monitoring progress among other things. The five ways of thinking are called: yellow-print thinking, blue-print thinking, red-print thinking, green-

print thinking and white-print thinking. The syllable 'print' denotes the endeavors of change agents to, more or less, work according to some preconceived plan (i.e. maintain that there is a causal relationship between their action and the desired outcome of the change, however different the plan might look in each of the colors). In table 1 we give an overview of some of the characteristics. Three of these characteristics will be dealt with in more detail in the next sections: assumptions, interventions and change agents.

Table 1. The five colors at glance

	<b>Yellow-print</b>	<b>Blue-print</b>	<b>Red-print</b>	<b>Green-print</b>	<b>White-print</b>
Something changes when you...	bring common interests together	think first and then act according to a plan	stimulate people in the right way	create settings for collective learning	create space for spontaneous evolution
in a/an ....	power game	rational process	exchange exercise	learning process	dynamic process
and create....	a feasible solution, a win-win situation	the best solution, a brave new world	a motivating solution, the best 'fit'	a solution that people develop themselves	a solution that releases energy
Interventions such as ...	forming coalitions, changing top structures	project management, strategic analysis	assessment & reward, social gatherings	training and coaching, open systems planning	open space meetings, self-steering teams
By a/an ...	facilitator who uses his own power base	expert in the field	HRM expert	facilitator who supports people	someone who uses his being as instrument
Aimed at ...	positions and context	knowledge and results	procedures and working climate	the setting and communication	patterns and meanings
Result is...	partly unknown and shifting	described and guaranteed	outlined but not guaranteed	envisioned but not guaranteed	unpredictable
Safeguarded by...	decision documents and power balances	benchmarking and ISO systems	HRM systems	a learning organization	self-management
The pitfalls lie in...	dreaming and lose-lose	ignoring external and irrational aspects	ignoring power and smothering brilliance	excluding no-one and lack of action	superficial understanding and laissez faire

### 3 Assumptions

The five ways of thinking differ in the assumptions that they have about why and how people or things change. Having used this meta-theory for several years in discussions with change agents, we notice that the assumptions are often deeply embedded in beliefs and values of the persons in question. A certain degree of logic is attached to the choice of the colors, which will also be indicated below.

Yellow-print thinking assumes that change only succeeds if the powers that be are committed to backing it up. This refers to both people with power based on their formal positions as well as to people with informal power such as opinion leaders. Furthermore, yellow-print thinking assumes actors only change their standpoints if their own interests are taken into account, or when it is possible to compel them to accept certain ideas. It is thought that resistance and failure is inevitable if you do not get all or at least most of the important players on board. Combining ideas or points of view and the forming of coalitions or power blocks are favored methods in this type of change process. Change is considered as a negotiation exercise aimed at achieving feasible solutions based on consensus. This way of thinking fits smoothly into change processes where complex goals or effects must be achieved and in which more people or parties are involved in mutually interdependent ways. It is based on socio-political concepts about organizations in which power play, interests and conflicts play an important role. (See e.g. Hanson, 1996 or Greiner & Schein, 1988) The color yellow can be regarded to as the color of power (e.g. symbols like the 'sun', the 'fire') and of the type of process (brooding and coalition formation around a 'log fire').

In blue-print thinking it is assumed that people or things will change if a clearly specified result is laid down beforehand. All steps are planned down to the last detail, and the control over the result, as well as the path to be taken is kept well under control. Not interests, but rather rational arguments are thought to be most important. Failure is thought to be built in if facts and figures are not taken into account. The project approach is an expression of this way of thinking (see e.g. Wijnen & Kor, 2000). Scientific Management is another classic example. One is inclined to ask for proven methods with reproducible results. Transparency, objectivity and efficiency are valued greatly. This way of thinking fits well when the change is focused on 'hard' aspects of an organization: such as organizational structure, systems or infrastructure. The term 'blueprint' represents the (architectural) design that is drawn up beforehand and is guaranteed to represent the actual outcome.

Red-print thinking assumes that people and organizations will change when it is made attractive for them. In this way of thinking it is important to stimulate people and to inspire them, to seduce them into acting as desired. However, care and attention are also important. Red-print thinking has its roots in the classic Hawthorn experiments (see Mayo, 1933), developed further by McGregor (1960), but is also the dominant thinking in present day HRM management (e.g. Paauwe, 1995). In other words, people change if they are rewarded (salary, promotion, bonus, a good evaluation) or 'penalized' (demotion, bad evaluation). A key concept is barter. If you give a person a bonus, he will work

harder/better. If you promote him he will become more responsible. And if you show care or interest for people, they flourish and perform. The aim is to have a good 'fit' between what individuals want and what the organization needs. The change effort often focuses on 'soft' aspects of an organization, such as: personnel, management style, talents, and competencies. Communication is highly valued as ways to manage expectations and 'sell' visions. The color chosen here, refers to the color of the human blood. The human being must be influenced, tempted and stimulated.

In green-print thinking the terms 'change' and 'learning' have very similar meanings. People change if they learn. People are motivated to discover the limits of their competences and to involve themselves in learning situations. Learning is thought to be particularly effective in collective settings, as this allows people to give and receive feedback and to experiment with more effective ways of acting. The aim is to strengthen the learning abilities of the individual and the learning within the organization. If people learn and the organization learns, change is happening. The aim is not to prescribe top down outcomes of the change process. It is believed that learning is most effective when people work on their own learning goals and take ownership of their own learning. This approach fits well with changes that focus on the competences of people, especially (semi) autonomous professionals. Green-print thinking has its roots in action-learning theories (e.g. Kolb et al, 1991 or Argyris and Schön, 1978) and is part and parcel of more recent thinking on 'learning organizations' (e.g. Senge, 1990). The color green is chosen because the objective is to get peoples' ideas (with their motivation and learning capacity) to work, giving them the 'green light'. But it also refers to 'growth', as in nature.

In white-print thinking the dominant image is that everything changes autonomously on its own accord. 'Panta rhei': everything is in motion. Where there is energy, things change. When this is the case, 'the time is ripe'. White-print thinking assumes that failure results from thinking we can change everything we want. It is thought more important to understand where the energy is strong within an organization, where it wants to go, and to find means to support this. Change will then take care of itself. Complexity is regarded as the enriching nature of things, not as disruptive chaos. Diagnosing the complex dynamics of a system and then creating room for change is a favorite approach. Sense-making plays an important role in this as does removing blockades for change and explicitly relying on the strength and soul of people. External stimuli are deemed of lesser importance. White-print thinking arose in reaction to mechanistic and linear worldviews. It is nourished by chaos theory, systems thinking and network theories. (E.g. Stacey, 1996 or Checkland & Scholes, 1990). White can be seen as a combination of all colors. But more importantly it denotes openness: it allow room for self-organization and evolution. The outcome is open.

Table 2. Assumptions behind the five ways of thinking

	<b>Things/people will change if you.....</b>
<b>Yellow-print</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can unite interests</li> <li>- can compel them to accept (certain) point of view</li> <li>- can create win-win situations/can form coalitions</li> <li>- demonstrate the advantages of certain ideas (power, status, influence)</li> <li>- get everyone on the same wave length</li> <li>- can bring them in a negotiating process</li> </ul>
<b>Blue-print</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formulate a clear result/goal beforehand</li> <li>- make a plan with clear steps from A to B</li> <li>- monitor the steps well and adjust accordingly</li> <li>- keep everything as stable and under control as possible</li> <li>- can reduce complexity as much as possible</li> </ul>
<b>Red-print</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stimulate people in the right way, for example, by inducements</li> <li>- employ advanced HRM tools for rewards, motivation, promotions</li> <li>- give people something in return for what they give you</li> <li>- manage expectations and create a good atmosphere</li> <li>- make things attractive for people</li> </ul>
<b>Green-print</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- make them aware of new outlooks/own shortcomings</li> <li>- are able to motivate them to see new things/to learn</li> <li>- are able to create suitable collective learning situations</li> <li>- allow the learning process to owned by the people involved and geared towards their own learning goals</li> </ul>
<b>White-print</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- start from the drives, strengths and the 'natural inclinations' of people.</li> <li>- add meaning to what people are going through</li> <li>- are able to diagnose complexity and understand its dynamics</li> <li>- give free rein to people's energy and remove possible blockades</li> <li>- make use of symbols and rituals</li> </ul>

#### 4 Interventions

In this section we elaborate on interventions that match the different colors. Interventions can be seen in all manners of size, scope and depth. A three-year merger process can be regarded as a macro-intervention - a major series of planned actions. One single activity or even a single sentence can be regarded as micro-interventions many of which are an

integral part of any macro-intervention. Congruence of micro- and macro-interventions increases the successfulness of both. Micro-interventions can aimed at individuals or small groups. Macro-interventions can be aimed at individuals, groups and organizations. We adopt the general definition of Argyris (1970), which covers these different levels. He states that: “to intervene is to enter an ongoing system of relationships, to come between or among persons, groups or objects for the purpose of helping them.” This general definition is elaborated by Cummings and Worley (1993). They say that an intervention is: “a set of sequenced planned actions or events intended to help an organization increase its effectiveness. Interventions purposely disrupt the status quo; they are a deliberate attempt to change an organization or a sub-unit toward a different and more effective state.”

In table 3 we list typical examples of micro-interventions using the five colors, as wells as an indication of the thought and meaning behind the statements. In this table we see what kind of statements (often made by change agents) correspond with a certain way of thinking (colors), but we also need to know the purpose (thought and meaning) to be able understand the micro-intervention more fully.

Table 3. Micro-interventions

Dominant color	Examples of (typical) micro-interventions	The thought and meaning behind each of the statements
<b>Yellow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You need each other</li> <li>- The agenda has been predetermined with the parties involved</li> <li>- Let us continue this discussion in a smaller group</li> <li>- With those who have a mandate</li> <li>- There will be a press release at 7 p.m.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizing dependence between Actors</li> <li>- Restricting degrees of liberty</li> <li>- Limiting the risk of loss of face</li> <li>- Increasing room for negotiation</li> <li>- Increasing time pressure</li> </ul>
<b>Blue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You want to achieve a 12% cost reduction</li> <li>- Within one year</li> <li>- This can be achieved by taking the following steps</li> <li>- That have proved their worth in practice</li> <li>- With a monthly progress report sent to you</li> <li>- An agreement is an agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stating and defining an unambiguous result</li> <li>- Stating clear management aspects</li> <li>- Making the process predictable</li> <li>- Making use of existing knowledge and competencies</li> <li>- Building in progress control measures</li> <li>- Not allowing the process to be dependent on its staff</li> </ul>
<b>Red</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our vision is to become no. 1 in the market</li> <li>- And we will achieve this by investing in people</li> <li>- And because we support each other</li> <li>- We will pay out performance-related bonuses</li> <li>- No one will loose out</li> <li>- And these measures will be determined in consultation with the trade unions and after an internal survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sketching a tempting prospect</li> <li>- Making things pleasant for people</li> <li>- Stimulating vertical as well as horizontal exchange</li> <li>- You scratch my back...</li> <li>- Limiting uncertainty</li> <li>- Building in a measure of care</li> </ul>
<b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have asked you here today</li> <li>- On the basis of your learning goals</li> <li>- I would like you to read and analyze this case</li> <li>- And to try out the solution in a clinic</li> <li>- You only get out what you put in</li> <li>- The ideal is to experiment with new behavior</li> <li>- You normally demonstrate this type of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a group setting</li> <li>- Fitting in with existing learning issues</li> <li>- Making use of practical problems</li> <li>- Alternating between thinking and doing</li> <li>- Emphasizing personal responsibility</li> <li>- Creating security through rules</li> <li>- Mirroring</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>behavior</li> <li>- And that has this effect on me</li> <li>- You could also behave in this way or that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using the rules of feedback</li> <li>- Making consciously incompetent</li> </ul>
<b>White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leaders experience the organization as a twilight zone</li> <li>- No matter what they did the situation became more tenuous</li> <li>- While staff flaunt procedural rules</li> <li>- And the market is developing more quickly than we are</li> <li>- This creates a vicious circle and a feeling of impotence</li> <li>- Dynamism does not flourish in arenas of controls and procedures</li> <li>- There is a plethora of innovative ideas in the workplace</li> <li>- Let people develop when they have found their own sponsors</li> <li>- And allow them to exchange, assess and link the ideas</li> <li>- And let the successful player act as a coach for others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placing a great deal of emphasis on observation, awareness</li> <li>- In particular of changes through Time</li> <li>- Of the relationship between diverse aspects</li> <li>- In light of the relationship of the organization and its environment</li> <li>- To recognize (complex) patterns</li> <li>- And to give them meaning</li> <li>- Searching for where there is 'natural' will and power for change</li> <li>- Breaking down resistance</li> <li>- Getting a dialogue going</li> <li>- Creating heroes</li> </ul>

Macro-interventions can also be characterized by their dominant color. Here we categorize some macro-interventions which are all generally well known to change agents. First, table 4 shows nine interventions per color on an individual level. Table 5 and 6 do this for interventions on a group level and organization level respectively. For each macro-intervention we have added in the tables a short description.

Table 4. Some colored macro-interventions on the individual level

<b>Dominant Color</b>	<b>Macro-interventions</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Personal commitment statement</i> can be seen as the result of a negotiation process of an individual with the organization. What will the employee deliver in the coming year and what does the organization furnish in return.</li> <li>- <i>Outplacement</i> is a process in which an individual negotiates with the organization about the conditions for leaving the organization limited damage to both parties.</li> <li>- <i>Protégé-constructions</i>. Protégés get protection from influential people within the organization in order to prepare them for new positions, to influence others or to reward them by supporting their career.</li> </ul>
<b>Blue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Management by objectives</i> is the clear statement of targets, the measuring of these targets and a system of holding people accountable for them.</li> <li>- <i>Hygienic working</i> is working in an orderly, planned and systematic way.</li> <li>- <i>Working with a calendar</i> is the management, planning and prioritizing of ones own time.</li> </ul>
<b>Red</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Career development</i> is taking into account someone's interests, history, skills, competencies in charting and supporting his/her (professional) life.</li> <li>- <i>Recruitment and selection</i> is offering assistance to individuals who are looking for a job and organizations who are looking for employees.</li> <li>- <i>Task enrichment/ task enlargement</i> is meant to create a greater variety of work, to oversee a complete task or product in order to enhance a sense of ownership and overview and to increase motivation.</li> </ul>
<b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Coaching</i> is paying attention to specific learning questions of an individual and exploring them in a confidential series of conversations.</li> <li>- <i>Intensive clinic</i> is the specific training of skills in a role-plays. The skills are predetermined.</li> <li>- <i>Feedback/mirroring</i> is aimed at getting insight in how one's own behavior affects others.</li> </ul>
<b>White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>T-group</i> gives, through learning by experience, insight in group dynamic processes and especially in the individual's effectiveness in these processes.</li> <li>- <i>Personal growth</i> is based on the thought that someone who knows himself, his motives, talents, emotions, allergies etc. will be able to manage his own life consciously and powerfully.</li> <li>- <i>Networking</i> is the searching and collaborating with other people of one's own choosing to create new environments and meanings that further one's goals.</li> </ul>

Table 5. Some colored macro-interventions on the group level

<b>Dominant Color</b>	<b>Macro-interventions</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Confrontation meeting</i>: different perspectives or views are brought together; the purpose is that through reasoning, negotiating, giving and taking agreements are found.</li> <li>- <i>Third party strategy (mediation)</i> is the idea that an independent outsider can assist the parties involved to develop solutions, which due to their regular interactions they would not have been able to develop themselves.</li> <li>- <i>Top structuring</i> is designing and staffing the apex of an organization, often riddled with issues of power distribution, relationships, coalitions, likes and dislikes.</li> </ul>
<b>Blue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Working in projects</i> is a working method for temporary assignments combining transparency of working, clear division of roles and objective monitoring to efficiently reach results.</li> <li>- <i>Archiving</i> is a systematic approach of common, well-defined and consistent ways of archiving documents and information. Including the way they are accessible.</li> <li>- <i>Decision-making rules</i> consist of agreements such as divisions of responsibility, sanctioning authority, phasing of decision-making etc. that are all meant to enhance efficiency and minimize conflicts.</li> </ul>
<b>Red</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Social activities</i> are meant to create a pleasant atmosphere between employees and are based on the idea that there is a direct relationship between the well being of people and their performance.</li> <li>- <i>Team roles</i> are defined to delineate complementary roles in a team, allowing the performance of the total team to increase by better cooperation (2+2=5).</li> <li>- <i>Management by speech</i> refers to motivating and visioning behavior by managers based on the idea that direction and direct interaction enhances motivation.</li> </ul>
<b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Teambuilding</i> helps groups to execute their task better by means of committed improvement of interpersonal skills and competencies for joint problem solving.</li> <li>- <i>Gaming</i> is a learning activity in which people with the help of a simulated reality learn by doing and reflecting faster than they would be able to in real life.</li> <li>- <i>Intervision</i> is a structured method to learn from colleagues by examining one real life case at the time and inquiring into underlying ideas or assumptions.</li> </ul>
<b>White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Self-steering teams</i> refers to enabling group to perform (almost) all tasks needed to make a service/product a success and allowing them to do this in a way they see fit. The idea is that allowing groups of people a lot of freedom, allows them to take fuller responsibility and make their work better, more rewarding and meaningful.</li> <li>- <i>Open space meeting</i>. Time and place are fixed. The theme, the subject and who will be there is open. Meetings and initiatives stem from the ideas and leadership of people</li> </ul>

	<p>involved allowing them to set it up the way they want.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Expliciting mental models</i> is to become conscious of how a group and its members look at reality, make meaning out of it and what the effects of their outlook are. In doing so it can clear up misunderstandings and explore more empowering viewpoints.</li> </ul>
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Table 6. Some colored macro-interventions on the organization level

<b>Dominant Color</b>	<b>Macro-interventions</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Improving quality of work</i> has resulted in employee participation and employee consultation (through work councils). Conflicting interests must be united through negotiations.</li> <li>- <i>Forming strategic alliances</i>: if you can't beat them, join them! It is the forming of collective power to create a strategic position that outmaneuvers other players.</li> <li>- <i>Negotiations on labor conditions</i> refer to balancing workers' and company's interests and reflects the thinking in win-win situations and in common ground.</li> </ul>
<b>Blue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Strategic management</i>. The present and future situation is determined on the basis of research of internal capacities and external developments. A strategy is determined as the rational optimal combination between the two</li> <li>- <i>Business Process Redesign</i> is a set of methods designed to chart work processes, to analyze them and to redesign them using a number of logical rules aiming at more efficiency and effectiveness.</li> <li>- <i>Auditing</i> is to carry out a systematic study (through interviews, questionnaires etc.) of an existing situation by use of a structured framework.</li> </ul>
<b>Red</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Reward systems</i> are powerful tool to implement objective procedures to measure and reward performance of people. Rewards can be both material (like salary, bonus, etc.) and immaterial (like training, travel, titles)</li> <li>- <i>Managing mobility and diversity</i> is a an approach to optimize the composition of the workforce to reflect the labor - and client market (in terms of gender, age, ethnic background etc.), to enhance the migration of new ideas and skills and to enhance complementarity of talents,</li> <li>- <i>Triple ladder</i>: individuals can grow in different types of competencies. Delineation of multiple career paths, makes it possible to create perspectives for a wider range of people and to excel in a wider set of competencies crucial to the continuity of an organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Open systems planning</i> regards planning as a learning process. Knowledge resides with many and enhancing collective participation furthers both the quality and the ownership of the resulting planning.</li> <li>- <i>Parallel learning structures</i>. One builds a new structure alongside the existing one, in order to learn, innovate or solve problems in a different way (different norms and procedures). It is based on the idea that no one structure creates sufficient interaction and learning.</li> <li>- <i>Quality circles</i> bring small groups in problem-solving activities. The groups learn to improve</li> </ul>

	their own work processes on the job thus using first hand knowledge and eliminating the gap between central quality procedures and implementation.
<b>White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Search conferences</i> are also known as 'futuring' or 'visioning'. Central to the process is the past, the present and the future, with the emphasis on sense making. The process is unpredictable as structure is thought to conceal possibilities.</li> <li>- <i>Rituals and mystique</i>: are technically superfluous but socially essential. They point to and call up common values and norms. They make transitions real by collectively marking them.</li> <li>- <i>Deconstructing 'sacred cows'</i>: to ask the questions many people are for some reason afraid to and challenge the status quo. Some cultural characteristics that perhaps once served a purpose can now be responsible for strangling the organization and frustrating its renewal.</li> </ul>

## 5 Change agents

Possibly one of the most important factors in effecting change is the change agent: his or her quality of presence and his or her competence. We define a change agent as a person taking responsibility for consciously and professionally designing and affecting change. This can be managers, consultants as well as employees or network partners. (This type of agency is nobody's prerogative in particular, see e.g. Gerrichhauzen, 1994). Change agents come in many shapes and sizes. Various authors have posed situational models for change agents: their roles must fit the desired approach to change for the cases at hand. Zaltman and Duncan (1977) delineate the expert who provides direct solutions to the client system, the catalytic agent who outlines and stimulates the change, and the process consultant who facilitates communication between those involved. Other authors distinguish additional roles, such as the 'mentor' or 'innovator' role (see e.g. Quinn, 1988). Westra and van de Vliert (1989) stress that the role of the change agent is also strongly linked with what he or she believes is 'good' for organizations and what he or she trusts to work best. We believe that the role of the change agent needs to be linked to both. Their role need to fit the desired approach for the change: incongruence frustrates the change. Their role must fit with their beliefs/intentions as well in order for them to be believable. In table 7 we describe how these aspects can be related to one another. For each color-print approach to change, the intention, role and focus of the change agent is suggested.



Table 7. Intention, role and focus of the change agent

	<b>Yellow print</b>	<b>Blue print</b>	<b>Red print</b>	<b>Green print</b>	<b>White print</b>
<b>Intention</b>	I want to change the opinions and policies of actors/organizations	I want to change one of the hard aspects of the organization (buildings, production lines, information systems)	I want to change a soft aspect of the organization (personnel, management style, culture)	I want to change the people. I help people develop themselves and share their learning with each other	I create space for change, I appeal to peoples' self-confidence and inner direction and I 'practice what I preach'
<b>Role/style</b>	A facilitator who strives for feasible solutions, who guards his own power base and makes use of it when necessary (mediation, arbitration)	An expert who strives for the best solution; who takes full responsibility for the implementation and monitoring (assuming he has been mandated to do so)	A procedure expert who strives for solutions that enjoy (shop floor) support, that elicit involvement, and which encourages motivation. If so requested, he can advocate particular solutions too	A facilitator who strives to help solve problems (together). He is an expert only as far as the communication and interaction is concerned. With regard to content he is, at most, a coach	A personality that strives for spontaneous evolution by catalyzing forces that create solutions and thwarting forces that block them. To this end he might use any expertise or power he has
<b>Focus</b>	Focus on positions and context	Focus on expertise and results	Focus on procedures and atmosphere	Focus on setting and communication	Focus on patterns and persons

What are the competences a change agent should possess? Cummings and Worley (1993) give a list of 84 competencies based on literature and study in the world of organization development (OD) practitioners. Others, like Doppler and Lauterburg (1996) come with equally impressive lists. Often the size of the list is put into perspective by saying that half of the list should be regarded as absolutely necessary. More might be unrealistic, less might be unprofessional. We agree with these authors that someone will need a lot of competencies if he or she is to be able to implement the full spectrum of color-strategies in the role of change agent. We do not deem this task impossible by definition but it is certainly a tall order. We observe however that most change agents, including ourselves, have a preference for one or two color strategies. We think professionalism can be well maintained when change agents recognize the limits of their own professional capabilities and limit their work to that arena, to know when it is necessary to refer elsewhere, or to call in the help of others. As a bonus, for some colors it is even good role modeling in change processes to profess one-sidedness, in particular in green and white processes. It provides space for other peoples' imperfections and can enhance trust and establish rapport. The competences of change agents can be described per color-print and allows for a more limited list than an overall one would. In table 8 we have attempted to outline these sufficiently to provide an image of what matters most for each color and how much these competences differ from one another. The competences can be of use in reflecting on the needed profile of a change agent given a change process or to reflect on one's own capabilities.

Table 8. Competencies of the change agent per color

	<b>Yellow print</b>	<b>Blue print</b>	<b>Red print</b>	<b>Green print</b>	<b>White print</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strategy and policy theory</li> <li>- (top) structuring</li> <li>- external trends and networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- expertise in regard to the content of the change</li> <li>- project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- management science, specifically HRM-methods</li> <li>- motivation theories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning theory/ didactic theory</li> <li>- organization-development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- chaos theory/systems theory</li> <li>- psychology</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- network identification</li> <li>- feeling for power structures and - balance</li> <li>- conflict mediation and influencing tactics</li> <li>- strategic interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planning en control</li> <li>- analytical thinking/ research methods</li> <li>- verbal and written presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- systems design</li> <li>- communication planning</li> <li>- working in teams</li> <li>- facilitating discussions/interview skills</li> <li>- convincing, motivating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- designing and facilitating learning situations</li> <li>- creating a safe and open environment</li> <li>- coaching/listening/ giving feedback</li> <li>- acting as a role model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pattern recognition and creation of (new) meaning</li> <li>- challenging the status quo</li> <li>- dealing with conflicts and creating dialogue</li> <li>- dealing with insecurity/uncertainty</li> </ul>
<b>Attitude</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- independence</li> <li>- stability</li> <li>- self-control</li> <li>- self-confidence</li> <li>- perseverance</li> <li>- flexibility</li> <li>- diplomacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- result oriented</li> <li>- decisiveness</li> <li>- independence</li> <li>- intelligence</li> <li>- accuracy</li> <li>- dedication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- carefulness</li> <li>- flexibility</li> <li>- trustworthiness</li> <li>- decisiveness</li> <li>- loyal</li> <li>- steadfast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- empathy</li> <li>- trustworthiness</li> <li>- creativity</li> <li>- openness</li> <li>- flexibility</li> <li>- self confidence</li> <li>- inspirational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- independence</li> <li>- authenticity</li> <li>- self-assured</li> <li>- honesty</li> <li>- flexibility</li> <li>- self-confidence</li> <li>- spiritual</li> </ul>

## 6 Implications and conclusions

In the previous sections we summarized a meta-theory of change. We gave examples of micro- and macro-interventions, which we categorized according to the colors. We then described roles and competencies of change agents or interventionists, also within the framework of the colors. In this section we will describe some implications of these insights for change processes and change agents.

In change processes a distinction is made between diagnosis of a situation, ‘design’ of a change process and the actual intervening in organizations. We will make that distinction here too, even though diagnosis and design can be regarded as interventions too.

Diagnosis is the process that is used to try and find answers to two main questions: ‘what’s going on?’ and ‘why are the things the way they are?’ Diagnosis also refers to the type of information gathered. Diagnosis thus has a process and content aspect. Both are strongly influenced by the models or theories of the change agent in question. Regarding the process one can state that yellow and blue change agents will choose a more expert and research approach, the other colored change agents will favor a more action oriented and participative approach. Regarding the content of the diagnosis, all colors provide certain viewpoints to look at and interpret reality. Here diagnostic conclusions will be partly predetermined by the viewpoint the change agent is inclined to take from the start. We are starting to suspect that, in order to survive in the long run, organizations need to have all the colors balanced. Organizations must deal properly with power and differences in interests (yellow), must effectively go for results and maintain a certain organizational hygiene (blue), must take the irrational human being into account and insert care and perspective in organizational life (red), must learn and cooperate constantly (green) and must innovate and be creative (white). The different colors have conflicting principles: that means that a balanced or sound organization has to cope with the paradoxes that result from these conflicting principles.

The implication of this is two-fold. One, the content of the diagnosis should not be limited to the dominant color of the change agent. The different colors show a more complete and complex picture that allows for seeing imbalances. Secondly, we suspect that if one or two colors are very dominant in an organization and one or two are absent, interventions of the absent colors are needed to balance the organization. The trouble here is that no one will discern this absence and favor those kind of interventions, because this is not seen as something important (this particular thinking is not present!). So first one might have to work on conditions for this: attracting new people, training, external change agents, etc.

After the diagnosis an intervention ‘plan’ is developed. An intervention plan is “an integral, consistent, feasible and relevant plan for (a set of) interventions in an organization whose aim is the actual implementation of the intended outcomes of a change.” The size and scope of the plan can vary considerably; a plan for a meeting or a micro-intervention does not have to be worked out in great detail. And the very nature of a white-print approach (the route is the refuge) precludes the possibility of going into as much detail, as is the case with a blue-print approach. Given the great differences in

conditions, competences, outcomes, etc. of the various colors, we think that it is important to consciously choose one dominant color for an intervention plan. A learning situation (green) will for instance be limited in its success when issues relating to power and interests (yellow) come into play. The rules of the game are just too different. The effectiveness of an intervention plan appears to be related to the congruence and depth of intervening in one dominant color. However, there can be other colored interventions to support the change: managing expectations and guidance (red), training and feedback (green), construction of procedures or manuals (blue), pilots or experiments (white), or a steering committee (yellow). Many different types of interventions can be part of an intervention plan.

Diagnosis and design are intellectual, cognitive exercises. One can 'play' with models and concepts, with colors, interventions, roles etc. The situation is different when it comes to acting, which is *doing* the (micro or macro) intervention with the expected effect. It is our belief that the dominant color of the interventionist must fit the color of the intervention. That is important from the standpoint of credibility and effectiveness. When some one orders you to learn (a blue execution of a green intervention), it will be very unlikely that it will happen. You rightly fail to realize this is serious and it will not affect you. Related to this point, there is another issue. Change efforts in organizations are collective efforts. Discussions on change processes are thwarted when the people involved are unable to discern explicitly where they and their discussion partners are coming from. A management team with a typical head of a personnel department (red?), a typical head of the finance department (blue?) and a typical governor (yellow?) will have a hard time managing change when their differences are not on the table and can be tested for their appropriateness. We have also observed that the colors can be a model to label one's limitations as change agent and knowing when to ask somebody else to take over. This handing over to another type of change agent is most important at the intervention stage. It seems possible for professional change agents to diagnose and design beyond their own colored comfort zone. However it seems very hard indeed to intervene beyond one's own comfort zone.

Lastly, we want to remark that in our view all colors are of equal value. There is a time for negotiating (yellow) and a time for learning (green). Each value can often be best communicated by people who have an affinity with that color and know how to go beyond the superficiality of that approach. E.g. a professional yellow change agent will stress the democratic ideals behind this color where interests and power is balanced and strive towards that ideal, where other people might be inclined to equate yellow processes with oppressive power games. Notwithstanding the equal value of the colors, we also observe that some colors are more in fashion than others. Green and white approaches are currently favored in words, but not in actions. We think that their rise in popularity might be justified given the rise of professionalism in organizations, the speed of innovations, the need for leadership in network organizations, etc. We expect green, and especially white approaches to gain more prominence in real life when more practitioners move further beyond the superficiality of fashion.

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