

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Edinburgh		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Leading Strategic Change		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
John Amis	Professor of Strategic Management & Organisation	2013-present
Chris Carter	Professor of Strategy & Organisation	2013-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Research by Amis and Carter has helped organisations highlight the imperatives that shape strategic change processes and outcomes. Insights emanating from this research have led to strategic transformations in commercial, public and third-sector organisations, often executed through shifts in culture and innovation processes. Exemplars of this work are presented that demonstrate research our research was integral to transformations at three prominent Scottish organizations, highlights of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Trust for Scotland (NTS): developed a new hybrid identity, contributing to visitor numbers increasing by over 500,000, membership up to over 371,000, and a much more successful fundraising operation • Scottish Television (STV): created a more innovative culture, which was pivotal in the development of the digital STV Player • Scottish Enterprise (SE): transformed SE's rural strategy, changed rural businesses and informed the Scottish Government's post-pandemic economic recovery plan. 		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Centre for Strategic Leadership (CSL) was launched in 2015 to help Scottish organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors benefit from cutting-edge research on management and organisational practices. From its inception, Amis and Carter have carried out primary research on change, culture and innovation that has focused on empirical contexts in Scotland and beyond, including Big Four accounting firms, the BBC, NTS, the Scottish legal system, social enterprise Street Soccer Scotland, the European migration crisis, SE, and STV. This has then been translated to inform organisation leaders about how to implement major strategic change initiatives.</p>		
Transformation		
<p>Amis and Carter's research programme has developed significant insight into how change takes place and the associated difficulties, unintended consequences and paradoxes (3.1-3.6). They show how overcoming these difficulties requires detailed understanding of local contexts, both internal and external. This is exemplified in research on the BBC that showed how the introduction of new accounting mechanisms led to a culture transformation and a new strategic approach to running the organisation (3.1). Research on media framing of the European migration crisis also shows how internal dynamics, in this case grounded in ideology and emotions, guides organisational decision-making (3.2). Insights drawn from a</p>		

study of the transformation of the Scottish civil justice system demonstrated how the ways in which organisations become mutually interdependent can shape change in unexpected ways, even resulting in resistance from those groups who apparently have most to gain (3.3). This theme is further developed in research on US schools that showed how a failure to understand the concerns of local communities prevented the enactment of changes designed to reduce childhood obesity in those same communities (3.4).

Culture

A feature of this body of research has been to show how important culture is to **facilitating** change. This is revealed in the studies on the BBC (3.1) and media firms' framing of the migration crisis (3.2). This also plays out particularly noticeably in the professions with work on Big Four accounting firms showing how institutional logics underpinned by particular values shape how decisions are made and thus how change can take place (3.5). This research, focused on long-term systematic contextual engagement, also demonstrates the importance of aligning culture with structures and systems if changes are to be anything other than ephemeral (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5).

Innovation

Amis and Carter's research also shows the importance of social capital and local contextual understanding in the innovation process (3.1). This is further demonstrated in research initiated by SE into how local Scottish businesses were able to respond to the pandemic, primarily by becoming much more locally oriented and creating innovative digital solutions (3.6). This research also revealed the ways in which social capital underpinned collective understanding of emergent problems, such as the need for shared transportation and local food processing plants. Similar emphases on the importance of social capital to developing innovative solutions were apparent in other contexts (3.1, 3.3, 3.4).

3. References to the research

- 3.1. Carter, C., Spence, C. & McKinlay, A. (2020) Strategic change, leadership and accounting: A triptych of organizational reform. *Public Administration*, 98(1): 62-91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12550>
- 3.2. Klein, J. & Amis, J. (2020) The dynamics of framing: Image, emotion and the European Migration Crisis. *Academy of Management Journal*. Published online 25 May 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.0510>
- 3.3. Ozturk, I., Amis, J., & Greenwood, R. (2017) Intra-professional status, maintenance failure, and the reformation of the Scottish Civil Justice System. How Institutions Matter. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 48, 207-234. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X201600048B007>
- 3.4. Vardaman, J. Amis, J., Wright, P., & Dyson, B. (2020) Reframing childhood obesity: The role of local communities in change implementation failure. *Human Relations*. Published online 9 January 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719899464>
- 3.5. Spence, C. & Carter, C. (2014) An exploration of the professional habitus of Big 4 accounting firms. *Work, Employment and Society*, 28(6): 946-962. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017013510762>
- 3.6. Amis, J.M. & Janz, B.D. (2020) Leading change in response to COVID-19. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 56: 272-278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886320936703>

4. Details of the impact

Amis' and Carter's research has influenced organisations, helping change cultures, implement transformation programmes, and develop innovative practices. Their influence is exemplified in their work with the National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Television, and Scottish Enterprise, set out below. Their research has also exerted wider influence in the Scottish public policy arena, outlined in the final section.

National Trust for Scotland (NTS)

NTS is Scotland's largest membership-based organisation. In 2016 it was facing a crisis with rapidly declining membership, visitor numbers and income, allied with rising costs associated with its preservation of buildings, land and items of significant cultural heritage. NTS invited the CSL to advise on the transformation required to allow the organisation to survive. This led to a three-year engagement that, typical of the CSL approach, involved detailed primary research that led to a PhD thesis and research papers along with close interactions with senior and middle management on how to develop and implement the required change programme. Central to this was translation of Amis and Carter's research findings from other contexts to help inform the change process. An early requirement was to create a clear direction for the organisation. NTS' Director of Customer & Cause, a member of the Senior Executive Board, commented: "I remember sitting in a session with John [discussing his work on law reform] when it struck me how we needed to redefine our 'North Star': the guiding light of the organisation" [5.1]. The concept of a hybrid organisation that would allow the embracing of commercial and preservation imperatives along with associated values that would at times be oppositional was then introduced. The Director of Organisational development [5.2] noted how this provided the senior leadership with a language and focus for the transformation that gave direction to a more decentralised structure, hiring of area managers able to embrace the commercial and preservation requirements, and new managerial processes across the organisation ranging from customer engagement to HRM. The Director of Customer & Cause also explained that the team's account of their work with US schools on childhood obesity "reinforced the powerful influence of local communities on programmes of change, which was extremely relevant to our case" [5.1]. He concluded that the work led by Amis had driven the following positive impacts: increasing visitor numbers by over 500,000, raising membership numbers to an all-time high of 371,000, significantly increasing fundraising income including the biggest single appeal that raised GBP1,500,000, raising brand awareness and positive sentiment by 20%, and developing and embedding a new set of corporate values [5.1].

Scottish Television (STV)

Several years of poor management accompanied by the 2008 financial crisis resulted in STV facing a battle to survive. It appointed a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who staved off the crisis but needed to position STV for a hugely competitive industry confronting a technological revolution. STV began collaborating with Amis and Carter in 2014, with the CEO noting that "Professor Amis and Carter's research has had a huge and positive impact on STV. At a vital juncture, they helped us transform the business, develop a high performing senior management team, deliver exceptional shareholder value and create Scotland's leading commercial digital media company" [5.3]. Carter's research on organisational change in the BBC and Big Four accounting firms demonstrated how STV could bring about culture change. Amis' research into the Scottish civil justice system and childhood obesity highlighted the importance of appreciating the roles of strategic stakeholders and in understanding the needs of local communities, vital for a Scottish broadcaster. This work helped transform STV's culture, resulting in the development of a senior management team to be less risk-averse and more strategic. The CEO reflected how this led to "a strategy of innovation and experimentation across the business. This was vital for building the reputation of the business and for finding future routes to growth." This was affirmed by the former Editor of News, Current Affairs and Sport at STV who explained "At STV, we had modest resources, compared with our competitors at the BBC. During the major events, we consistently outperformed the BBC as measured by the BARB [Broadcasters Audience Research Board], whether on evening news or our nightly current affairs show Scotland Tonight. We won the Royal Television Society award for our coverage of the Clutha helicopter crash. The insights from Amis and Carter undoubtedly helped these strong outcomes" [5.4]. The former Head of STV London and Deputy Head of the STV Productions Business further explained, "Both Amis and Carter's work encouraged us to think long-term, bracket off the 'here and now' to work out the forces driving change in broadcasting, and focus on delivering a future oriented strategy for STV. It sounds simple, but it rarely is" [5.5].

A pivotal outcome of the interaction between Amis and Carter and STV was the development of the STV Player. Under tremendous pressure to join ITV's digital platform, the ITV Hub, the CEO explained how "Carter's research [on the effects of the BBC's major strategic calls in the 1990s, which saw substantial investments in the internet/digital sphere] encouraged us to develop and invest in our own platform – the STV Player. The City of London investment community approved of this strategy, viewing it as audacious and showing a clear path to future growth. ...The STV player has been a major success. ...There is no doubt that Carter's research has been pivotal to this success and where the business is currently as a consequence" [5.3; cf. 5.5]. The turnaround of the broadcaster is demonstrated by its monthly audiences of 3,500,000 viewers, a decisive shift into digital media such that by 2017 23% of incomes were from outside broadcasting, and a market capitalization of GBP154,000,000.

Scottish Enterprise (SE)

SE is Scotland's national economic development agency. In 2014, the Chairman of SE met with Amis to explain some of the problems facing Scottish businesses, including a lack of innovation, weak international ambition and poor growth strategies. This led to the Director of Rural at SE [5.6] asking Amis to design a programme to help rural leaders address some of the problems identified by the Chairman in his initial meeting with Amis. Approximately 60 rural business leaders subsequently engaged with Amis and his colleagues in the CSL. The Director noted how the CSL's research has been instrumental in changes to the approach of SE Rural regarding growth, innovation and international expansion, and numerous transformations among its client organisations, particularly those that have directly engaged with Amis [5.6].

For example, the co-owner of the Building Workshop explained how her business had been impacted by Amis' research on Scottish law reform and US high schools, along with the work with Scottish rural entrepreneurs [5.7]. She cited six direct effects that it had on her and her business, including how she "transformed our architecture practice to a cloud-based business able to provide a fully remote service (this has proved especially useful during the covid-19 pandemic)" and "secured our first international contract" [5.7].

Influence on Wider Public Policy Interventions

The Covid-19 pandemic has precipitated unprecedented challenges for organisations. Amis's research with SE and Scottish rural entrepreneurs was used by the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery to inform how the Scottish government might support small and medium sized enterprises in recovering from the pandemic. The Advisory Group Chair notes in his letter, "I was asked by the First Minister of Scotland to put together and Chair the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery. As part of this we solicited input from a range of experts and interested parties. Amis carried out a piece of research with Scottish Enterprise that examined the impact of the pandemic on the rural economy and what would help rural businesses emerge from the crisis. Given that the rural economy is valued by the Scottish Government at over GBP30,000,000,000, helping these businesses respond to the crisis is vital to Scotland's recovery. Amis's research fed into the Advisory Group and helped inform the recommendations that we made to the Scottish Government" [5.8]. Additional evidence of the impact of this work was supplied by the Director of Rural who quotes a Special Advisor to the First Minister commenting that it would be useful to use key aspects of the research findings "as part of our own recovery plan" [5.6].

The impact reported above is exemplary of how the research of Amis and Carter has informed and shaped discussions in Scotland's corporate, public and non-profit sectors. The Chairman of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery testified "What Amis and Carter bring to the table is excellent strategic and organisational analysis." [5.8]. A prominent Member of the Scottish Parliament noted "I find Amis and Carter's work tremendously useful, as do my colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet" [5.9]. Finally, the Director

of Reform Scotland, a leading Scottish think tank, explained Carter and Amis' "research has been very useful for us as we engage with Scotland's policy and governmental challenges" [5.10]. The Chair of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group for Economic recovery concluded "Over the last five years, Amis and Carter's research has had a positive impact on Scottish business and public life" [5.8]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1. Testimonial from Executive Committee, National Trust for Scotland
- 5.2. Testimonial from ex-Head of Organization Development at National Trust for Scotland
- 5.3. Testimonial from ex-CEO, STV, Current Chair, MetOffice
- 5.4. Testimonial from ex-Editor of News, Current Affairs and Sport at STV; currently Deputy Head News, BBC Scotland
- 5.5. Testimonial from ex-Head, STV London; CEO 500 Miles
- 5.6. Testimonial from Head of Rural, Scottish Enterprise
- 5.7. Testimonial from Owner, Building Workshop
- 5.8. Testimonial from Chair, Scottish Government's Advisory group for Economic Recovery; Chair, Buccleuch Estates
- 5.9. Testimonial from MSP for Glasgow, Member of the Shadow Cabinet
- 5.10. Testimonial from Chief Executive of Reform Scotland; Scottish Editor, New Statesman