Organisational Kinetics: Toward A General Theory of Responsiveness and Organisational Change

Oyeinkorikiye Stephan Isaiah, PhD

Department of Management Faculty of Management Sciences Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State

***Corresponding Author**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.101000798

Received: 27 October 2026; Accepted: 03 November 2026; Published: 18 November 2026

ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic business climate, organisations face technological disruptions, digital transformation, intense competition, globalisation and shifting stakeholder expectations, which compel them to renew their plans, strategies, structures and behaviours continually. Existing perspectives, such as dynamic capabilities, organisational agility, organisational learning and absorptive capacity, offer insights into aspects of adaptation but leave room for explaining the transition from collective understanding to coordinated action. This conceptual paper proposes an approach called organisational kinetics to explain how organisations generate, coordinate and sustain purposeful motion. Drawing on organisational cognition, dynamic capabilities and adaptive systems perspectives, the framework conceptualises organisations as dynamic systems whose responsiveness depends on five interconnected dimensions. Organisational organic cognition enables organisations to sense and interpret their environment, learn from it and formulate adaptive responses; adaptive velocity relates to the speed of response; communication flow facilitates the sharing and integration of knowledge; structural flexibility enables organisational adjustment; and energetic alignment promotes commitment and collective action towards strategic goals. The paper presents organisational kinetics as an integrative approach that examines the speed, intensity, direction and effective coordination of firms' responses and pursuit of their goals. Based on this analysis, it concludes that organisational kinetics provides an integrated framework for exploring differences in organisational responsiveness under similar environmental conditions. It therefore suggests empirical studies to validate the framework's dimensions, establish its theoretical distinctiveness and examine its relationship with organisational performance.

Keywords: Communication flow, energetic alignment, adaptive velocity, structural flexibility, organisational organic cognition, organisational kinetics.

INTRODUCTION

The business world is becoming increasingly uncertain, complex and discontinuous, with continual technological change. Organisations operate in interdependent markets, and their ability to survive and grow is continually affected by changing market conditions, including digital technologies, consumer expectations and competitive practices. Digital transformation involves more than the introduction of new technologies and tools; it also involves changes to organisational strategy, structures and value creation (Hanelt et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2021). Organisations therefore need to review regularly how they gather information, analyse new trends and respond. They remain relevant partly because they can 'listen' to their environment and adapt their activities accordingly. Artificial intelligence (AI) presents an additional layer of complexity, affecting how organisations make decisions and solve problems. Raisch and Krakowski (2021) argued that automation and augmentation are coupled processes that must be managed in relation to human judgement and capabilities. Raisch and Fomina (2025) suggested that the outcomes of human–AI collaboration depend on how human and artificial intelligence are integrated. These contributions suggest that technology alone is insufficient to explain organisational effectiveness; the organisational arrangements through which technology supports understanding and action

must also be considered. This is particularly relevant because organisational change is not synonymous with effective adaptation.

The introduction of digital systems, the reorganisation of departments or changes to working practices can generate activity without producing a coherent response to environmental demands. Hanelt et al. (2021) discussed digital transformation as part of a broader journey of organisational change, raising questions about its effects on strategy and organisational structure. The present paper builds on this view and distinguishes between change as it occurs and purposeful organisational movement. Organisational movement is understood here as concrete changes in strategic orientation, resource allocation, routines, structures and collective behaviours undertaken in response to changing circumstances. It therefore concerns the direction, timing, coordination and implementation of change. Several theories provide foundations for explaining organisational adaptation. Dynamic capabilities theory highlights sensing, seizing and reconfiguring as key capabilities through which organisations address opportunities and threats. These capabilities depend on underlying skills, processes, structures and decision rules (Teece, 2007). Adaptation thus involves both recognising environmental changes and making the preparations necessary to address them. This view provides a basis for studying purposeful movement in relation to the renewal of routines and resources in evolving competitive contexts.

Sensemaking scholarship also highlights the significance of interpretation in organisational activity. Weick et al. (2005) focused on meaning construction among organisational members as a means of explaining organising and action. Their contribution suggests that environmental information does not have the same meaning for every organisation or every individual within it. Instead, interpretations emerge through social interaction and shape the responses that become possible. This paper therefore examines the interplay between interpretation, response timeliness, communication, structural adjustment and collective effort within a framework that describes the generation and coordination of organisational movement. Recent studies further reinforce the importance of examining relationships between organisational capabilities. Using chess competition as a controlled setting, Krakowski et al. (2023) examined shifts in the sources of competitive advantage and the substitution and complementarity of human and machine capabilities. Their results suggest that performance differences may arise from new combinations of capabilities rather than the continued dominance of existing expertise. For this paper, this provides a basis for considering the interdependence of capabilities rather than treating each as a separate variable that explains adaptation. This extension remains an inference and requires investigation in organisational settings.

Accordingly, this paper proposes an integrative framework, Organisational Kinetics (OK), to explain purposeful organisational movement. Organisational kinetics refers to the interacting mechanisms that organise the initiation, direction, coordination and maintenance of changes in organisational activities. ‘Kinetics’ serves as an organising analogy for examining movement and the conditions that enable it; it does not imply that organisational behaviour follows the laws of physics. In the proposed framework, organisations are adaptive social systems in which movement emerges through interactions among people, information, technologies, structures and routines. The framework focuses on how these elements interact over time to produce effective responsiveness. Five interconnected dimensions are proposed: organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment. Organisational organic cognition refers to the distributed ability to perceive environmental signals, interpret their meaning, learn from experience and reconsider existing assumptions. Adaptive velocity concerns the timeliness of developing and implementing appropriate responses. Communication flow involves the exchange of relevant information within and between organisational levels. Structural flexibility refers to the ability to modify roles, decision-making arrangements and resource allocation. Energetic alignment concerns the coordination of cognitive focus, motivation and effort towards organisational priorities. These dimensions form parts of the proposed framework whose conceptual distinctiveness and explanatory value require evaluation. Organisational organic cognition occupies a foundational position because interpretation influences the direction of subsequent decisions.

However, cognition is not viewed as the exclusive domain of senior management or as a single organisational mind. It is shaped by interactions among knowledge systems, routines, teams and employees. Different combinations and configurations of human intelligence and AI for problem-solving have been investigated in recent years, producing varied outcomes (Raisch & Fomina, 2025). On this basis, organisational cognition is treated here as an ongoing process in which both human judgement and technological support inform responses.

Cognition and action are also expected to interact, with implementation outcomes and feedback providing a basis for revising earlier understanding. The remaining dimensions describe how organisational understanding becomes coordinated action. Communication flow conveys interpretations and information to those responsible for acting. Structural flexibility enables the allocation of authority and resources needed to implement changes. Adaptive velocity concerns whether responses occur within an appropriate timeframe, while energetic alignment concerns the collective effort needed to sustain implementation. The framework suggests that weak relationships among these dimensions may limit responsiveness. Information may be poorly interpreted, delays may reduce its value for action, and limited authority or inadequate implementation support may prevent its use. Conversely, acting too quickly without sufficient understanding may lead to movement in an inappropriate direction. This conceptual paper aims to define organisational kinetics, elaborate its five dimensions and formulate theoretical propositions concerning their relationships with organisational responsiveness. It also identifies theoretical and managerial implications and directions for empirical research. Its purpose is to explain how environmental signals become purposeful, coordinated and sustained organisational activity. To establish this contribution, the constructs must be clearly defined, and the proposed relationships must demonstrate explanatory value beyond existing theory and evidence. Organisational kinetics is therefore proposed as an evolving model for examining the direction, timing, coordination and sustainability of organisational movement.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Organisational kinetics draws on established theories in organisational and strategic management. These theories offer valuable explanations of organisational adaptation but tend to focus on particular aspects of change, such as capabilities, learning, flexibility or knowledge management. Organisational kinetics combines these perspectives, suggesting that organisational adaptation is a process of movement arising from interactions among cognition, speed, information, structure and human energy.

2.1 Dynamic Capability Theory

Dynamic capability theory is a major perspective for explaining why organisations survive and compete in changing environments. Teece (2007) described dynamic capabilities in terms of an organisation's capacity to identify opportunities and threats, pursue opportunities and adapt its resources and structures to changing conditions. The theory shifted the focus of strategic management from acquiring resources to renewing and adapting them continually. Organisations with dynamic capabilities can detect changes, mobilise resources and restructure their operations to remain competitive. However, while dynamic capability theory explains what organisations must do to adapt, the processes through which adaptation occurs require further consideration. Mechanisms underpinning sensing, seizing and transforming influence decision-making, information-processing speed, knowledge transfer and team dynamics. Organisational kinetics extends this thinking by examining how an organisation moves towards adaptation. Dynamic capabilities are an important source of movement within OK, while that movement is characterised by interactions among organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment. Organisational kinetics is therefore presented as a complementary theoretical approach to the problems of organisational change.

2.2 Organisational Agility Theory

Organisational agility has grown in significance amid technological disruption, fluctuating markets and intensified competitive pressures. Agility is the capacity of organisations to sense change quickly, respond effectively and adapt their strategies, processes and structures. Research on organisational agility identifies three important abilities: sensing agility, decision-making agility and acting agility. Agile organisations are fast, collaborative and responsive. However, research on agility often examines the outcomes of movement rather than the mechanisms that generate it. Rapid response involves more than speed. Organisations need to understand the implications of change before determining an appropriate pace of response. Organisational kinetics presents adaptive velocity as a dimension describing the pace of movement. Adaptive velocity is not independent of the other dimensions: rapid action without adequate understanding can produce ineffective responses, while action without dialogue can create organisational confusion. OK therefore suggests that agility emerges when speed is accompanied by understanding, information flow, flexible structures and aligned human effort.

2.3 Organisational Learning Theory

Organisational learning theory explains how organisations learn from experience, change their behaviours and improve their performance. Argyris and Schön (1996) argued that organisational learning occurs through inquiry, reflection and adjustment. Learning enables organisations to identify mistakes, revise assumptions and develop better approaches. Its importance has increased as environmental change outpaces conventional planning cycles. Organisations need to learn continually, update their understanding in response to new information and develop new capabilities. Learning supports organisational movement, but information must also be translated into action. Even an organisation with extensive knowledge may struggle to adapt if its communication systems are inadequate, employee commitment is weak or its structures are inflexible. Organisational kinetics therefore locates learning within organisational organic cognition. Learning is embedded in the cognitive processes through which organisations understand their environment and determine suitable actions.

2.4 Sensemaking Theory

Collective interpretation is the cornerstone of sensemaking theory, another key foundation of organisational kinetics. Weick (1995) argued that organisations experience ambiguity and uncertainty and that their members need to make sense of these conditions. Organisations do not simply respond to objective environmental conditions; they respond to the meanings they assign to those conditions. A technological development, market change or competitive threat may generate different responses because it carries different meanings for different organisations. Organisational organic cognition builds on this insight. Organisations need to interpret signals collectively and determine their meaning before acting. Within OK, sensemaking explains the cognitive basis of organisational movement. Shared understanding helps organisational members agree on an appropriate direction.

2.5 Organisational Cognition Perspective

Organisational cognition research examines the knowledge organisations manage, how they develop it and how they make decisions. Organisational cognition is a higher-order phenomenon referring to collective or shared cognition that emerges through interactions among people, routines, technologies and systems. Distributed intelligence is becoming an increasingly important component of modern organisations. Decision-making extends beyond senior management to networks of people, systems, analytics and processes. Organisational kinetics develops this perspective through the concept of organisational organic cognition (OOC). OOC is viewed as a living organisational capability that develops through feedback, experimentation, learning and interaction with the environment. The term ‘organic’ emphasises the dynamic nature of organisational cognition: it grows and evolves as organisations engage with changing contexts.

2.6 Theoretical Boundaries and Incremental Explanatory Value

Teece (2007) specifies the microfoundations of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring, including managerial processes, decision rules and organisational structures. Organisational kinetics does not claim that these processes are absent from dynamic capability theory. Its narrower proposed contribution is a process-level account of how cognition, information transmission, decision/implementation latency, structural permission and collective effort interact during a particular response episode. The unit of analysis is the response trajectory, not simply possession of a firm-level capability. Two firms with comparable dynamic capability scores may still differ in response coherence because communication bottlenecks, authority constraints or misaligned effort interrupt translation from interpretation to execution. This is an incremental, testable claim rather than an established finding.

Weick (1995) explains the social construction of meaning under equivocal conditions; sensemaking can also be intertwined with enactment and action. OK therefore does not portray sensemaking as purely pre-action or static. It instead asks whether interpretations circulate, trigger timely decisions, receive structural support and mobilise sustained implementation. OOC should be discriminated empirically from established collective sensemaking and organisational learning measures; a relabelled sensemaking scale would not establish a new construct.

The kinetics metaphor is justified only if it reveals temporal coupling and friction that are obscured when capabilities are measured separately: response latency, pace–quality mismatch, directional drift, stalled implementation and feedback-driven redirection. 'Energy', 'force' and 'velocity' are analytical analogies, not physical quantities or conservation laws. A parsimonious alternative model using dynamic capabilities, sensemaking and change readiness must be tested against OK. If OK provides no incremental prediction of response quality or trajectory after those constructs are controlled, extending existing terminology is preferable to retaining a separate theory.

Boundary conditions include high-interdependence change initiatives with multiple actors and feedback cycles, where coupling problems are salient. OK may add little for routine, individually executed tasks or highly standardised responses. Under acute crises, deliberative cognition can slow essential action; under stable conditions, maximal velocity or flexibility may impose unnecessary costs. Regulatory constraints, power asymmetries and resource scarcity can limit the effectiveness of alignment even when motivation is high.

THE CONCEPT OF ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS

Organisational kinetics (OK) is the scientific study of the forces, mechanisms and conditions that influence the speed, intensity, direction and effectiveness of organisational movement. It provides a lens for examining how organisations initiate, maintain and change their strategies, structures, processes and behaviours. The author of this paper had earlier proposed four conceptually interrelated dimensions of organisational kinetics: adaptive velocity, interactional flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment. The central premise of his view is that organisational change is an ongoing process arising from the interplay of adaptive, communicative, structural and human factors. The propositions of organisational kinetics should therefore be presented as a new theoretical approach requiring further empirical examination. From this perspective, organisational movement refers to intentional changes made in response to changing conditions and in pursuit of organisational goals. These may include shifts in strategic priorities or resources, redesigned roles and responsibilities, the development of employee skills or evolving working practices. Movement thus extends beyond visible restructuring to changes in collective understanding and everyday behaviour.

In the following conceptual discussion, it is important to consider whether these changes improve the fit between the organisation and its members and enhance organisational functioning. This view is supported by recent studies treating organisational agility as a multidimensional phenomenon. According to Asghar et al. (2026), agility comprises interdependent capabilities in strategic, operational, innovation and workforce domains. Their review highlights interactions among contextual conditions, organisational attributes, enabling mechanisms and dynamic capabilities. This supports an integrative discussion of organisational movement but does not independently validate organisational kinetics. Organisations face external pressures from technological developments, competition, customer expectations, regulatory requirements and economic uncertainty. They also face internal challenges relating to leadership decisions, employee capabilities, organisational culture, knowledge systems and strategic priorities. The proposed kinetic interpretation is that these pressures create opportunities for action but do not necessarily produce effective responses. Their effects depend on how organisational members interpret them, mobilise resources and coordinate action.

Organisational kinetics therefore moves beyond the possession of resources to examine the processes through which those resources become purposeful action. An organisation may have skilled staff, financial resources and advanced technologies yet still experience persistent implementation delays. Conversely, an organisation whose members understand priorities and coordinate their efforts efficiently may respond effectively with fewer resources. The conceptual issue is the transformation of organisational potential into meaningful and relevant action. The central logic of organisational kinetics is that effective movement arises through interactions among cognition, action capacity, response speed, communication, structural flexibility and human commitment. These elements should be viewed as mutually influential rather than as a fixed sequence. Communication can influence interpretation before a decision is made; structure can affect the information available to decision-makers; and implementation experience can reshape understanding of the organisational environment. This discussion is grounded in organisational organic cognition, which the author had earlier described as an organisation-wide capability to detect, interpret, adapt to and learn from changing environmental conditions. His conceptual

contribution positions cognition as a bridge between organisational information, choices and adaptation. This implies that movement depends partly on how members understand new situations individually and collectively and translate experience into usable knowledge. Within the present framework, cognition helps determine the direction of movement. Environmental information often permits multiple interpretations: declining sales, for example, may reflect changing customer preferences, product-quality problems or distribution difficulties. Each interpretation may produce a different organisational response. Purposeful movement therefore requires more than identifying a problem; it requires questioning assumptions, comparing explanations and deciding what to do next. Cognition remains open to revision as new evidence emerges.

Organisational kinetic capacity can be understood here as the potential to mobilise and coordinate the resources needed to undertake a planned response. It is a proposed extension within this discussion, rather than a validated construct. It encompasses available skills, decision-making authority, implementation plans, technological support and access to resources. Its explanatory role is to distinguish what action is required from who has the authority and capacity to undertake it. Adaptive velocity concerns the timeliness of organisational responses. Isaiah identified adaptive velocity as one of the four basic elements of organisational kinetics. In developing this concept, speed, direction and implementation quality should all be considered. A rapid response based on an inaccurate analysis or exceeding an organisation's implementation capacity is unlikely to achieve the intended outcome. Prolonged delays can also be damaging because they may reduce the value of an otherwise appropriate response. Effective velocity is therefore proposed to involve matching the pace of action to the urgency, uncertainty and complexity of the situation. Communication flow enables organisational members to share information, understand priorities and coordinate interdependent activities. It also conveys implementation concerns and feedback to decision-makers.

Relevant empirical evidence is provided by Siamionava et al. (2024), whose study examines how different performance measures affect mutual trust and shared understanding between chief information officers and top management teams. Their conclusions highlight the relevance of communication content to cognitive coordination, particularly among individuals with distinct roles who must collaborate towards shared goals. This evidence suggests that distributing information is insufficient unless recipients understand its implications for their responsibilities in organisational movement. Employees may be informed of a strategic change without knowing the priorities, decision rights or actions expected of them. Communication flow therefore needs to be understood in terms of its clarity, accessibility, reciprocity and usefulness for coordination. In this discussion, it refers to the communicative aspect of Isaiah's broader concept of 'interactional flow'. Structural flexibility concerns the capacity of organisational structures to accommodate changes in responsibilities, working relationships and resource deployment. It is proposed to support coordinated action without excessive procedural delays. Temporary cross-functional teams, delegated decision-making and flexible roles are examples of such arrangements. However, flexibility must be accompanied by sufficient accountability and role clarity to prevent confusion. Organisational movement requires a balance between freedom to adjust and coordination that supports consistent implementation. Energetic alignment involves directing human effort and commitment towards organisational priorities. Isaiah had also included this dimension in his original account of organisational kinetics. In the present interpretation, it concerns aligning leadership intentions, employee motivation and collaboration with the intended direction of movement. A technically viable change may encounter difficulties if employees do not understand its purpose, perceive competing tasks as priorities or lack awareness of the support available for participation. Energetic alignment therefore draws attention to the human conditions that enable implementation. The interplay of these factors makes organisational movement more than a matter of speed and flexibility. Sound interpretations without implementation capacity can leave plans unrealised. Rapid communication without clear priorities can cause confusion. Flexible structures and commitment, when poorly coordinated, can generate activity without coordinated progress.

The present conceptual argument is that purposeful movement depends on the alignment of these conditions and the organisation's capacity to address constraints on their interaction. Movement also generates feedback. Adjustments to strategies, processes and working arrangements provide information about customer responses, staff skills and implementation challenges. Organisational members can use this information to revise assumptions and plan subsequent actions. Responsiveness and adaptation are proposed outcomes of effective movement, and these outcomes inform its continuation. This two-way relationship makes the discussion

developmental: organisations learn through action, and learning influences the direction and quality of subsequent action. Organisational kinetics can therefore support the study of how interpretation becomes coordinated action and how that action is sustained over time. This perspective has the potential to connect cognitive, communicative, structural and human conditions within a shared explanation of organisational movement. Establishing this contribution requires empirical evidence and clear distinctions between the definitions and measures of kinetic capacity and those of related concepts, including organisational agility, dynamic capabilities, adaptive velocity and movement effectiveness.

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS

Organisational kinetics proposes that organisational motion emerges through five interrelated dimensions: organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment. These represent the cognitive, temporal, informational, structural and human forces that jointly shape the initiation, coordination and continuation of organisational movement. The five-dimensional framework extends traditional views of organisational adaptation by suggesting that movement does not result from a single capability. Organisations become responsive when they understand change, determine an appropriate pace, share knowledge, adapt organisational arrangements and synchronise people's actions towards shared goals. Organisational movement is thus understood as an organised kinetic process.

4.1 Organisational Organic Cognition

Organisational organic cognition (OOC) is the foundational cognitive dimension of Organisational Kinetics Theory. It comprises the distributed and collective intelligence and learning that enable organisations to sense, interpret, learn from and adapt to developments in their environment. OOC differs from traditional approaches that locate intelligence primarily in individual managers. Instead, it views organisational intelligence as distributed across people, routines, technologies, knowledge systems and organisational practices. The organisation develops as a cognitive system capable of sensing, interpreting and responding to environmental change. The term 'organic' reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of organisational cognition. Organisational understanding is an ongoing process shaped by interaction, experimentation, feedback and environmental engagement. Research on sensemaking, knowledge management and dynamic capabilities highlights the role of cognition in organisational adaptation. Organisations respond to their interpretations of the environment, and effective movement therefore depends on sound understanding. OOC addresses the question: 'Where should the organisation go, and why?' This cognitive foundation enables organisational movement to be intentional rather than merely reactive. Without accurate interpretation of signals, organisations may make hasty decisions and move in the wrong direction. OOC comprises four interrelated processes.

4.1.1 Organisational Sensing

Organisational sensing is the capacity to detect environmental opportunities, threats and changes. Sensing activities include environmental scanning, competitor analysis, customer feedback, technological monitoring, market intelligence and internal performance assessment. Sensing is the first step towards adaptation because organisations must recognise changes before taking appropriate action (Teece, 2007). Organisational kinetics extends this view by arguing that sensing must lead to movement. Information must be understood collectively and translated into strategic action. Possessing substantial data does not necessarily mean that an organisation has mechanisms for understanding their meaning.

4.1.2 Collective Interpretation

Collective interpretation is the process through which organisational members develop a shared understanding of environmental events and determine their implications. In modern organisations, information is often incomplete or ambiguous, making interpretation necessary. Dialogue, collaboration, knowledge sharing and reflection enable members to move from individual interpretations towards collective meaning. For example, technological disruption may be interpreted as a threat requiring defensive measures or as an opportunity for innovation requiring innovative action. The distinction lies between the external event and the organisation's understanding of it. Collective interpretation therefore gives direction to organisational movement.

4.1.3 Organisational Learning

Organisational learning is the capacity to improve routines and skills through experience, feedback and learning. It enables organisations to review past decisions, identify effective approaches, revise ineffective practices, develop new skills and capabilities and improve future responses. Learning is particularly necessary in volatile contexts, where previous solutions may no longer be appropriate. Organisations must continually update their assumptions and knowledge. Within organisational kinetics, learning enhances movement by enabling organisations to improve subsequent actions through reflection on past experience.

4.1.4 Adaptive Response

Cognition Adaptive response cognition refers to the processes through which organisations assess options, select responses and organise the resources needed to implement them. Awareness of change does not necessarily produce adaptation. Organisations must decide what action to take, when to take it, how to implement it and which resources are required. Adaptive response cognition therefore provides a transition from learning to action. Together, sensing, interpretation, learning and adaptive response cognition constitute the cognitive engine of organisational movement.

4.2 Adaptive Velocity

Adaptive velocity is the rate at which organisations recognise, understand and respond to change. In conditions of technological disruption and competitive uncertainty, delayed responses may reduce organisational competitiveness. Organisations therefore face increasing pressure to accelerate decision-making and implementation. However, organisational kinetics proposes that effectiveness depends on more than speed. Rapid action without sufficient understanding can lead to strategic errors, wasted resources and organisational instability. Adaptive velocity must therefore be supported by cognition. It addresses the question: ‘How quickly does the organisation respond?’ The concept comprises three main components: detection velocity, or how quickly an organisation identifies environmental changes; decision velocity, or how quickly it interprets information and selects actions; and implementation speed, or how quickly strategic decisions become operational actions. Organisations with high adaptive velocity can reduce the time between environmental change and their response.

4.3 Communication Flow

Communication flow concerns the circulation, availability and integration of information within an organisation. Information provides a basis for coordinated action. Without its exchange across departments, levels and systems, clear understanding may fail to produce organisational movement. Effective communication flow disseminates information to relevant recipients, enables employees to understand strategic priorities, conveys feedback upwards and downwards and supports coordination across departments. It connects individual understanding with collective organisational action and addresses the question: ‘How does organisational understanding circulate through the system?’ Within organisational kinetics, communication is both a social process and a kinetic mechanism through which knowledge and organisational energy move. Poor communication creates organisational friction, slows movement and reduces responsiveness.

4.4 Structural Flexibility

Structural flexibility is an organisation’s ability to adapt its structures, processes, resource allocation and decision-making arrangements to new challenges. Organisational structures provide stability and can support accountability and coordination, depending on how their rules and procedures are designed and applied. They can also promote adaptability when designed for that purpose. Adler and Borys (1996) distinguish between ‘enabling bureaucracy’ and ‘coercive bureaucracy’: the former supports employee problem-solving, while the latter emphasises compliance and control. This distinction suggests that flexibility does not require abandoning formal structures. Rather, it requires arrangements that enable employees to redesign working processes, coordinate with colleagues across departments and make appropriate decisions responsibly. Structural flexibility therefore concerns how organisational arrangements can be adapted to support meaningful movement. Within

the proposed organisational kinetics framework, structural flexibility creates pathways through which cognitive understanding becomes coordinated action. Although organisational organic cognition can support the recognition of challenges and identification of suitable responses, rigid hierarchies, lengthy approval processes and fixed resource arrangements can slow organisational change and hinder implementation. This proposed relationship draws on Teece's (2007) emphasis on sensing opportunities, seizing them and reconfiguring resources and organisational arrangements to support adaptation. Structural flexibility is therefore presented as a means of connecting organisational understanding with action. For example, an organisation responding to changing customer needs may establish cross-functional teams, delegate decisions across departments and redirect resources towards new product development.

4.5 Energetic Alignment

Within organisational kinetics, energetic alignment describes the alignment of motivation, commitment and collective effort with organisational objectives. Human effort is needed to translate strategic intentions into coordinated action. Although knowledge systems, technologies and flexible structures create opportunities for adaptation, success depends on employees understanding the direction of change and the importance of their involvement. Gagné and Deci (2005) explain that contexts supporting autonomy, competence and relatedness encourage the internalisation of work-related goals and the development of autonomous motivation. Applied to energetic alignment, this suggests that sustained effort depends on purposeful engagement, opportunities to develop skills and positive relationships. Leaders can strengthen alignment by communicating a clear purpose, involving employees in decision-making and recognising actions that support shared goals. Collective ownership and confidence in the organisation's capacity to implement change are also part of energetic alignment. Weiner (2009) describes organisational readiness for change through two related elements: shared commitment to change and shared belief in the collective ability to implement it. His theory suggests that greater readiness encourages effort, persistence and collaboration during implementation. Within organisational kinetics, these ideas support the proposition that human energy sustains movement when employees value its direction and believe they have the resources and capabilities to contribute. Conversely, unclear priorities, inadequate support and conflicting expectations can undermine commitment and the effectiveness of collective action. Energetic alignment therefore addresses how people sustain organisational movement by connecting shared purpose and motivation with support for action and coordination over time (Weiner, 2009).

4.6 Cross-Dimensional Coupling, Friction and Distinctiveness

The five dimensions should not be interpreted as five independent positive traits. Their configuration matters: strong OOC paired with weak communication may remain localised knowledge; rapid decisions without structural authority may stall; high employee commitment without credible direction may intensify ineffective action. Communication is reciprocal with cognition, and structural design shapes both information access and implementation speed. Alignment can improve persistence but can also entrench a mistaken strategy unless corrective feedback is welcomed.

Compared with Teece's (2007) firm-level microfoundations, these are proposed episode-level interaction mechanisms and timing effects; compared with Weick's (1995) meaning-making lens, they specify the downstream constraints and feedback through which meaning becomes implemented movement. Empirical tests should estimate interaction terms, lagged effects and bottleneck configurations rather than assuming a simple additive index. Kinetic capacity must be measured separately from its adaptive outcomes to avoid circularity. The five-dimensional model is provisionally distinct, not yet demonstrated to be a new theory.

THE INTEGRATED ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS MODEL

The five dimensions form an integrated and interconnected system. Organisational movement begins with organisational organic cognition, through which organisations understand environmental changes. This understanding influences the timeliness of responses through adaptive velocity. Structural flexibility enables organisations to translate understanding into action, while energetic alignment mobilises individuals to implement that action. These dimensions interact to create organisational kinetic capacity: the capacity to generate, coordinate and sustain purposeful movement.

FIGURE 5.1 | INTEGRATED ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS MODEL

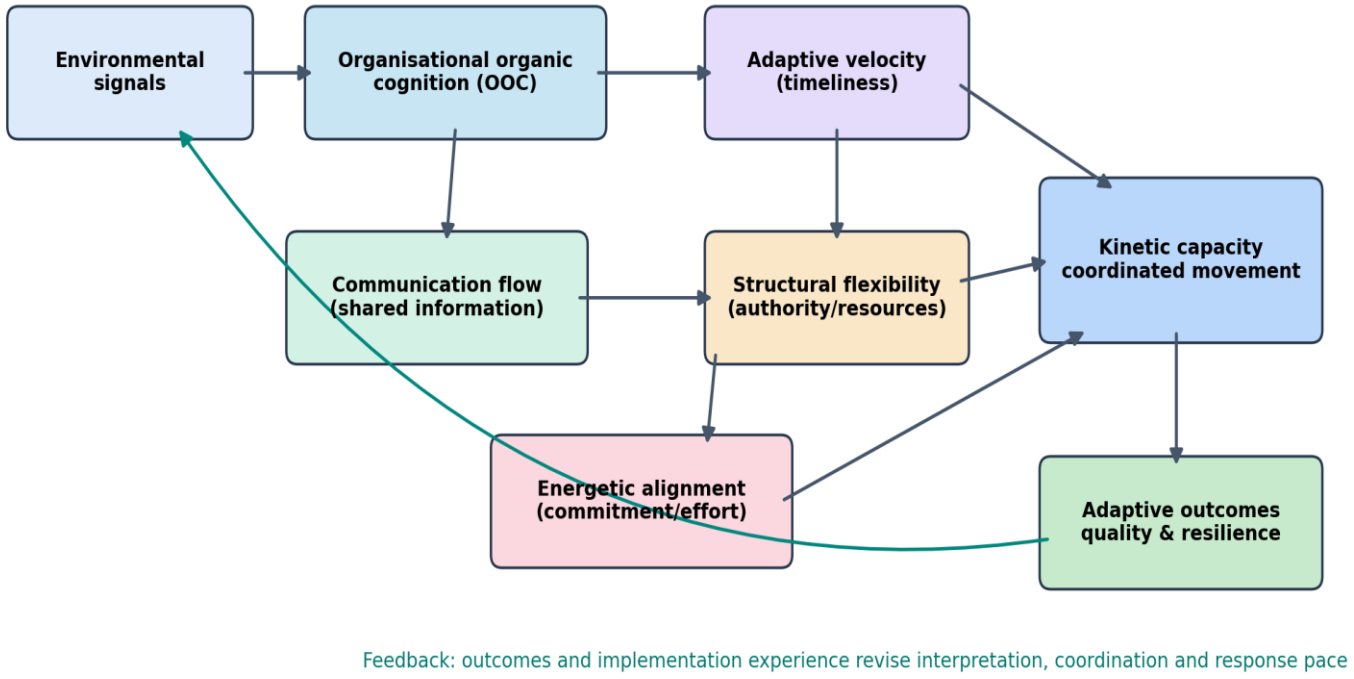


Figure 5.1. Integrated Organisational Kinetics Model.

Source: Author's conceptual model (2026).

THE ASSUMPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS

Organisational kinetics (OK) proposes that organisational effectiveness requires the generation, coordination and maintenance of purposeful movement. The framework rests on nine interrelated assumptions.

Assumption 1: Organisations are dynamic systems. Organisations continually adjust to internal and external conditions. Their effectiveness depends on how they use resources to produce purposeful change.

Assumption 2: Purposeful movement begins with the perception and interpretation of change. Organisations must perceive and interpret change to develop appropriate responses. Organisational organic cognition provides shared understanding that supports coordinated action.

Assumption 3: Movement arises from interacting forces. Organisational movement results from interactions among external and internal forces, including technology, competition, leadership, knowledge and culture.

Assumption 4: Adaptive velocity influences responsiveness. Effective responses depend on the speed of detecting change, interpreting its implications, making decisions and implementing appropriate actions.

Assumption 5: Communication facilitates coordinated movement. Timely and effective communication integrates organisational information into collective action, reducing delays and fragmented responses.

Assumption 6: Structural flexibility enables intentions to become actions. Organisations need to adjust structures and reallocate resources as conditions change.

Assumption 7: Human energy sustains movement. Shared purpose, employee commitment, motivation and cultural support align individual effort with organisational direction.

Assumption 8: The five dimensions are interdependent. Organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment work together to generate organisational kinetic capacity.

Assumption 9: Movement has multiple qualities. Its speed, direction, intensity and effectiveness vary. Movement that supports successful adaptation must be timely, strategically directed and capable of producing sustainable effects.

6.1 Preliminary Operationalisation and Measurement Guidance

The following are proposed—not validated—survey items. Respondents should rate each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), referring to a clearly identified change initiative in the previous 12 months. Obtain responses from employees and managers across functions; aggregate to organisational level only after checking within-group agreement and intraclass correlations.

Organisational organic cognition (OOC): (OOC1) 'People in different units jointly interpret emerging changes before major responses are chosen.' (OOC2) 'Our organisation tests alternative explanations of unexpected environmental signals.' (OOC3) 'Lessons from implementation lead us to revise our shared understanding.' (OOC4) 'Relevant frontline insights influence strategic interpretations.' Possible proxies: proportion of cross-functional reviews including frontline evidence; number of documented hypothesis revisions per initiative; elapsed time from signal detection to shared diagnosis.

Energetic alignment (EA): (EA1) 'Employees understand how their work contributes to the change priority.' (EA2) 'Different teams direct effort toward the same implementation milestones.' (EA3) 'Employees sustain effort when the change encounters setbacks.' (EA4) 'Conflicting priorities are resolved promptly across teams.' Possible proxies: share of teams with aligned milestones; cross-team task completion rate; persistence after setbacks; dispersion in priority rankings across departments. Avoid equating overtime or employee exhaustion with desirable 'energy'.

For the remaining dimensions, measure adaptive velocity using verified signal-to-decision and decision-to-implementation times adjusted for task complexity and response quality; communication flow using message reach, reciprocal feedback and comprehension checks; and structural flexibility using decision-right reassignment time, resource redeployment time and cross-functional staffing changes. Measure kinetic capacity as coordinated completion of change milestones, while measuring outcomes separately as independent indicators of adaptation quality, innovation, resilience or sustained performance.

For P1–P9, P1–P3 can use OOC scores predicting movement, velocity and communication; P4–P7 link the respective dimensions to independently assessed responsiveness, coordination and movement; P8 tests interactions or a theoretically justified higher-order factor; and P9 tests whether earlier kinetic capacity predicts later outcomes. Use multiwave data (baseline cognition/alignment, intermediate implementation, subsequent outcomes), multiple raters and archival timestamps. Test reliability, convergent/discriminant validity, measurement invariance and incremental predictive validity against sensemaking, dynamic capabilities, agility and change readiness. Preregister competing additive, interaction and bottleneck models, and avoid causal claims from a single cross-sectional survey.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS BASED ON ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS

The preceding assumptions provide a basis for proposing relationships among the dimensions of organisational kinetics.

P1: Organisational organic cognition positively influences organisational movement. Organisations with more developed cognitive capabilities can sense environmental changes, understand their meaning and decide how to respond. OOC supports movement by enabling organisations to identify changes and determine an appropriate course of adaptation.

P2: Organisational organic cognition positively influences adaptive velocity. Although speed is important, understanding supports effective speed. Organisations that interpret environmental signals accurately can make timely and informed decisions. Collective understanding therefore facilitates effective response processes.

P3: Organisational organic cognition strengthens communication flow. Shared understanding establishes common meaning and reduces information barriers. When organisational members share an understanding of situations, knowledge exchange and integration become easier. P4: Adaptive velocity positively influences organisational responsiveness. Organisations that respond quickly are better positioned to address uncertainty and capitalise on emerging opportunities. Adaptive velocity reduces the time needed to respond to environmental changes and take action.

P5: Communication flow positively influences organisational coordination and collective action. Movement requires coordination among organisational actors. Communication enables knowledge, decisions and resources to circulate throughout the organisation.

P6: Structural flexibility positively influences organisational movement and adaptation. Flexible structures enable organisations to translate cognitive understanding and strategic intentions into operational action.

P7: Energetic alignment positively influences organisational movement. Change initiatives require human commitment. Energetic alignment supports implementation by directing employees' efforts towards common goals.

P8: Organisational kinetic capacity emerges through interactions among the five dimensions. The central argument of OK is that the dynamics of organisational movement arise through interactions among organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment.

P9: Organisational kinetic capacity positively influences adaptive performance and long-term organisational sustainability. Organisations with strong kinetic capacity can respond to environmental change and sustain innovation and competitiveness.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL KINETICS

OK offers an integrative perspective on how organisations generate, connect and maintain meaningful movement in dynamic contexts. It brings organisational cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment into a single framework. By focusing on relationships among these dimensions, OK directs attention towards the processes through which organisations connect understanding with coordinated action. Its proposed theoretical significance lies in explaining how organisational movement progresses, becomes fragmented or fails to produce effective adaptation. Within organisational adaptation theory, OK treats adaptation as an integrated process of interpretation, communication, structural adjustment and human mobilisation. Environmental challenges alone do not ensure appropriate organisational responses. Organisations must recognise signals, develop shared understanding and establish conditions for implementation. These activities need not occur sequentially; they involve continuing feedback among processes. This perspective helps explain why organisations operating under similar environmental conditions may achieve different outcomes, depending on how effectively they connect understanding with action.

OK also complements dynamic capability theory, which explains how organisations sense opportunities, act on them and reconfigure resources in changing environments (Teece, 2007). Organisational organic cognition concerns understanding opportunities and threats, while adaptive velocity concerns response timeliness. Communication flow supports knowledge sharing and coordination, while structural flexibility and energetic alignment support resource and process reconfiguration and employee involvement, respectively. These relationships provide a hypothesised account of how dynamic capabilities operate together and how inadequate coordination may constrain transformation. The framework also contributes to organisational agility research by clarifying the conditions under which responsiveness is effective. Immediate responses may offer limited benefits when organisations misunderstand environmental changes, communicate poorly or lack employee

commitment. OK therefore presents agility as an outcome of coordinated kinetic capacity: timely responses guided by informed direction, suitable structures and sustained participation. This perspective encourages researchers to examine response quality and coherence alongside timeliness. For organisational cognition research, OK connects cognition with movement through organisational organic cognition. Cognition is viewed as distributed across employees, technologies, procedures and interpersonal relationships and as responsive to learning and feedback. The proposed contribution is to explain how shared interpretations influence the direction of action and the coordination of implementation.

However, its theoretical distinctiveness requires clarification in relation to collective sensemaking, organisational learning and distributed cognition. OK also contributes to communication and structural research by examining how information exchange and organisational arrangements support movement. Communication flow connects interpretation with implementation and enables relevant knowledge to circulate across organisational levels, departments and external relationships. Structural flexibility concerns the configuration of processes, resource allocation and decision-making arrangements. Together, these dimensions suggest that information and structures must be accessible and capable of supporting action while retaining sufficient stability for accountability and coordination. Energetic alignment adds a human and behavioural dimension to organisational adaptation: motivation, commitment and collective ownership sustain implementation. For strategies and technologies to be effective, employees need to understand organisational priorities and have the willingness, capability and opportunity to act on them. Organisational Kinetics (OK) therefore incorporates human involvement into the transformation process. Collectively, these contributions provide a conceptual foundation for examining how collective knowledge becomes coordinated and sustained adaptation, although empirical testing remains necessary.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Organisational kinetics proposes a stronger connection between understanding and coordinated action. Developing organisational organic cognition involves gathering information and establishing practices for environmental scanning, information sharing and reflective learning. Managers need to support these practices so that employees can interpret environmental developments collectively. Sharing operational experience across functions and conducting regular reviews can transform individual knowledge into collective understanding. Managers can also improve adaptive velocity by clarifying decision-making authority, empowering teams and removing unnecessary approval processes. However, speed must be considered alongside decision quality: effective adaptation requires an appropriate pace, attention to consequences and the use of feedback. OK also has managerial implications for communication, organisational design and employee commitment. Communication flow can be strengthened through clear communication, information systems and feedback mechanisms connecting strategic activities with daily operations. Structural flexibility should support adjustments to teams, processes and resources when circumstances change. Flexible arrangements must retain clear responsibilities and coordination mechanisms to maintain accountability during change. Managers support energetic alignment by communicating a compelling purpose, involving employees in decisions, acknowledging their contributions and providing support.

Within the proposed framework, these dimensions reinforce one another: effective information circulation strengthens collective understanding, while adaptable structures support adjustment and employee engagement towards shared goals. Future research should test the proposed relationships empirically and establish the limits of OK. An initial priority is to develop and validate measures of organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment and demonstrate their distinctiveness from existing concepts such as organisational learning, agility and dynamic capabilities. These dimensions could subsequently be investigated in relation to innovation, digital transformation, resilience, competitive advantage and sustainability performance. Structural equation modelling could test alternative explanations, including whether the dimensions operate as separate predictors, through mediating relationships or as components of a higher-order organisational kinetic capacity. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies would help explain how this capacity develops, how feedback influences subsequent action and whether sustained movement produces positive outcomes. The framework's applicability should also be examined across

industries and national settings, with attention to environmental turbulence, institutional conditions and organisational characteristics.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper proposes Organisational Kinetics (OK) as a unified theoretical approach to explaining the generation, coordination and maintenance of purposeful movement in organisational environments characterised by uncertainty, technological development and continual change. Building on dynamic capabilities, organisational agility, learning and cognition, OKT examines the processes through which organisations transform environmental pressures and internal knowledge into coordinated action. Its central argument is that organisational movement emerges through five dimensions: organisational organic cognition, which provides direction and purpose; adaptive velocity, which concerns the pace of response; communication flow, which supports the circulation of knowledge and shared understanding; structural flexibility, which enables operational adjustment; and energetic alignment, which mobilises employee commitment and effort. These five dimensions provide a possible explanation for differences in organisational responsiveness, with some organisations responding rapidly while others move slowly or incoherently. The approach therefore focuses on how resources and capabilities are mobilised to produce informed, coordinated and sustained movement as part of adaptation. However, OKT remains a conceptual framework requiring empirical testing, including the development of valid measurement scales, assessment of its distinctiveness from existing theories and examination of its relationships with innovation, resilience, digital transformation and long-term competitiveness.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although Organisational Kinetics Theory offers a conceptual understanding of organisational movement, several elements require empirical investigation. Further studies are needed to develop measurement tools for its five dimensions. Scales measuring organisational organic cognition, adaptive velocity, communication flow, structural flexibility and energetic alignment should be assessed for reliability. The relationships between organisational kinetic capacity and outcomes such as innovation performance, digital transformation success, organisational resilience, competitive advantage and sustainability performance should also be examined in light of the proposed relationships.

REFERENCES

1. Adler, P. S., & Borys, B. (1996). There are two kinds of bureaucracy: Enabling and coercive. Administrative Science Quarterly, 41(1), 61–89. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393986
2. Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1996). Organizational learning 2, theory, method, practice. Addison-Wesley.
3. Asghar, J., Kanbach, D. K., & Kraus, S. (2026). Toward a multidimensional concept of organizational agility: A systematic literature review. Management Review Quarterly, 76, 885–911. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-025-00497-6
4. Bennett, N., & Lemoine, G. J. (2014). How VUCA impacts YOU. Harvard Business Review, 92(1/2), 27.
5. Ciampi, F., Demi, S., Magrini, A., Marzi, G., & Papa, A. (2021). The mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation in the entrepreneurial innovation of business models due to big data analytics capabilities. Journal of business research, 123, 1-13.
6. Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Motivation in work: self-determination theory. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26(4), 331–362. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322
7. Hanelt, A., Bohnsack, R., Marz, D., & Antunes Marante, C. (2021). A systematic literature review of digital transformation for insights and implications for strategy and organizational change. Journal of Management Studies, 58(5), 1159–1197. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12639
8. Kovynyov, I., Buerck, A., & Mikut, R. (2020). Empirical study of the design of transformation initiatives in an organisation in order to implement organisational agility. arXiv.

9. Krakowski, S, Luger, J and Raisch, S. (2023). The impact of AI and the paradigm shift in sources of competitive advantage. Strategic Management Journal, 44(6), 1425–1452. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3387
10. P. C. Verhoef, T. Broekhuizen, Y. Bart, A. Bhattacharya, J. Q. Dong, N. Fabian, and M. Haenlein. (2021). A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda on Digital transformation. Journal of Business Research, 122, 889–901. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022
11. Raisch, S. and Krakowski (S.). (2021). The paradox of automation and augmentation in the context of artificial intelligence and Management. Academy of Management Review, 46(1), 192–210. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0072
12. Raisch, S., & Fomina, K. (2025). Combining human and artificial intelligence: Hybrid problem-solving in organizations. Academy of Management Review, 50(2), 441–464. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2021.0421
13. Siamionava, K., Mitra, S., & Westerman, G. (2024). Linking up with metrics: Differential impact of IT and organizational metrics on cognitive coordination in top management teams. Production and Operations Management, 33(9), 1875–1894. https://doi.org/10.1177/10591478241266524
14. Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: The nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. Strategic Management Journal, 28(13), 1319–1350. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.640
15. Teece, D. J. (2018). Business model and dynamic capability. Long Range Planning, 51(1), 40–49.
16. Warner, K. S. R., & Wäger, M. (2019). Developing Dynamic Capabilities towards Digital Transformation – a Continuous Strategic Renewal Process. Long Range Planning, 52(3), 326–349.
17. Weick, K. E. (1995). Sensemaking in organizations. Sage Publications.
18. Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Process of organizing and sensemaking. Organization Science, 16(4), 409–421. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0133
19. Weiner, B. J. (2009). The concept of an organization's readiness to change. Implementation Science, 4, Article 67. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-67
20. Zhang, J., Long, J., & von Schaewen, A. M. E. (2024). Digital transformation and dynamic capabilities/organisational agility: The relevance of knowledge integration mechanisms. Technology Forecasting and Social Change.