European Quality Assurance Forum 2017

What a difference QA makes: Dealing with emerging and induced change
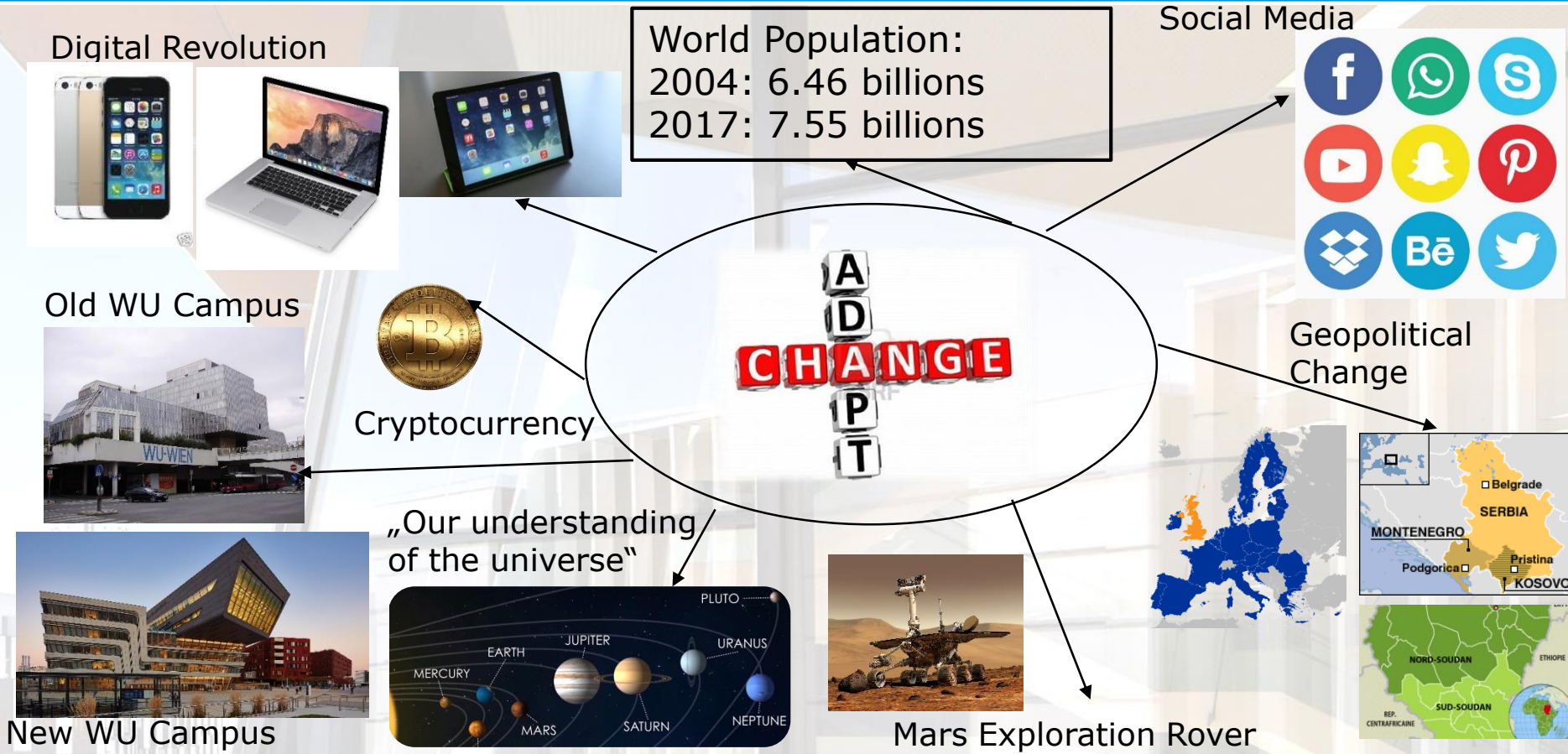
WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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Change Management – What can change in 13 years?

Digital Revolution

World Population:
2004: 6.46 billions
2017: 7.55 billions

Social Media

Old WU Campus

Cryptocurrency

Geopolitical Change

„Our understanding of the universe"

New WU Campus

Mars Exploration Rover

And in the world of QA?

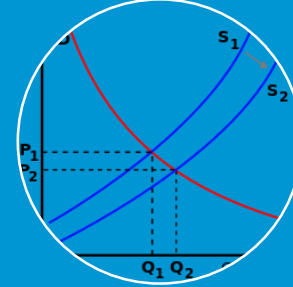|	
ESG (first edition)	12 years ago
EUA launches quality culture project	15 years ago
Most cited QA publication (Harvey & Green)	24 years ago
First course evaluations in Austria	50 years ago
Oldest European QA agency	ab. 80 years ago

Emerging change and induced change

Emerging changes: complexity, interdependencies, contingencies
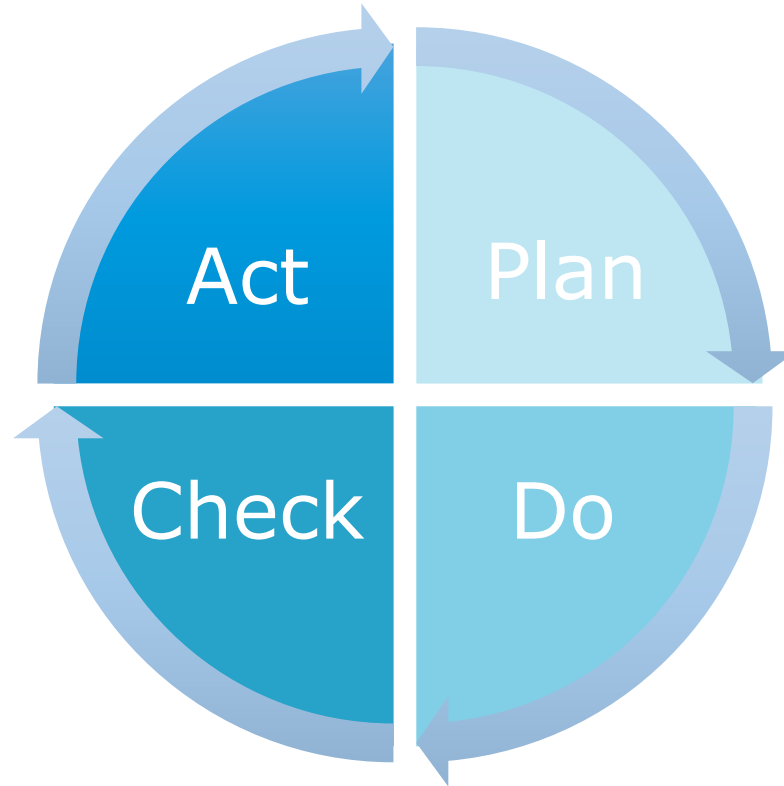
→ coping/dealing with change

Induced changes: planning, formalisation, standardisation

→ managing change

Organizational dynamics

The basic model of all QA induced change

Difficulties with the „plan" part?

The relativity of improvement

- What counts as an improvement, for whom and under what circumstances (cf. Lueger & Vettori 2008)?
- Does improvement mean striving towards an absolute goal? Towards a relative goal? Keeping the same standard in the light of unfavourable circumstances?
- Continuous improvement can be a rather demotivating goal, as it implies the devaluation of everything that has been done before (cf. Weick)

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Our relationship with the „do" part?

Struggling with the „check" part?

Instruments in QA

- Tendency towards normative and mimetic isomorphism (cf. Powell & DiMaggio): QA instruments resemble each other across different contexts

- Quantitative approaches (with a preference for descriptive statistics) dominate the field

- Instruments tend to be stable over a long period of time – but there is still a lack of longitudinal analyses

- Evaluations of concrete policies and activities are still rare (sucess of measures is difficult to determine)

Continuous disappointment with the „act" part?

Obstacles to rational decision making

- Bounded rationality (cf. Simon): An individual's rationality is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision.

- Prospect theory (cf. Kahnemann, Tversky): People fear losses more than they value gains. Relatedly, actors are often leaning towards acceptable solutions rather than optimal ones

- Decision-making theories overemphasise the planning/strategy part of management; but implementing/realising changes is the much more time-consuming part (and requires a lot of quick operative decisions)

However: Is QA inducing change? A look at some evidence

- Effects are stronger on formal aspects (routines, processes, regulations, structures) than on others (cf. Stensaker et al. 2011, see also projects like WiQu, WirQung, EIQSL)

- QA can lead to institutional isomorphism (cf. Dattey et al. 2014)

- Impact question might need to be differently posed (cf. Newton 2012)

- Studies on effects of internal QA are still rare – and often prone to epistemological weaknesses

QA and induced change: Some relationship advice

QA can learn from evaluation theory, in particular from utilization-focused evaluations

QA staff might need to immerse themselves more in the organization, take more responsibility in the „do" part

Information and communication management are still underestimated parts of QA

There is a need for a clearer model of impact/change

Emerging changes in higher education

Digitalisation	Social Inclusion	Internationalisation
Funding	New providers	

Changes that are QA specific

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The race for reputation is on: on a global level	Strategic approaches to teaching and learning are more in demand	Social media change student feedback habits
	QA is becoming a profession in its own right	Data Protection regulations will make analyses more difficult

QA and emerging change: some relationship advice

Focus on environmental analyses instead of surveying students for the umpteenth time

Social media, learning analytics and other facets of the ongoing digital development need to be taken into account in a productive way

QA staff needs training/knowledge in a variety of different areas
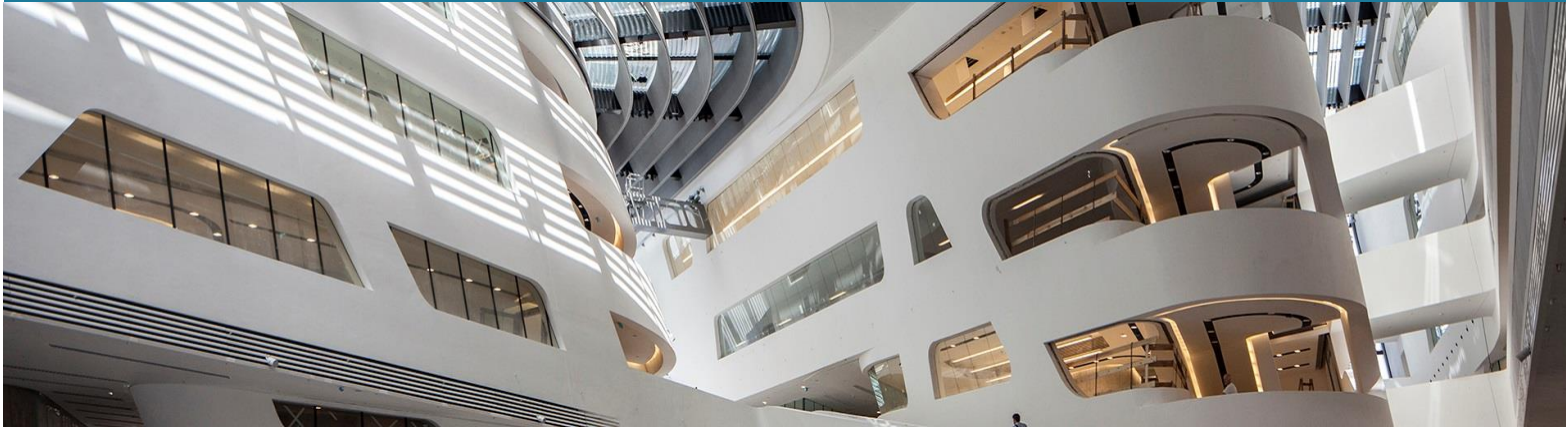
Quality Management and Quality Assurance

Quality Management	Quality Assurance
Management Discourse	Political Discourse
Roots in business (e.g.TQM)	Roots in political process (e.g. Bologna Declaration)
Oriented at strategic goals	Oriented at stakeholder satisfaction
Goal agreements, KPI, information systems	surveys, course evaluations,
PDCA	ESG
Audits, Accreditations, Evaluations	

Cf. Vettori 2015

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