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Article

Relation between Organizational Capacity for Change and Readiness for Change

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Abstract: Readiness for change is seen as an important prerequisite increasing chances for change success. While assessing the readiness level allows for tailoring of the interventions and the change process, it requires time and planning. When organizations face increasing levels of unpredictability and need to adapt to fast environmental shifts, linear causal models to plan and implement changes become harder to follow. Emergent changes also barely accommodate planning and assessing readiness levels. Multiple and overlapping change initiatives become the norm rather than an exception, thus exert additional pressure on organizations hoping to start with assessing and developing readiness. Applying dynamic capabilities lens allows addressing such challenges through the concept of organizational capacity for change. This article reviews theoretical and empirical research advances to answer two questions. First, how do readiness and organizational capacity for change differ? A review of theoretical assumptions, dimensions and antecedents is employed to delineate the two constructs. Second, what is the relationship between the two constructs? The analysis is guided by an organizational change typology to highlight their applicability to selected types of change. The research concludes that capacity for change differs and can complement readiness in helping organizations navigate unpredictable environments.

Keywords: organizational change; organizational capacity for change; readiness for change



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1. Introduction

Organizations constantly change, sometimes gradually evolving and at other times quickly redirecting strategies, structures, business models, and operations. An abundance of studies analyzes and synthesizes the antecedents, the process, and the outcomes in an attempt to help understand how organizations change and what makes them successful or not when changing (Dempsey et al. 2022; Lausier et al. 2020).

At times there are unpredicted major events requiring organizations to react immediately, often at big leaps. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted practically all organizations worldwide by putting a strain on supply chains, modes of working, technologies used, and demand. The war in Ukraine posed another set of challenges to societies and markets. Peaking energy prices and inflation, expected tightening of access to financing, increasing cyber threats would require organizations to further rethink strategies and business plans, and many will need to implement significant organizational changes to survive. The list of environmental challenges above is far from exhaustive.

While the effects of the recent crises on societies and economies are yet to be fully assessed, there are calls for the need to reevaluate what we know about organizational change. Worley and Jules (2020) conclude that too many organizations did not have the capabilities to respond to COVID-19. Amis and Janz (2020) underline the need of trust and a safe environment where organization members can share information and experiment with ideas to quickly adapt and take advantage of the new economic realities.

The world has seen major disruptions before, and organizations have been forced to react in order to survive. Still, many studies on organizational change highlight the low

success rates when implementing planned change initiatives (Kotter 2007; Meaney and Pung 2008). Some authors claim failure to establish sufficient readiness accounts for half of the unsuccessful organizational change efforts (Wang et al. 2020).

It seems we still do not know for sure what makes change effective, thus what guidelines should be followed (Bamford and Forrester 2003; Dunphy 1996). Part of the explanation acknowledges that the variations in the conditions when change happens might result in different types of changes. Consequently, the search for a unified methodology and theory should rather be replaced by constructive debates and analysis of empirical evidence on the validity and applicability of competing theories (Dunphy 1996). Even when defining change as “one type of event, [...] an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity” (van de Ven and Poole 1995, p. 512), the question of how it happens may have a variety of answers. Consequently, what the antecedents of change success are.

Readiness for change is seen as one of the key success factors when organizations implement changes (Armenakis et al. 1993; Herold et al. 2007) measuring the attitudes within the organization. The attitude to one change event can be positive, supportive, or negative, resisting. It depends on the evaluation of the organizational members of whether the change will be beneficial and possible to implement. Readiness for change, thus, can hardly be developed “in general” and be applied to changes with different scopes and goals. Individuals may believe they can implement one specific change or align with one goal while disapprove or doubt the implementation of others. However, there is not enough research on whether readiness attitudes differ depending on the type of change (Rafferty and Simons 2006), and whether readiness is equally important for different types of change (Weiner et al. 2020).

The concept of organizational capacity for change (OCC) is an emerging area of research interest over the past decade. It addresses in part, limitations of readiness for change such as the above. Increasingly, literature shifts focus from how to prepare the organization and mobilize support for a specific change initiative (associated with readiness for change) to how to create a longer-term capacity that can serve the organization in the implementation of multiple change processes (Schwarz and Stensaker 2014). This interest relates to the increased appreciation of change as a multitude of processes—often overlapping and being at different stages with different success at a given point in time—in an organization facing turbulent environment.

Still, the concept of organizational capacity is characterized by some ambiguity. There are several theoretical contributions while empirical research is limited (Heckmann et al. 2016). Its applicability to different types of change has not been researched much as well. The concept is often confused with readiness for change (Stevens 2013; McGuinness et al. 2002) although some authors conceptualize its difference.

Judge and Blocker (2008) differentiate the two concepts based on the level of manifestation—unlike readiness, organizational capacity for change goes beyond the individual level and describes the collective capabilities of an organizational unit to change. Typically, readiness for change is assessed at the individual level. Yet, Vakola (2013) differentiates its implications on the individual, group, and organization levels and proposes a multilevel readiness for change incorporating all three levels. The multilevel model responds to the calls to accommodate multiple changes (which hampers assessment and development of readiness separately for each change initiative), as well as the need to maintain readiness during and beyond the change itself. Thus, the level of manifestation might not be the proper differentiator between the two constructs.

Vakola suggests that “readiness could be perceived and ‘invested’ in as a constant state, which is conceived as a core competency to cope with continuous changing external, as well as internal, conditions” (Vakola 2013, p. 103). Stevens (Stevens 2013) also calls for a process model of readiness for change, which should reflect its recursive and multidimensional character. These arguments pose the question whether readiness for change could be conceptualized as a continuous phenomenon and depart from its association with a particular change

instance and the assessment of its efficacy. Or, as the research on organizational capacity for change claims, another concept may provide this missing link.

This article explores the two concepts—readiness for change and organizational capacity for change. Their differences, relationship and roles are reviewed to contribute to the two concepts' understanding and differentiation. Theoretical assumptions, dimensions, antecedents, and applicability to selected types of change are explored based on extant literature findings.

The conclusions demonstrate the differences between readiness and organizational capacity for change. This article proposes that organizational capacity for change—reflecting capabilities, distinct processes as defined by the dynamic capabilities framework, could help in building readiness for particular change initiatives. More empirical research is needed to test the relationship between the two constructs, identify antecedents of organizational capacity for change as well as map it to dynamic capabilities and organizational ambidexterity taxonomies.

2. Methodology

This article aims to identify the differences and complementarities between two constructs—readiness for change and organizational capacity for change. While readiness for change is well explored and defined in extant literature, organizational capacity for change is a newer construct often confused with the latter. There is less agreement on the nature and role of organizational capacity for change. Thus, this article seeks to answer two research questions:

RQ1: How do readiness and organizational capacity for change differ?

RQ2: What is the relationship between readiness and organizational capacity for change?

To explore the first question, theoretical assumptions, dimensions and antecedents of the two constructs are reviewed. A typology of organizational change is used to investigate the second research question. Readiness and capacity for change applicability in selected types of change is discussed.

3. Theoretical Lens

Readiness for change is rooted in the organizational development and humanistic traditions. It could be tracked to the classical experiment of [Coch and French \(1948\)](#) which demonstrates the value of participation in change efforts in removing group resistance to changes ([Armenakis et al. 1993](#); [Weiner 2009](#)). Readiness for change follows Kurt Lewin's three-stage change model ([Lewin 1947](#)). It addresses mainly the requirements of the first stage “unfreeze”—motivating the organization members, demonstrating the discrepancy between the current and desired state, creating an appealing vision of the future, and boosting the confidence that it can be achieved ([Weiner 2009](#)). The members of the organization need to first believe that a specific change initiative will be beneficial and achievable. Irrespective of what the reasons behind change are, it requires new behaviors, new ways of doing things and thus depends on the individuals' willingness to adopt them. Change might result in a new strategy, new policies and procedures, new job descriptions or technologies introduced. All of these would impact the way people work, and success would entail their engagement and shared belief they can—and want to—achieve the desired future. The change initiative should provide a clear cause-effect to convince individuals to embrace the goal and follow the steps to its achievement.

The organizational development traditions suggest that the individual is inherently good and having a substantial capacity for self-determination, creativity, and psychological growth ([Cummings and Cummings 2014](#)). Change in the organization would succeed through cooperation and alignment of the interests of the individual and the organization. Assessing the level of readiness gives the opportunity to understand these interests, explain, provide information, support, align, and empower individuals. Taking the process view on readiness would entail doing this assessment not only prior, but also during the

implementation (Stevens 2013) and adjusting when necessary. Although typically assessed at the individual level (Peus et al. 2009; Rafferty et al. 2013), there are calls to differentiate and integrate the implications on the individual, group, and organization level (Vakola 2013; Wang et al. 2020).

Many researchers conceptualize the capabilities that enable organizations to implement changes through the dynamic capabilities framework (Judge and Elenkov 2005; Oxtoby et al. 2002; Soparnot 2011; Klarner et al. 2008) and organizational ambidexterity (Meyer and Stensaker 2006; Judge and Blocker 2008). This approach turns the focus to the organizational competencies and abilities rather than the individuals' beliefs and attitudes.

The dynamic capabilities are defined as “the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and re-configure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments” (Teece et al. 1997, p. 516) but also to shape the environment (Teece 2007). They refer to specific, identifiable (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000) and entrepreneurial (Teece et al. 1997) processes. Importantly, dynamic capabilities do not produce results but enable the (re-)organization and utilization of resources to produce end results. They relate to change in organizations unlike the ordinary, operational capabilities (Winter 2003). From the dynamic capabilities lens, capacity for change is described as general for all other dynamic capabilities (Oxtoby et al. 2002; Andreeva and Ritala 2016). It allows the organization to adapt its existing capabilities to new threats and opportunities as well as to create new opportunities (Judge and Elenkov 2005), to initiate and successfully achieve changes of different types, sizes, and forms on an ongoing basis (Heckmann et al. 2016).

The organizational ambidexterity seeks to explain how organizations balance two largely conflicting sets of goals, respectively activities—exploration and exploitation (O’Reilly et al. 2013). Recent studies demonstrate that this contradiction could be bridged and does not require to necessarily separate the two groups of activities in time or in space (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; Luger et al. 2018; Papachroni et al. 2015). From the organizational ambidexterity lens, capacity for change is defined as “the allocation and development of change and operational capabilities that sustain long term performance” (Meyer and Stensaker 2006, p. 220).

The review of applicable theoretical lens is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Theoretical Lens.

	Readiness for Change	Organizational Capacity for Change
Theoretical Lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the individual • Organizational development, participatory approach • Kurt Lewin’s 3-stage process (“unfreeze-move-refreeze”) to motivate and align individuals and the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on organizational capabilities • Dynamic capabilities that help change ordinary capabilities which produce end results • Balancing exploration and exploitation (organizational ambidexterity)

4. Dimensions and Antecedents

Readiness for change is the cognitive precursor of the behaviors of support for—or resistance to—organizational change (Armenakis and Harris 2009). The construct suggests change as a distinct event, which can be characterized by a clear goal towards which success is measured, a beginning and an end. These elements enable the assessment (and building) of the organization’s readiness level. It is defined through the shared commitment and self-efficacy to implement a particular change (Weiner 2009), beliefs and intentions of members of the organization to change their behaviors (Armenakis et al. 1993) accordingly. Definitions are converging to describe it as a psychological rather than a structural construct (Weiner et al. 2020). Armenakis and Harris (2009) conceptualize the motivations to change through the role of change messages that impact five beliefs—discrepancy; appropriateness; efficacy; principal support; and valence. The authors develop a readiness model based on assessing and building the above five beliefs, which reflect the readiness dimensions. Readiness as change recipients’ reaction, however, might be part of the internal context or a

consequence of change (Oreg et al. 2011). Miake-Lye et al. (2020) extract five dimensions which are typically used in readiness assessment measures—outer setting, inner setting, intervention characteristics, characteristics of individuals, and implementation process. They highlight however that readiness is operationalized differently across projects or settings. A review of instruments to assess readiness is elaborated by Weiner et al. (2020) and discusses on their dimensions, reliability, and validity.

Readiness for change may vary over time and from one change initiative to another. It refers to a state rather than a personality trait (Choi 2011). Readiness is subject to the influence from content (of the specific change initiative), context (of the environment, the organizational capacity), process (of the change implementation), and individuals involved (members of the organization) (Holt et al. 2007).

Several articles have summarized what is already known about the antecedents of readiness to change and come up with converging classifications. Rafferty et al. (2013) review extant research on two levels—individual and organizational, and identify external pressures, internal context enablers and personal (resp. group) characteristics to influence the cognitive and affective readiness to change. Weiner (2009) starts from the motivation theory and social cognitive theory and identifies change valence and information assessment to be antecedents of readiness for change. These antecedents are largely influenced by contextual factors, such as organizational culture; policies and procedures; past experience; organizational resources; organizational structure. Vakola (2014) identifies individual characteristics, contextual characteristics and work attitudes as impacting the individual readiness for change. Rafferty and Minbashian (2019) find cognitive beliefs and positive emotions about change to be significantly associated with change readiness.

The organizational capacity for change starts with the understanding that change is ongoing, but also manifested in single events which might be overlapping in time, contradicting in goals and competing for resources (Klarner et al. 2008; Heckmann et al. 2016). The concept addresses the need to explain the ability of organizations to tackle multiple change. Many authors (Heckmann et al. 2016; Klarner et al. 2007; Meyer and Stensaker 2006) conceptualize OCC as the ability of the organization to formulate, implement and maintain multiple changes in the long term and thus distinguish the concept from readiness for change which relates to a single change initiative.

While most of the definitions start from the dynamic capabilities' framework, there are disagreements as to what the nature of the capacity for change is and how to measure it (Supriharyanti and Sukoco 2022). Heckmann et al. (2016, p. 779) integrate existing definitions and conceptualizations to describe organizational capacity for change as *“a broad dynamic, multidimensional capability that enables an organization to initiate and successfully achieve changes of different types, sizes, and forms on an ongoing basis. OCC is multidimensional comprising different aspects of leadership, culture, employee behavior, and an organizational infrastructure supporting organizational change”*. The focus on organizational capabilities includes employee behaviors but departs from the attitudes and beliefs as captured by readiness for change.

Organizational capacity for change as a dynamic capability may develop in time and with gained experience and relates to learning in the organization. Building OCC, however, does not necessarily mean each change initiative implementation will be a success (Meyer and Stensaker 2006). Dynamic capabilities refer also to processes, procedures (Barreto 2010) implying that capacity for change would incorporate experience and results from previous changes. It influences the quality of processes used by the organization to implement and sustain changes (McGuinness et al. 2002).

A review of OCC dimensions is summarized in Table A1 in Appendix A. Several common dimensions can be highlighted and grouped into organizational context, change process, transformational leadership, learning, and culture.

The question of antecedents of capacity for change as well as its relationship with other constructs, however, is largely unexplored (Heckmann et al. 2016). Judge et al. (2006) identify two antecedents—adaptability (one of the elements of contextual organizational am-

bidexterity as proposed by Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) and environmental uncertainty. In a later text, though, Judge and Blocker (2008) argue that change capacity is in fact an antecedent of strategic ambidexterity, and the relationship is moderated by environmental uncertainty and organizational slack. Shipton et al. (2012) argues human resources (HR) management systems help build capacity for change, and this influence is moderated by external factors (such as national institutional and cultural environment) and internal factors (such as HR power and HR competence).

Supriharyanti and Sukoco (2022) review a total of 48 studies and extract three groups of OCC antecedents—individual factors, organizational factors, and environmental factors. The authors highlight that the antecedents need further empirical evidence. This grouping of explored antecedents follows the dynamic capabilities literature. In a recent literature review, Schilke et al. (2018) identify the same three groups of antecedents of dynamic capabilities—organizational factors, individual/team factors, and environmental factors.

The review of dimensions and antecedents of the two constructs is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Dimensions and Antecedents.

	Readiness for Change	Organizational Capacity for Change
Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared commitment • Self-efficacy • Beliefs-discrepancy; appropriateness; efficacy; principal support; and valence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational context—structural flexibility, processes, and procedures) • Climate (encouraging participation in change processes; trust in peers and leaders) • Change process—previous experience with changes, transparency, communication • Transformational leadership (also mid-level management) • Learning in the organization • Culture (supporting innovation; cultural cohesion)
Antecedents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External context • Internal context (culture, policies, procedures, structure, trust, climate, past experience, resources, conflicts, flexibility etc.) • Change content and valence • Personality characteristics of the organizational members involved: self-evaluation (self-efficacy, locus of control); beliefs; positive emotions • Information assessment (by the organizational members involved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational factors (experience with change; organizational structure; organizational culture; resources incl. capabilities; learning; information technology etc.) • Individual/team factors (experience with change; leadership; managerial cognition) • Environmental factors (external environment incl. dynamism, uncertainty, stage of evolution; national uncertainty avoidance)

5. Applicability to Different Types of Change

Understanding the type of change faced by an organization guides the way it is led, and what might help its success. There have been numerous approaches to classify the possible types of change. This article steps on the typology developed by Maes and Hootegem (2011). The authors summarize previous research advancements into a set of eight dimensions to describe the different types of change in a dynamic way. Four of these dimensions have been substantially researched: control, scope, frequency, and stride (Maes and Hootegem 2011), and are well defined and explored in empirical and theoretical studies. The higher level of clarity on these four dimensions motivates their selection for the purpose of this article.

5.1. Change as Planned vs. Emergent

Planned change builds on the idea that an organization may deliberately and rationally solve problems, improve its functioning, and address environmental challenges (Maes and Hootegem 2011). It is typically associated with a specific initiative and follows a

general approach of diagnosis, design of action plan, implementation, and assessment of its achievement. According to Holt et al. (2007, p. 235), readiness “reflects the extent to which an individual or individuals are cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo”. That is, a clear plan, direction of action can be supported by readiness for change. Readiness for change, conceived as “the cognitive precursor to the behavior of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort” (Armenakis et al. 1993, p. 683) requires clarity on the elements of the change effort envisaged. According to Wang et al. (2020), readiness connotes a state of being both psychological and behaviorally prepared to take action (i.e., willing and able) in view of the proposed change. The proposed change can be described by its content; it is deliberate and planned. When a planned initiative is defined by its goal, scope, and consequences, assessing readiness for change can help develop or adjust the action plan. Recent empirical studies assess readiness levels in the context of planned change, such as process improvements and innovation in the context of a project-based industry (Akunyumu et al. 2021), knowledge acquisition in professional services industry (Rusly et al. 2015), innovative projects in clusters (Jamai et al. 2022).

Emergent change takes a different stance as to how change is initiated. Its conceptualization builds on the notion that change may be emergent and unintended, not planned a priori, based on local improvisations which can then be generalized (Orlikowski 1996). It is associated with the opportunity to exploit existing tacit knowledge in the organization (Maes and Hootegem 2011) which might otherwise not be tapped in by senior management when designing a planned change initiative. Maes and Hootegem (2011) highlight some of the constraints of emergent change, such as it is diffused (not focused), and better suited to implementation in operations, plants, and stores (than to strategy, firm-level, or corporate change). Thus, the nature of emergent change could hardly accommodate assessment of readiness level. Exploiting the “tacit knowledge in the organization” relates ordinary capabilities, which can be modified and operated by dynamic capabilities. However, organizational change capacity might be beneficial through the appropriate leadership, culture, and an organizational infrastructure enabling organizational change. OCC refers to the overall openness and tolerance to change (McGuinness et al. 2002) and to the extent organizational aspects support or hamper change in general (Bennebroek Gravenhorst et al. 2003).

5.2. Change as Adaptation vs. Transformation

There are two types of change according to its degree and impact on the organization (Maes and Hootegem 2011). Adaptation is less intensive, results in readjustment of the organization, while transformation is characterized as radical, revolutionary.

Readiness for change could be built within the context faced by the organization (Armenakis et al. 1993) and refers to the cognitive and affective elements of this attitude (Rafferty et al. 2013). It can be particularly helpful in ensuring the acceptance and adoption of a change initiative (Armenakis et al. 1993) through good translation of new strategic ideas into working practices or routines (Øygarden and Mikkelsen 2020). Transformations also described as a shift of the paradigm would involve having or creating the proper attitude to the change required. Assessing and building readiness will thus support transformational change initiatives. Hameed et al. (2017) discuss readiness in public sector R&D organizations undergoing major internal restructuring and expecting additional procedural changes. The shift of paradigm to innovation is the context in which readiness is explored empirically in the context of shifting paradigm to innovate (Akunyumu et al. 2021), to transform educational systems (Wang et al. 2020).

Change capacity is generally defined through the specific dynamic capabilities in the organization that enable it to continually reconfigure and adapt its operational capabilities and create new ones (Heckmann et al. 2016). Thus, it does not relate to attitudes, but provides the capabilities that can help implement different adaptations and transformations. Organizations that possess such a capacity are capable of change as and when necessary (Andreeva and Ritala 2016). Change capacity enables organizations to implement

large-scale changes without compromising daily operations (Meyer and Stensaker 2006). Some empirical evidence has been reported on the applicability of OCC in transformational changes (Spaulding et al. 2016; Zhao and Goodman 2018) as well as adaptations (Arnulf 2012).

5.3. Change as Discontinuous vs. Continuous

The dimension of frequency distinguishes the number of times a change is happening (Maes and Hootegem 2011). Continuous change at the micro level is associated with ongoing, smaller-scope adaptations or adjustments which might or might not result in large-scope transformation. This could also refer to multiple changes, which might or might not be interlinked.

Conceptualizing readiness as a recursive and multidimensional process (Stevens 2013) may relate to continuous change and multiple changes (Rafferty and Simons 2006). However, it is important to keep the focus on the meaning of readiness as a “state of preparedness for future action” (Weiner et al. 2020). That is, “ready for” a specific change, action. A multiple changes’ view poses questions such as how to engage and motivate the organization for each additional change (Schwarz and Stensaker 2014). A more feasible approach would come from capacity for change; some authors go even further to link change capacity primarily to continuous change (Andreeva and Ritala 2016).

Seeing change as a constant process would require organizations to build their change capacity to be able to navigate it successfully. It allows change implementation without compromising subsequent change processes (Meyer and Stensaker 2006) and doing so constantly (Klarner et al. 2007) in a cascading series of inter-related change initiatives (McGuinness and Morgan 2005) or multiple changes (Meyer and Stensaker 2006). Change capacity seen as processes, routines, leadership and attitudes (Judge et al. 2009) has a role in support of both discontinuous and continuous change. Available empirical evidence supports such a claim—some studies describe OCC in the context of a discontinuous event, while others view it as a generic dynamic capability serving multiple and continuous changes (Supriharyanti and Sukoco 2022).

Discontinuous change can also be interpreted as a distinct event. Thus, readiness for change seen as attitude to the specific initiative is easier deployed with discontinuous change. Readiness assessment is mostly intervention-specific, needs to be customized or tailored prior to use (Miake-Lye et al. 2020) and would differ at individual and organization levels (Weiner et al. 2020).

5.4. Change as Incremental vs. Revolutionary

Incremental change describes a gradual process of realigning the organization through accumulation of small changes (Maes and Hootegem 2011). It aims at achieving congruence, considers feedback from previous actions and incorporates it in the ongoing process. The right cognitive and affective attitude to change, as captured by readiness for change, would keep the energy and focus of the organization. Rafferty and Simons (2006) find that individuals who support and feel capable of implementing a less intense change (fine-tuning) will also be more likely to support and feel capable of implementing more wide-ranging change (transformative, revolutionary). Similar to the case of continuous change, it might be challenging to assess the readiness level throughout the incremental change. The mechanisms to generate support (i.e., build readiness) would need particular attention when dealing with incremental change (Rafferty and Simons 2006).

Revolutionary change relates to a process of massive changes at once and alters radically essential elements of the organization such as formal structures and decision-making routines (Maes and Hootegem 2011). In fact, readiness is more often studied in the context of radical, transformative changes (Rafferty and Simons 2006). Readiness is an important factor to ensure the members of the organization share the goal, see the benefits and believe they can accomplish the revolutionary change. Organizational change capacity would provide the necessary abilities to complete it.

Table 3 below maps the role of the two concepts to selected dimensions of change and their attributes.

Table 3. Types of Change.

Dimension	Readiness for Change	Organizational Capacity for Change
Control: planned vs. emergent	Facilitates planning and implementation with a focus on a particular change initiative Not relevant in the case of emergent change	Facilitates both planned and emergent change through ensuring the appropriate leadership, culture, and an organizational infrastructure
Scope: adaptation vs. transformation	Required when transformations are being initiated Could help in the case of adaptation	Facilitates both adaptation and transformation through the necessary capabilities to implement the change
Frequency: discontinuous vs. continuous	Facilitates planning and implementation with a focus on a particular change initiative Requires new assessment and development of readiness for each initiative (in the case of multiple changes) Could be more cumbersome to assess in the case of continuous change	Facilitates managing and leading continuous change without losing operational performance Requires constant focus of the organization in developing and maintaining the capacity Supports the implementation of discontinuous change, seen as a distinct event
Stride: incremental vs. revolutionary	Helps keep focus when the change is incremental Helps mobilize members of the organization through shared attitude	Facilitates both incremental and revolutionary change through the necessary capabilities to implement it

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The search for organizational change success factors is ongoing and will continue to grow in relevance in turbulent and dynamic environments. Readiness for change and organizational capacity for change are two concepts attempting to help organizations in navigating change. Organizational capacity for change being a newer and less empirically explored construct is often confused with readiness for change. The analysis in this article contributes to delineating the two constructs and clarifying their relationship.

To answer the first research question and differentiate the two constructs, the analysis explores their theoretical assumptions, dimensions, and antecedents.

The review of *theoretical lens* applied to the two concepts—readiness for change and organizational capacity for change—indicates the differences in their conceptualization. Readiness for change reflects the psychological predispositions, shared understanding that a particular change initiative is beneficial (for the organization and self), desired and possible to implement by the organization. It is a mindset—beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that can be assessed before and during the implementation (Vakola 2014) as well as influenced (Armenakis et al. 1993). Thus, it can be seen as situational. There are calls to incorporate dynamism in explaining readiness for change and to reflect past experiences and group norms, interpersonal, and social dynamics (Stevens 2013; Vakola 2014). This article proposes that such a dynamism might be reflected through the relationship between readiness and capacity for change. The adequate change-related processes and practices within the organization that are collectively built (Klarner et al. 2008) could help boost the motivation for future change initiatives.

These processes and practices aimed at changing the organization to respond to dynamic markets and to support building a sustainable competitive advantage are captured by the dynamic capabilities framework. The findings in this article align with Soparnot (2011) who defines OCC as a skill, competence to adapt, a proactive approach which may be built and maintained to serve the organization many times, and thus distinguishes it from change management.

This article aligns with the dynamic capabilities lens and thus supports extant empirical and theoretical contributions (Oxtoby et al. 2002; Judge and Elenkov 2005; Klarner et al. 2007; Heckmann et al. 2016). The analysis findings disagree with Soparnot who distinguishes organizational capacity for change from dynamic capabilities: “where change capacity may be qualified as dynamic capacity, it should not be confused with it” (2011, p. 645). He suggests that the change capacity aims to explain how the new strategic and organizational reconfigurations happen, while dynamic capabilities only identify the routines that enable these renewals.

The organizational capacity for change conceptualized as a dynamic capability could be seen as an antecedent to readiness for change. In fact, some of the antecedents to readiness are identified in this article as dimensions of organizational capacity for change. These include elements of the internal context such as climate, experience with past changes, learning, transformational leadership, structure, but exclude external context and personality characteristics.

To answer the second research question and define the relationship between the two constructs, the analysis explores their role in selected types of change. This responds to the call for more research on attitudes such as readiness for different types of change (Rafferty and Simons 2006; Weiner et al. 2020) and limited empirical evidence on OCC (Supriharyanti and Sukoco 2022). The analysis concludes that the two constructs share a role and can both be beneficial in certain types of change. Unlike readiness, organizational capacity for change could support organizations in navigating continuous and adaptive changes.

Readiness, defined as an attitude, can be assessed and developed in relation to a definable change, seen as a distinct event. Thus, it can assess to what extent the members of the organization understand and agree with its goal, believe they can achieve it and that it is beneficial (for the organization and selves). It can facilitate changes which are planned, transformational, discontinuous, both incremental and revolutionary. It might be helpful in keeping the focus in the case of changes which are continuous and adaptive, although the readiness assessment might be more cumbersome.

Capacity for change, defined as a capability to implement a change, can be assessed and developed in relation to multiple, continuous and adaptive changes. This aligns with previous contributions (Andreeva and Ritala 2016). OCC can provide the capabilities within the organization to implement different types of changes and be seen as an antecedent, based on which readiness for change can be developed. The organizational change capabilities (drawing on processes, flexibility, climate, leadership, learning, culture) could support building the shared beliefs and attitudes that the organization will be able to implement a particular initiative. This proposition aligns with Katsaros et al. (2020) conclusion that to develop readiness demands building dynamic core competences, among others.

This research bears its limitations. The scope of reviewed theoretical and empirical contributions does not claim to be exhaustive in scope and detail. However, the aim here was to highlight key distinctions and point at possible relations between the two concepts which impacted the selection of articles reviewed. Second, the empirical evidence on organizational capacity for change is limited which makes it difficult to generalize conclusions and implications.

Several findings in this article are inconclusive and need to be empirically tested. These are used to formulate some directions for further research.

First, although the dynamic capabilities framework is widely cited as a theoretical background in defining OCC, this claim still lacks enough empirical grounding. Andreeva and Ritala (2016) propose capacity for change to be regarded as a generic dynamic capability as opposed to domain-specific capabilities. That is, OCC enables dynamic capabilities aimed at changing specific processes, practices, structures in specific domains, which in turn enable ordinary capabilities. OCC however, is largely omitted in dynamic capabilities reviews. A recent taxonomy by Leemann and Kanbach (2022) scopes empirical research since 2007 to identify 240 idiosyncratic dynamic capabilities organized into 19 sub-capabilities within the triad of sensing, seizing, and transforming. Whether organizational capacity

for change fits into the known classifications of dynamic capabilities remains a question for further research. Similarly, more empirical research is needed to clarify the link and map capacity for change to organizational ambidexterity typology (see [Carter \(2015\)](#) for a proposed approach).

Second, this article steps on dynamic capabilities' antecedents applied also by [Supriharyanti and Sukoco \(2022\)](#). Antecedents of OCC are yet largely explored ([Heckmann et al. 2016](#)). Further empirical research would help position antecedents of readiness and capacity for change and support—or not—this article's propositions.

Third, empirical evidence is needed to test the relationship between the two constructs. The OCC dimensions should also reflect their dynamic properties. Seen as skills, abilities, procedures and processes, readiness for change antecedents appear to be dimensions of the dynamic capability OCC. Reviewing existing scales to measure OCC and testing the relationship to readiness for change might bring further insights to the relationship between the two concepts. This might help address the lack of sufficient clarity and empirical results to support a generally accepted definition of OCC as a distinct concept from readiness for change.

Fourth, the outcomes of organizational capacity for change and readiness for change were omitted from the scope of this article. However, to fully distinguish the two concepts, exploring their outcomes would be necessary. Outcomes of readiness for change are generally associated with change supportive behaviors ([Holt et al. 2007](#); [Rafferty et al. 2013](#)). The number of studies examining the influence of readiness on adoption and implementation of change, though, are limited, and evidence to support the criticality of readiness as a precursor to successful change is still to be collected ([Weiner et al. 2020](#)). Likewise, research on OCC outcomes is far from sufficient. Most of the empirical studies on OCC are aimed at identifying its dimensions ([Oxtoby et al. 2002](#); [Klarner et al. 2008](#); [Meyer and Stensaker 2006](#)), testing the relationship to organizational performance ([Judge et al. 2006](#); [Judge and Elenkov 2005](#); [Adna and Sukoco 2020](#)) or change project performance ([Heckmann et al. 2016](#)). Existing empirical research focuses more on the relationship of OCC to performance related outcomes. The non-performance related outcomes (such as innovation process, resilience, market orientation) are underexplored ([Supriharyanti and Sukoco 2022](#)). These however seem to be in essence capabilities and may provide the link to dynamic capabilities framework. OCC should be conceptualized as impacting ordinary capabilities that produce results. [Schilke et al. \(2018\)](#) identify two groups of consequences of dynamic capabilities (performance-related and change-related) and two possible ways of reaching them. One is direct influence of dynamic capabilities on consequences that could be moderated by two groups of factors (organizational and environmental). The second is through the influence of dynamic capabilities on the resource base which in turn influences the consequences. Identifying the mechanisms and ordinary capabilities which are influenced by OCC could help clarify the concept and position it into the dynamic capabilities domain.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Dimensions of organizational capacity for change.

(Oxtoby et al. 2002)	(Bennebroek Gravenhorst et al. 2003)	(Judge and Elenkov 2005)	(Meyer and Stensaker 2006)	(Klamer et al. 2008)
Empirical Personal interviews, results aggregated into 167 key points	Empirical Survey questionnaire, 79 statements under 16 aspects, grouped in 2 dimensions	Empirical Survey questionnaire, 32 items grouped in 8 dimensions	Conceptual Literature review on change process prescriptions	Empirical Case study: World Health Organization Interviews, internal documents, business press articles
'Sustainable Competitiveness Process' model-12 steps:	16 aspects of organizational capacity for change: 1st group relates to the organization	8 dimensions of OCC:	Prescriptions to building organizational change capacity:	14 determinants grouped into 3 dimensions: 1st dimension-5 process determinants
(1) Compelling business need	(1) Goals and strategy	(1) Trustworthy leadership	(1) Framing (the reasoning and rationale behind changes)	(1) Transformational leadership
(2) Set clear goals and measure objectives	(2) Structure	(2) Trusting followers	(2) How changes are communicated	(2) Incremental deployment
(3) Establish leadership	(3) Culture	(3) Capable champions	(3) Involving (allowing organizational members to participate in planning	(3) Collectively built change processes
(4) Build key players	(4) Technology	(4) Involved mid-management	(4) Pacing and sequencing (tempo of the change process and sequence in which changes are introduced)	(4) Creation of transparency
(5) Create commitment among all involved	(5) Job characteristics	(5) Innovative culture	(5) Routinising (use of organizational routines to implement change)	(5) The perceived legitimacy of the change
(6) Discover preferred learning methods	(6) Political relations	(6) Accountable culture	(6) Recruiting (hiring personnel permanently or temporarily)	2nd dimension-6 organizational context conditions
(7) Arrange time, space and "kit"	(7) Goals	(7) Systems communications		(6) The value of change
(8) Develop materials	(8) Technology	(8) System thinking		(7) Structural flexibility
(9) Implement improvements	(9) Tension			(8) Cultural cohesion
(10) Measure against goals	(10) Timing			(9) Trust
(11) Visibly display progress and give recognition	(11) Information supply			(10) Practices based on consensus
(12) Record new "est practices"	(12) Creating support			(11) Capabilities of individual learning
	(13) Role of change managers			3rd dimension-3 learning determinants
	(14) Role of line managers			(12) Improvement through experience
	(15) Expected outcome			(13) Renewal through experimentation
	(16) Support for change			(14) Transfer of organizational knowledge

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