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Successful organizational change through win-win: How change managers can organize mutual benefits

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Matthias Georg Will

Successful Organizational Change Through
Win-Win: How Change Managers can Organize
Mutual Benefits

Diskussionspapier Nr. 2012-20

des Lehrstuhls für Wirtschaftsethik
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Abstract

The situational logic of multi-sided dilemmas often inhibits organizational change. This article develops a heuristic that can support change managers in distinguishing between optimization of moves within a game and adjustment of formal and informal governance structures of the game. This heuristic illustrates how change managers can create mutual benefits through incentives or commitment mechanisms and thus reduce resistance to organizational change. The link between governance structures and individual behavior reveals the extent to which a change management focusing on action theory can be integrated into existing governance structures or, alternatively, to what degree governance structures will have to change to create win-win potentials.

Key Words: Change Management, Organizational Change, Incentives, Commitment Mechanisms, Social Dilemma, Win-Win, Potentials of Interactions in Companies

Kurzzusammenfassung

Die Situationslogik mehrseitiger Dilemmata blockiert häufig den organisatorischen Wandlungsprozess. Dieser Beitrag entwickelt eine Heuristik, wie Change Manager zwischen einem Optimierungsbedarf auf der Ebene der Spielzüge und einem Anpassungsbedarf auf der Ebene der Spielregeln unterscheiden können. Diese Heuristik veranschaulicht, wie Change Manager wechselseitige Besserstellungspotentiale durch Anreize oder Bindungsmechanismen erzeugen können und hierdurch Widerstände gegen den organisatorischen Wandel reduzieren können. Die Verknüpfung von Governance Strukturen und individuellem Verhalten zeigt auf, inwieweit sich ein handlungstheoretisch konzeptioniertes Change Management in die vorhandenen Governance Strukturen integrieren lässt, bzw. inwieweit die Governance Strukturen angepasst werden müssen, um Win-Win-Potentiale zu generieren.

Schlüsselwörter: Change Management, Anreizmechanismen, mehrseitige Dilemmata, wechselseitige Besserstellung, Interaktionspotentiale in Firmen.

Successful Organizational Change Through Win-Win: How Change Managers can Organize Mutual Benefits

Matthias Georg Will

This paper develops a framework that reveals how the dualism between individual behavior and the institutions of a company influences organizational change. The central thesis of the paper is that it is due to dysfunctional governance structures that organizational change often fails or, at the very least, meets with stiff resistance. Also, dysfunctional governance structures reduce the potential for effective interaction between managers and employees, leading to a lose-lose situation for all parties, as well as for the company itself. Therefore, the paper develops a framework that supports change managers in creating win-win situations through organizational change.

The first section of this paper presents a review of the extensive literature on the link between individual motives and resistance to organizational change. There is a strong focus in this literature on management, psychological, or sociological theories that reconstruct change management from an action-theoretical perspective; interaction-theoretical approaches are rare. However, and as discussed in the second section of the paper, an interaction-theoretical framework is a very useful one for helping change managers to create mutual benefits through cooperation or competition. Functional interactions between managers, employees, and shareholders can be highly effective in achieving collective aims despite different individual goals. Change managers can optimize interactions to generate a win-win situation by means of appropriate formal or informal incentives or commitment mechanisms. The interaction-theoretical framework also reveals important conditions under which action-theoretical approaches can be successful and under which conditions such an approach will benefit from being complemented by interaction-theoretical approaches. The last section of the paper focuses on formal and informal governance structures such as incentives, commitment mechanisms, and company culture. Also covered in the final part of the paper is the role of discourse within companies in implementing change and reducing resistance.

1. The Implementation of Organizational Change Despite Resistance

There is an extensive body of literature addressing resistance to organizational change.¹ This research documents many reasons why managers and employees resist organizational change. For example, managers and staff may have very different ideas about how the change should be accomplished,² and they might even disagree whether change is necessary.³ It could be that the environment in which the company operates is changing so fast that the company is not able to develop and implement suitable change management strategies.⁴ Possibly, communication within the company has broken down,

¹ Cf. Pardo del Val and Fuentes (2003; pp. 149–150). The literature overview adapts the classification of Pardo del Val and Fuentes and cites recent articles.

² Cf. Bovey and Hede (2001b), Dijk and Dick (2009), Klein and Sorra (1996), Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), Lines (2004), Rumelt (1995), and Zeffane (1996).

³ Cf. Barr et al. (1992), Ford et al. (2008), Krüger (2010), Rumelt (1995), and Zeffane (1996).

⁴ Cf. Mabin et al. (2001), Rumelt (1995), and Wadell and Sohal (1998).

making civil communication about change impossible.⁵ Perhaps the company's culture itself makes change an anathema.⁶ Sometimes, managers' and employees' skills are simply not up to the task of implementing a successful organizational change.⁷ In addition to all these reasons, motivational problems are an important cause of resistance to organizational change, and this sort of problem is the focus of the next paragraphs.

The change management literature discusses many reasons why managers and employees may be unmotivated and resist change either because they expect it to be a win-lose situation or because it actually is one. For example, the staff will have to learn new skills, and learning is no fun.⁸ The organizational change can also have a negative impact on employees' perception of their job biographies. Changing the way things are done can imply, almost by necessity, that the previous way of doing things was inefficient or ineffective, and very often employees will take such an implication personally, even though such was not the intent.⁹ Moreover, companies often relocate employees during organizational change, resulting in friends being separated, adding more stress and discomfort to the process.¹⁰ Changes often result in managers having less influence and power.¹¹ Sometimes, managers and employees are expected to institute changes and maintain their usual work volume, a situation that is almost guaranteed to cause resentment and resistance.¹² Also, if employees and managers understand organizational change within a win-lose paradigm, they often feel unfairly treated, which is another obstacle to accepting change.¹³

These circumstances reduce motivation and cause resistance against organizational change. The literature is very rich how change managers can motivate employees and managers:

(1) *Resistance due to lack of motivation during the strategy formulation stage.* Resistance to organizational change can develop during the strategy formulation stage if managers and employees are either unmotivated to explore suitable change strategies or do not see the necessity for organizational change.¹⁴ In such a situation, Waddell and Sohal (1998; p. 547) recommend the use of communication and participation. According to these authors, employees and managers will become motivated if they are given sufficient information and allowed to participate in the change process. However, Lawrence (1969; pp. 56–57) emphasizes that participation only motivates if the needs of managers and employees are respected not only as means but also as acceptable aims: "Participation will never work so long as it is treated as a device to get somebody else to do what you want him to."¹⁵ Ford et al. (2008; pp. 371–372) find that employees and managers will be unsupportive if they view the organizational change negatively. To

⁵ Cf. Hutt et al. (1995), Morrison and Milliken (2000), Nemeth (1997), Proctor and Doukakis (2003), and Schalk et al. (1998).

⁶ Cf. Ford et al. (2001), Hannan and Freeman (1984), Klein and Sorra (1996), Krüger (2010), Nemeth (1997), Rumelt (1995), and Strebel (1994).

⁷ Cf. Dam et al. (2008), Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), Mabin et al. (2001), Proctor and Doukakis (2003), and Rumelt (1995).

⁸ Cf. Sonntag and Stegmaier (2007; p. 48).

⁹ Cf. Luhmann (1999; pp. 149–155), Rumelt (1995; p. 8), and Dijk and Dick (2009; pp. 146–147).

¹⁰ Cf. Lawrence (1969; p. 49), Nerdinger et al. (2008; pp. 115–116), and Dijk and Dick (2009; pp. 145–147).

¹¹ Cf. Beer and Eisenstat (1996; p. 600) and Dijk and Dick (2009; p. 144).

¹² Cf. Beer et al. (1990; p. 7), Rumelt (1995; p. 5), Klein and Sorra (1996; p. 1062), Kotter and Schlesinger (2008; p. 3), and Dijk and Dick (2009; p. 144).

¹³ Cf. Folger and Skarlicki (1999; pp. 37–38).

¹⁴ Cf. Rumelt (1995) and Waddell and Sohal (1998).

¹⁵ Lawrence (1969; p. 56).

motivate the staff under such circumstances, these authors also suggest communication and participation. Rumelt (1995; pp. 5–6) adds that direct and implicit costs can result in a lack of motivation. Change managers can overcome this problem by appropriately compensating affected managers and employees.

(2) *Resistance due to lack of motivation during the execution stage.* If the employees or managers expect personal disadvantage from the change, the probability of resistance to it increases. For example, the staff may resist change if they expect that they will have to work harder for the same pay. Lines (2004; pp. 211–212) thus recommends participation as a means of motivating staff and managers during the execution stage. Dijk and Dick (2009; pp. 160–161), Klein and Sorra (1996; p. 1074), and Bovey and Hede (2001b; p. 545) add that in addition to participation, communication is an important tool for motivating the staff. Beer et al. (1990; pp. 9–12) suggest several practical strategies for reducing resistance by increasing motivation: support for innovative departments and better career opportunities for managers who implement organization change successfully. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008; p. 9) advise change managers to identify which of the staff have the potential and ability to block organizational change and which ones are in possession of information essential for success of the change project. Change managers can then use this information to develop and execute effective change strategies. Folger and Skarlicki (1999; pp. 42–45) specify several other reasons why organizational change can fail during the execution stage due to motivational problems. Their starting point is the empirical observation that many employees fear that change will have a negative effect on their material or intangible wealth. To reduce resistance, they recommend that change managers should make it clear to the staff, by communication and action, that the change process will be fair and just.

(3) *Resistance due to risk aversion or a status-quo orientation during the execution stage.* Risk aversion and status-quo orientation can give rise to resistance to change very similar to that discussed above in the context of lack of motivation. Managers and employees are not motivated to implement organizational change because they fear changes and thus prefer the status quo. Also similar to the lack of motivation problem are the ways of dealing with risk aversion and status-quo orientation: communication¹⁶ and participation.¹⁷ Other possible strategies found in the literature for dealing with risk aversion and status-quo orientation include making sure of the competence of the change managers,¹⁸ attempting to reduce psychological perception problems,¹⁹ and training and empowering brave leaders.²⁰

In summary, then, we see that the approaches in the literature for overcoming motivational problems have a strong action-theoretical focus. According to these approaches, change managers can overcome resistance through an optimization of the moves of the game: better strategies, more information, suitable training, a sufficiently skilled staff and a consideration of psychological perception problems—all aimed at using the skills and information of the employees and managers in a more productive way. All of these approaches can be very effective; however, they all have the same blind spot: they do not explicitly deal with the question whether strategies oriented at action theory are

¹⁶ Cf. Dam et al. (2008; pp. 329–330), Hutt et al. (1995; pp. 28–29), and Mabin et al. (2001; pp. 187–188).

¹⁷ Cf. Lines (2004; pp. 211–212), Dam et al. (2008; pp. 329–330), Mabin et al. (2001; pp. 187–188), and Kanter (1989; p. 91).

¹⁸ Cf. Hutt et al. (1995; pp. 28–29) and Mabin et al. (2001; pp. 187–188).

¹⁹ Cf. Krüger (2010; pp. 214–215).

²⁰ Cf. Burdett (1999; pp. 9–12) and Kanter (1989; pp. 91–92).

meant to make sure that employees and managers will know how they *should* implement organizational change or to make sure that employees and managers will know how they themselves *want* to implement it.²¹ Do these approaches try to establish a win-win situation, or are they more likely to result in a win-lose paradigm?

Indeed, we can understand participation in a way that this method can create win-win solutions. Especially, participation can motivate employees and improve the efficiency and effectivity within organizations through a better flow of information, autonomy and initiative of employees.²² However, in the literature, doubts exist that participation is able to generate mutual benefits. For example, Heckscher (1995) argues that participation is in general not able to support organizational change because it does not alter the win-lose situation of many change programs. From a more conceptual perspective, Baidridge (1998; p. 1004) shows that the function of participation is only “monitoring workers and ensuring the flow of efficient information.”

To summarize these findings, participation has *in general* a positive effect on the individual level because of motivation.²³ Also, it has *in general* a positive effect on the organizational level because of an increase in information, autonomy and initiative.²⁴ Whether participation is able to create win-win during organizational change does not only depend on the general effects of participation on the individual and organizational level. An important factor is the conception of organizational change (Figure 1). If change management has a win-lose perspective (or the staff expects win-lose), the effects of organizational change can outweigh the positive motivational effects. In this case, participation can reduce the negative effects for the staff, but participation does not fundamentally alter the win-lose situation.

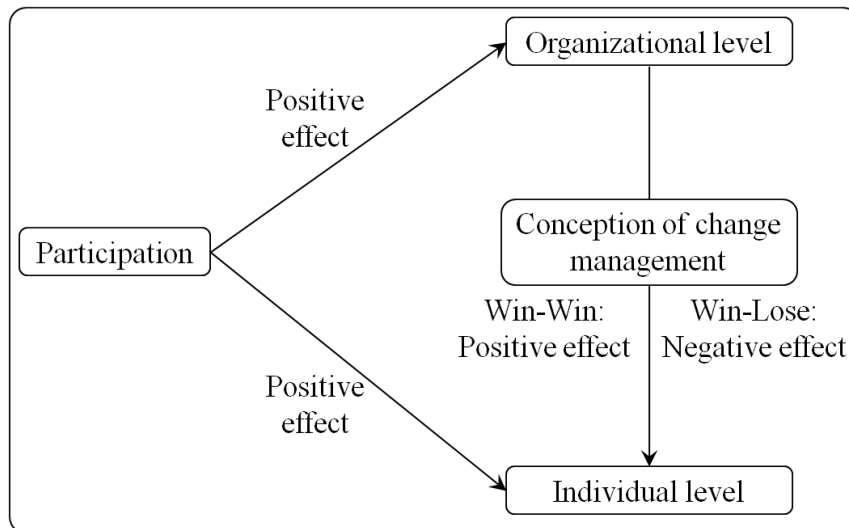


Figure 1: Effects of participation on the individual and organizational level²⁵

This paper applies an *interaction-theoretical* approach to show how change managers can discover hitherto unrealized win-win potentials. This is important to create mutually beneficial and thus agreeable outcomes for employees, managers, and the company. If change managers create joint benefits, they will have a powerful tool for reducing re-

²¹ One exception is Maurer (1996; pp. 60–61).

²² For a literature overview cf. Lines (2004; p. 196).

²³ Cf. Miller, Monge (1986).

²⁴ Cf. Miller, Monge (1986).

²⁵ Own figure.

sistance to and increasing acceptance of organizational change. To date, interaction-theoretical frameworks for organizational change are rare. We do find one work that recommends using new institutional economics as an interaction-theoretical framework to advance change management research.²⁶ Additionally, Rumelt (1995; pp. 9–11) contains a brief discussion of how collective-action problems can reduce the success of change management. Furthermore Mackenbrock (2006), who concentrates on complex turnaround management, discusses competing interests in multi-stakeholder dialogues.

2. Functional Governance Structures to Generate Win-Win Through Change Management

This section takes an interaction-theoretical approach to show how change managers can create mutual benefits and thus build up acceptance and reduce resistance. The first subsection is an overview of how employees and managers can interact to establish win-win solutions. The second subsection summarizes how formal and informal governance structures can be used to adjust individual behavior so as to accomplish socially desirable interactions. The third subsection combines interaction possibilities and individually preferred behavior to create a framework for change managers that will aid them in deciding whether they should optimize the moves of the employees and managers or instead adjust the governance structures to attain a win-win solution. The last subsection clarifies how change managers can combine interaction-theoretical with action-theoretical approaches.

2.1 Solutions for Cooperation and Competition to Organize Interactions Within Companies

From an interaction-theoretical perspective, we can distinguish between cooperation and competition.²⁷ These kinds of interaction are ambivalent: They can be highly functional to reach socially desirable outcomes and they can also be the reason for socially undesirable results. If cooperation respectively competition is functional in a collectively desirable way depends on the context.²⁸ Are we able to reach the socially desirable outcomes by means of cooperation, or would competition be more expedient? Figure 2 illustrates how traditionally organized firms that use mass production implement cooperative and defective solutions to organize win-win. In this type of company, there is a very strong correlation between the hierarchy and the firm's governance structure.²⁹

(1) *Solutions for cooperation.* Governance structures can enable cooperative behavior within a company. For example, in the case of a company engaged in mass production, cooperative solutions are necessary on the vertical level to manage and monitor the production.³⁰ Managers make centralized decisions about what should be produced, and the quality and quantity of same; the workers execute these decisions. The division of labor between decision making and implementation creates mutual benefits for both

²⁶ Cf. Stock-Homburg (2007; pp. 850–851).

²⁷ Cf. Coase (1937; p. 391), Williamson (1973; p. 1973), and Pies (1993; pp 176–177). For a literature overview, see Miller (2008).

²⁸ Cf. Becker (1993; pp. 385–385), Schelling ([1978] 2006; p. 14), and Pies (1993; pp. 103–104).

²⁹ Cf. Miller (2008; pp 355–357), Hielscher (2011; p. 6).

³⁰ Cf. Miller (1992; pp. 73–74).

parties.³¹ Henry Ford's assembly line illustrates the efficiency of vertical cooperation. The workers were only able to earn efficiency wages as long as they met Ford's performance targets.³² Henry Ford could make a profit only if the workers were productive, which was not a sure thing because their jobs were exhausting and boring and the risk of absenteeism or quitting were high. Governance structures that create cooperation are an effective solution to this sort of problem. Henry Ford designed formal and informal structures that were highly effective at achieving the mutual desired productivity. In short, the wages he paid were high enough to keep the workers on the job. At the same time, the contractually agreed-to wage kept Henry Ford from exploiting the workers. Ford also set up a department that supervised the quality and quantity of the production process and sanctioned shirking. This department also supervised the workers' private lives in an attempt to reduce absenteeism and improve worker health.³³ To generalize from the example of mass production, functional governance structures can create positive team externalities through cooperative behavior.³⁴ A combination of monitoring, positive incentives, and negative sanctions can result in benefits for both shareholders and managers and even the employees.

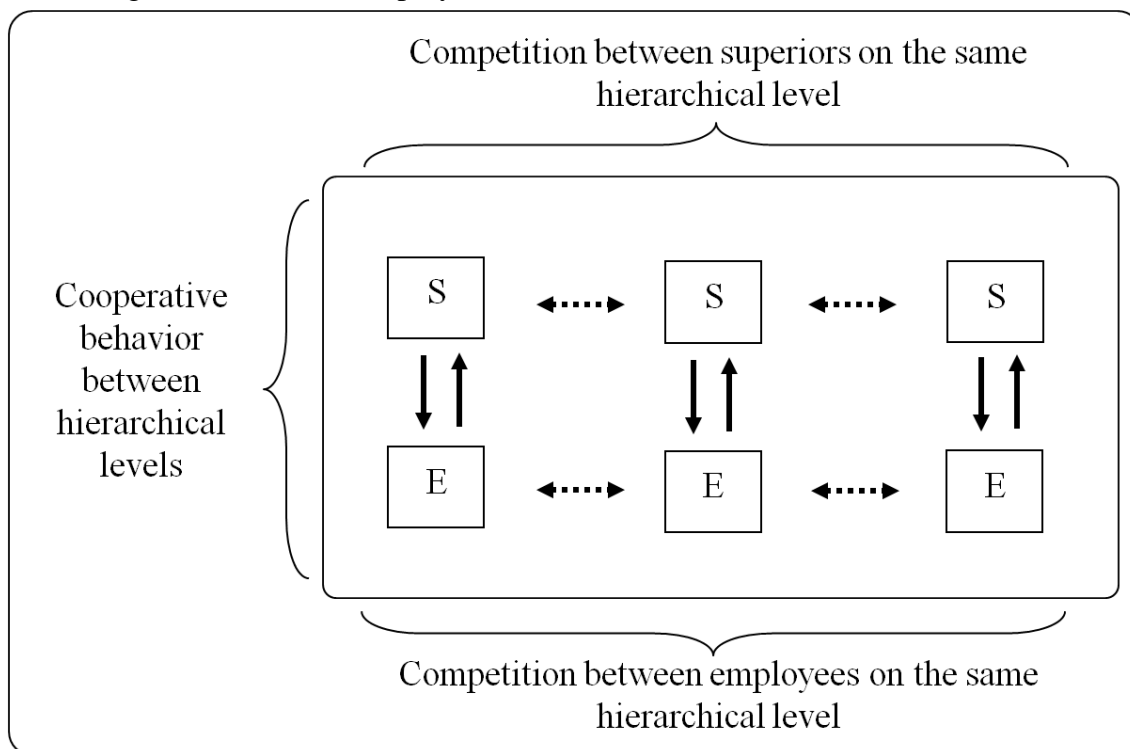


Figure 2: Solutions for competition and cooperation within a company that uses mass production³⁵

(2) *Solutions for competition.* Companies can also generate positive team externalities by means of competition. This approach generates mutual benefits through competition, not cooperation. Competition can be an effective governance structure if it motivates managers and employees to develop their potential. For example, companies use this strategy to motivate better performance from managers competing for a higher position

³¹ Cf. Alchian and Demsetz (1972; pp. 782–783).

³² Cf. Miller (1992; p. 68).

³³ These days, of course, such interference in an employee's private life would not be tolerated.

³⁴ Cf. Alchian and Demsetz (1972; p. 779).

³⁵ Own figure based on Hielscher (2011; p. 6).

on the corporate ladder, or from workers by offering high performance bonuses.³⁶ Output-orientated contracts for workers and managers (e.g., piece rate contracts or performance bonuses)³⁷ and difficult challenges to career advancement³⁸ are functional governance structures that foster competition within the company. Competitive solutions can be in the mutual interests of shareholders and staff. Shareholders can profit from increased productivity on the part of competing employees. The staff can benefit because these governance structures reduce shirking and thus increase positive team externalities.

If competition within a company is a functional governance mechanism, why isn't all value creation accomplished via this "free market" solution? In reality, cooperation does not occur only on the vertical level or competition only on the horizontal level; it is an appropriate mix of both solutions that tends to generate a stable and effective equilibrium within companies.³⁹ For example, even though in the short run, competition can be an extremely powerful governance mechanism for increasing output. In combination with long-term contracts, employees can build up reputation and have to make thus responsible decisions if it would be better to fulfill short-term targets or to invest the efforts in building the type of long-term cooperation necessary for, say, productive and profitable R&D.⁴⁰ For this cooperation, only competitive solutions could be dysfunctional because employees have incentives to fulfill their short-term targets.⁴¹ This would cause an underinvestment of efforts in R&D. For example, the possibility to build up reputation can be a functional governance structure to overcome the short-term incentives for competition.

Figure 2 illustrated the governance structure of a mass production factory. A more complex value chain requires cooperation and competitive solutions that are not parallel to the hierarchy. Cooperative behavior between employees on the same hierarchical level can be extremely functional for the production and distribution of complex services or products. For instance, the probability of success increases tremendously if the R&D department takes into consideration the expertise and experience of the sales department and if, in turn, marketing campaigns rely on the R&D department for accurate information about innovative products.⁴² Competitive solutions can be highly functional between hierarchies as well. For example, whistle-blowing policies can prevent corruption, to the benefit of the entire company. Whistle-blowing can meaningfully destabilize the cooperative relationship between supervisors and subordinates in the interest of employees, managers and shareholders.⁴³

To summarize the interaction-theoretical perspective, highly productive companies organize the creation of value through a functional combination of competitive and cooperative solutions. Depending on the particular value creation process, companies can connect cooperation and competition through specific governance structures. This theo-

³⁶ Cf. Nalebuff and Stiglitz (1983; pp. 23–25). For a literature overview, see Miller (2008; pp. 355–357).

³⁷ Cf. Miller and Knot (1992; p. 106–107).

³⁸ For example, competition for advancement tends to increase both employee effort (cf. Miller, 2008; pp. 355–357) and willingness to bear risk (cf. Nalebuff and Stiglitz, 1983; pp. 23–25).

³⁹ Cf. Pies (1993; pp 176–177) and the expansion of this idea to the ordonomics (Pies et al., 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

⁴⁰ Cf. Kreps (1990; pp. 106–108).

⁴¹ Cf. Lazear (1989; p. 562).

⁴² For the importance of cooperation between particular departments for supply chain management, see Cooper et al. (1997).

⁴³ Cf. Pies and Beckmann (2009; pp. 14–20).

retical perspective enables change management to find new and socially acceptable ways of increasing the company's profitability because functional governance structures overcome lose-lose games.

2.2 The Acceptance of Cooperation and Competition

Henry Ford used extremely strict governance structures to reach his desired productivity.⁴⁴ These governance structures were successful because they did not solely concentrate on the company's goals, but also considered the self-interest of the staff. Without functional governance structures, the different interests of employees, managers, and the company can result in conflict and inefficiency. Therefore, the interaction-theoretical perspective focuses on socially desirable outcomes that are in the collective interest of every involved party. For the parties, the interactions are means to reach their individual aims. Of course, this requires that the interactions generate win-win solutions from everyone's perspective.

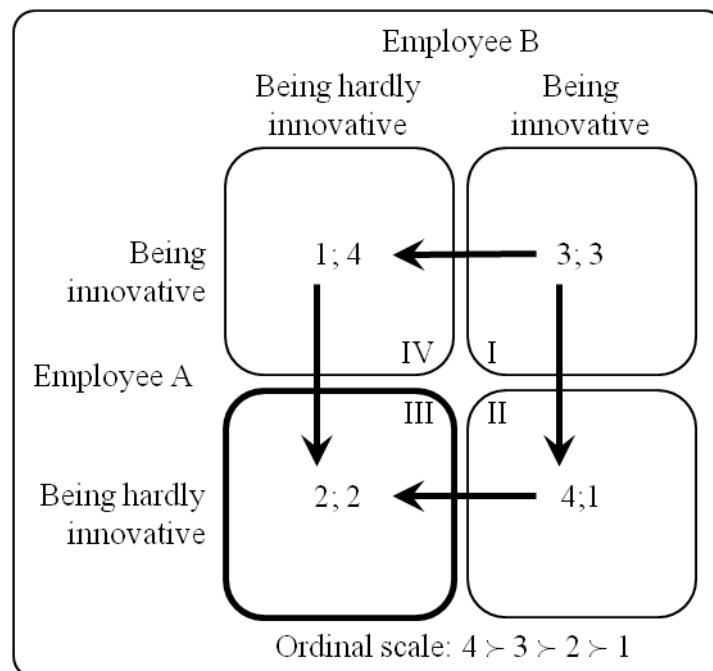


Figure 3: The social dilemma of being innovative⁴⁵

From an interaction-theoretical perspective, employees, managers, and shareholders who are trapped in a social dilemma that prevents each party from attaining collectively desired goals will have a congruent collective interest in resolving the social dilemma.⁴⁶ Even if individual aims are different, the involved parties could have a congruent collective interest in productive interactions. For example, many employees or managers would prefer working in a highly innovative company because of high wages, job security, and more chance of individual fulfillment.⁴⁷ Shareholders, too, prefer to hold shares in an innovative company because, in general, such companies are more profita-

⁴⁴ Cf. Miller (1992; p. 68).

⁴⁵ Own figure.

⁴⁶ Cf. Buchanan (1987; pp. 246-248), Pies et al. (2009b; pp. 378-379).

⁴⁷ Cf. Phelps (2006; pp. 361-363).

ble.⁴⁸ However, employees, managers and shareholders can achieve this desired state only if every party works to make it happen. Solutions for competition or cooperation can be used to create an environment in which employees, managers, and shareholders reach their congruent collective aims.

The central question in accomplishing this is: What are the congruent collective aims, and how can companies achieve a win-win solution? For purposes of illustration, consider an anonymized German technology company that wants to increase the number of its innovations. To that end, it undertook a change management program. This example is particularly interesting because more innovations would be in the interest of the company and of the employees. Compared to a technology company that is not very innovative, the staff would prefer a highly innovative company (Figure 3).⁴⁹

However, for most employees, being innovative is exhausting.⁵⁰ They would prefer easier jobs and not have to constantly be inventing new things. Every employee would thus be very pleased if all his or her colleagues were innovative, thus building up the company and ensuring secure and highly paid jobs ($4 > 3$). On the other side, being innovative if the colleagues are not innovative is a self-damaging strategy ($2 > 1$): the profits from innovation are shared even though the effort was not. Thus, regardless of the innovation behavior of colleagues, and assuming that no one likes to work harder than is necessary, being *non*innovative is rational for every employee (compare the directions of the arrows in Figure 3), but is collectively self-damaging ($2; 2$), seeing that no one benefits if no one is innovative.

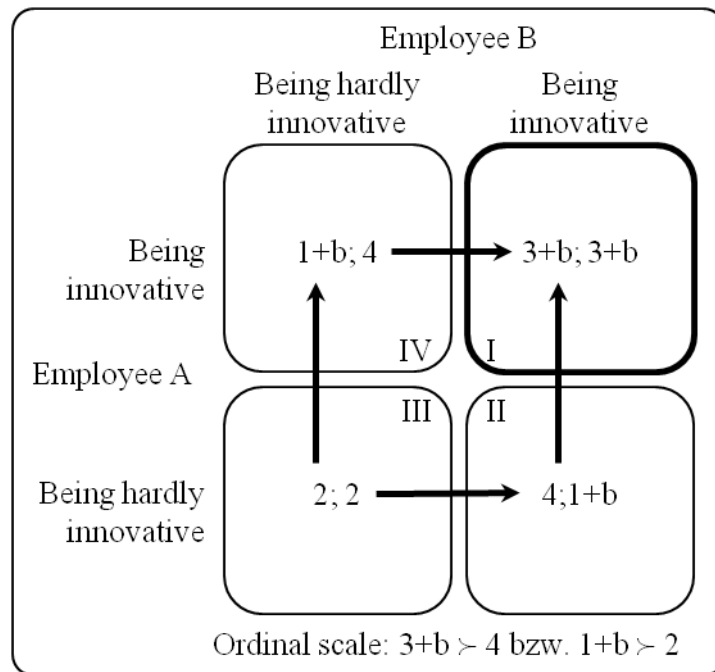


Figure 4: Incentives to overcome the social dilemma of being innovative⁵¹

This is a classic social dilemma between individual and congruent collective aims: saving individual efforts versus working in an innovative company. The dilemma also highlights that the parties are failing to use their potential. However, they are not failing

⁴⁸ Cf. Geroski and Machin (1993) and Gaia and Kirca (2012).

⁴⁹ The same holds for the shareholders, too. For purpose of illustration, this case is not described in detail.

⁵⁰ For a literature review, see Howell and Higgins (1990; pp. 318–319, 321–322).

⁵¹ Own figure.

because of their motives; it is the dilemmatic situation itself that is preventing them from creating mutual benefits. However, change managers can reach a Pareto-optimal outcome by changing the situation. They can motivate the employees and/or managers to act in a socially desirable way either by (a) using incentives to reward socially desirable behavior or by (b) using commitment mechanisms to sanction socially undesirable behavior.

(a) *Incentive mechanisms.* In the above example of a social dilemma, functional incentives can overcome the Pareto-inferior equilibrium. Such an incentive would have to make being innovative worth the extra effort expended and be conducive to innovative behavior regardless of the behavior of colleagues (Figure 4: $3+b > 4$, respectively, $1+b > 2$). Employees, managers and shareholders accept these approach if mutual benefits are created because of these incentives.

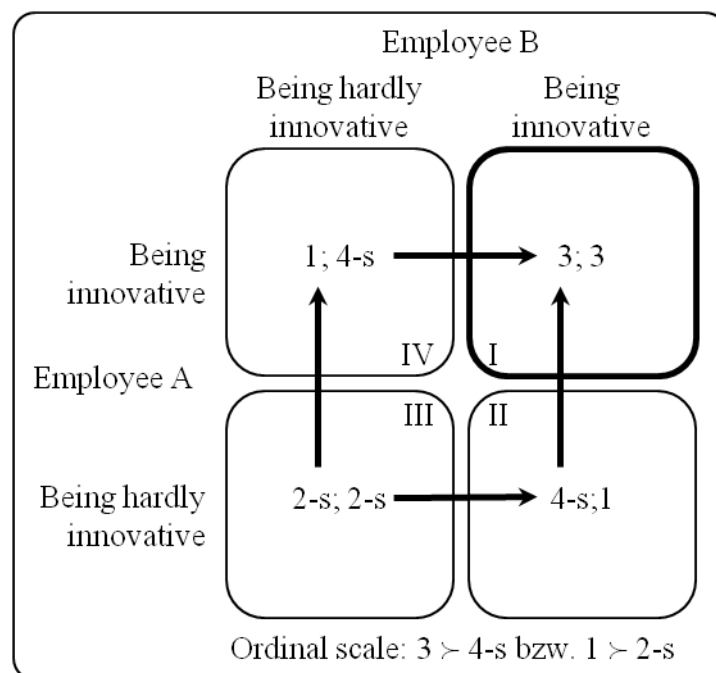


Figure 5: Commitment mechanisms to overcome the social dilemma of being innovative⁵²

(b) *Commitment mechanisms.* An alternate way of creating mutual benefits involves commitment mechanisms. Commitment mechanisms do not reward socially desirable behavior; they sanction socially undesirable behavior (Figure 5). As long as the commitment mechanisms are credible, the socially desirable behavior is the superior strategy. If the employees view the sanctions as more unpleasant than the additional effort of being innovative, it is their interest to cooperate irrespective of colleagues' behavior ($3 > 4-s$, respectively, $1 > 2-s$). However, companies should not implement commitment mechanisms to punish behavior that some managers or shareholders believe to be socially undesirable. The purpose of commitment mechanisms is to reach the collective aims via an alteration of conditions. Credible commitment mechanisms create an environment within which the staff is willing to invest efforts in collectively reaching Pareto-optimal solutions. In other words, the purpose of commitments is not to make more profit at the employees' expense, but to make it in the employees' best interest that everyone interacts in a socially desirable way.

⁵² Own figure.

The interaction-theoretical approach reveals another important feature that cannot be seen directly by looking at the structure of the above social dilemma. The payoffs symbolize how individuals value different outcomes on an ordinal scale. However, a payoff of 3 does not mean the same for every employee, manager, or shareholder or, in other words, a payoff of 3 will mean different things to different parties. The payoffs describe the subjective valuation of different outcomes for one person only. An interpersonal comparison is thus not possible.⁵³ This is not a weakness of the model, however, but instead clarifies that functional solutions for cooperation or competition can create win-win situations despite conflicting individual interests.⁵⁴ To satisfy different individual aims through congruent collective aims is an important ability in pluralistic societies. Companies able to create value despite of pluralistic aims might have a competitive advantage.⁵⁵

2.3 Change Management Conceptualization and Governance Structures

Change managers can use the interaction-theoretical approach to discover unused win-win potentials and thus implement organizational change without resistance. Creating mutual benefit is a way of facilitating organizational change despite incongruent individual aims. Win-win solutions make it easier for managers and employees to accept change. If change managers can devise appropriate and effective incentives or commitment mechanisms, employees will actually favor organizational change due to the benefits they will realize. The challenge for change managers is to determine whether existing governance structures are going to facilitate or hinder providing mutual benefits.,

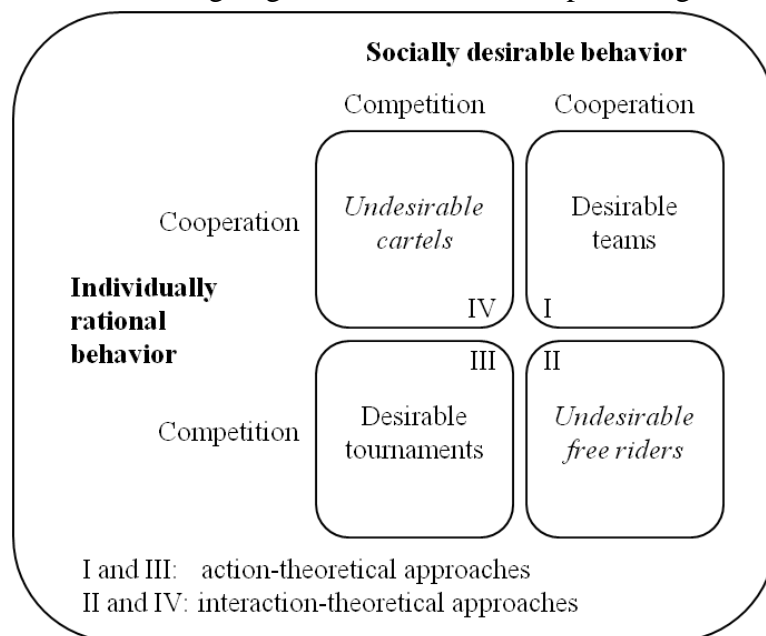


Figure 6: Socially desirable behavior and individually rational behavior⁵⁶

⁵³ Cf. Arrow (1950; p. 342).

⁵⁴ However, congruent individual aims could simplify complex interactions. For a literature overview, see Jaros (2010).

⁵⁵ Cf. Luhmann (2011; pp. 102–103), Pies et al. (2009b; pp. 388–393), Pies et al. (2010; pp. 271–273).

⁵⁶ Own figure.

Figure 6 summarizes social interactions that create lose-lose or win-win. Therefore, Figure 6 shows on the horizontal side the socially desirable interaction to reach a Pareto-superior outcome and on the vertical side the status quo, which is reconstructed by individually rational behavior. The four-field matrix reveals the cases for which change management can create win-win solutions within the existing governance structures and the cases in which change management will be able to generate mutual benefits only by changing governance structures.

Field I—desirable teams. In this case, individuals can reach the Pareto-optimal output through cooperative behavior. The team structure creates an environment in which it is individually rational to cooperate. Socially desirable behavior and rational behavior are congruent: the company, its employees, and the managers interact in an optimal way. Change managers can implement organizational change within desirable teams if the change process either reduces the individual effort of being cooperative or increases mutual benefits. For example, employees will be in favor of change that abolishes unpleasant tasks.⁵⁷ Individuals also tend to be in favor of change that increases mutual benefits.⁵⁸ If organizational change is beneficial within the existing team structures, change managers do not have to adjust the governance structures through interaction-theoretical approaches. Action-theoretical approaches that improve the moves are sufficient and also accepted by employees and managers.

Field II—undesirable free riders. The socially desirable behavior is cooperation, whereas the individually rational behavior is competition. This incongruence leads to unused interaction potential, as in the above example of the German technology company. All parties give up mutual benefits because the situational logic provides strong incentive not to act in the common interest. In this case, colleagues who are cooperating can be exploited by employees, managers, or shareholders. Cooperative behavior is thus not a good individual strategy. Organizational change can create mutual benefits if change managers can alter these dysfunctional governance structures. Depending on the specific possibilities for exploitation of cooperating individuals, managers, employees, or shareholders need functional incentives or commitment mechanisms to make them behave in a socially desirable way.

Field III—desirable tournaments. In tournaments, the socially desirable behavior is competition. Employees or managers compete to reach the socially desirable outcome: a highly profitable firm that pays high wages and offers job security. Change management can be implemented without adaptation of the governance structures if organizational change reduces the effort needed to win the tournament or increases mutual benefits. Action-theoretical approaches can be functional to attain either end.

Field IV—undesirable cartels. In this case, too, the socially desirable behavior is competition. Ironically, in this case, it is cooperation that is socially undesirable. For example, socially undesirable cooperation occurs when it is rational for both managers and subordinates to abandon monitoring. Monitoring involves effort on the part of managers and, of course, for the subordinates who must meet quotas or quality standards. Given this, why do not managers always turn a blind eye on subordinates? Socially undesirable cooperation can be compared with cartels on markets. Competition would be

⁵⁷ For example, change that increases ergonomics. Cf. Biman (1987; pp. 238–239) and Helander and Burri (1995; pp. 148–150).

⁵⁸ Linux development teams are an interesting example of desirable teams. The members are highly intrinsically motivated to change existing structures all the time. For them, permanent change is extremely important to self-fulfillment. Cf. Hertel et al. (2003; pp. 1169–1174).

in the collective interest of every market participant. Indeed, cartels reduce individual effort and make it possible to profit from the efforts of those who are not members of the cartels. Despite this, cartels are not win-lose games between the insiders and outsiders; they are lose-lose games for everyone.⁵⁹ Cartels lead to lower effort and less innovation.⁶⁰ Organizational change can create a win-win situation if it adjusts the governance structures so that employees and managers are more likely to compete than cooperate. This can be done by instituting positive incentive mechanisms to promote socially desirable behavior or commitment mechanisms to reduce socially undesirable behavior.

The above discussion shows that it is sometimes necessary to adapt governance structures so as to optimize interactions within the company and generate win-win solutions for shareholders, managers, and employees. Changing governance structures must be done carefully, however, to make sure there will be no unintended consequences. Even when governance structures do not need to be altered, change managers need to be careful when implementing action-theoretical change management to make sure that the change process will be compatible with individually rational behavior.

2.4 The Link Between Action-Theoretical and Interaction-Theoretical Approaches

The interaction-theoretical framework reveals the conditions under which the action-theoretical approaches are powerful tools for successfully implementing change and dealing with resistance to it. The framework also highlights the conditions under which change management can be successful only if governance structures are adapted appropriately. This framework, shown in Figure 7, will aid change managers in determining whether they can (1) directly improve the moves within tournaments or teams or whether they will have to (2) adapt the governance structures to achieve the socially desirable behavior.

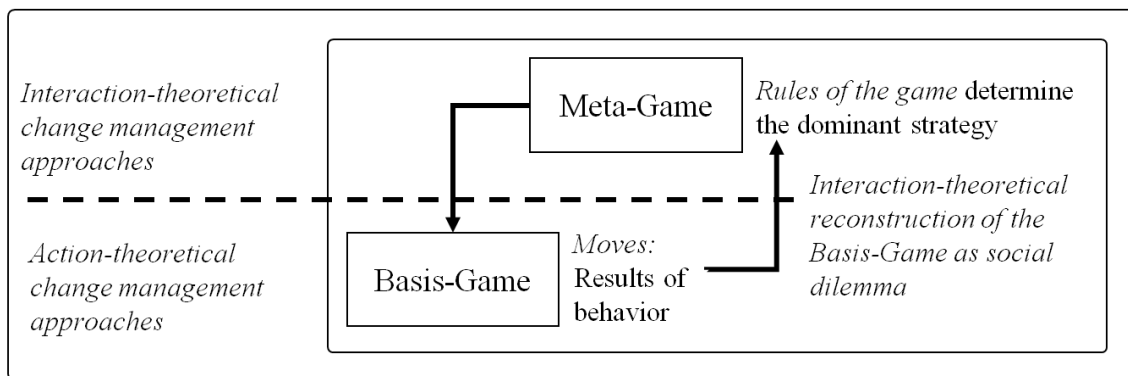


Figure 7: The interdependence between action-theoretical and interaction-theoretical change management approaches⁶¹

(1) *Optimization of the Basis-Game.* Figure 7 shows the behavior of the managers and employees on the level of the Basis-Game. Action-theoretical approaches—like providing information, communication, encouraging participation or learning—can directly influence the output of the Basis-Game. These approaches will be extremely effective when used within socially desirable teams or tournaments. If action-theoretical ap-

⁵⁹ For the dead weight loss of cartels between companies, see Williamson (1968; pp. 21–22), Posner, (1974; pp. 4–5), Rogerson (1982), Landes (1983), and Leslie (2006).

⁶⁰ Cf. Miller (1992; pp. 113–116) and Lawler (1971; pp. 124–127).

⁶¹ Own figure, based on Pies et al. (2009a; p. 326, 2009b; p. 386, 2010; p. 268).

proaches reduce effort within the Basis-Game or increase mutual benefits, employees and managers will accept them.

However, action-theoretical approaches are not sufficient if socially undesirable free riders or cartels create a gap between individual rational behavior and collectively desired behavior. A direct optimization of moves will not be effective because the Pareto-inferior situation is causing the collectively undesirable outcome. Despite behaving rationally they cannot use their potentials. In these dilemmas, action-theoretical approaches may have some, albeit low, impact because they tend to improve the socially desirable moves. However, these moves are not individually rational. More information, communication, better skills, or participation are usually not able to alter the incentive structures of social dilemmas. If a gap between the individual and the collective aims inhibits a win-win solution and causes resistance, action-theoretical approaches cannot overcome these challenges. Successful change management requires an alteration of the company's Meta-Game.⁶²

(2) *Adaptation of governance structures within the Meta-Game.* Socially undesirable cartels or free riders are problems that are extremely difficult to overcome through action-theoretical approaches. Within this type of social dilemma, it is very difficult for individuals to make reasonable decisions: if they decide in their own interest, they can negatively affect the whole company; however, if they choose to fulfill the collective aims, shirking colleagues, managers, or shareholders can exploit their efforts. Interaction-theoretical approaches try to overcome these social dilemmas by means of altering the dilemmatic situation. Change managers can adapt the governance structures to change the rules of the Pareto-inferior game. Functional formal or informal governance structures could be designed to change socially undesirable cartels or free riders into either socially desirable teams or tournaments. Under functional governance structures, employees, managers, and shareholder do not have to decide between individual aims and congruent collective targets. Functional governance structures generate an environment within which the individual aims can only be fulfilled by socially desirable interactions.

The interaction-theoretical perspective thus highlights that resistance to organizational change is not only a problem of communication, information, learning, and different aims; resistance to change can also be caused by dysfunctional governance structures that create a gap between individually rational and collectively desirable behavior. The challenge for organizational change is to adjust the governance structures so that employees and managers can make decisions without having to decide between individually rational and collectively desirable behavior.

Change managers do not have to find a consensus between the collective and the individual aims. If change managers organize value creation through socially desirable teams or tournaments, they can overcome the tradeoff between individual aims and the company's goals. Under functional governance structures, the employees, managers, and shareholders can reach their individual targets through socially desirable interactions. If change managers seek to attain value creation through a win-win solution, the resistance to organizational change will decrease. The creation of mutual benefits will provide good reason to accept organizational change.

The adjustment of governance structures does not preclude the necessity for action-theoretical approaches. Information, communication, participation, and learning can

⁶² Cf. Pies et al. (2009a; p. 326, 2009b; p. 386 or 2010; p. 268).

accelerate the implementation of action-theoretical-orientated processes. Organizational change can successfully overcome resistance through mutual benefits if change managers combine action-theoretical and interaction-theoretical approaches.

3. Discussion: Incentives, Commitment, Information Asymmetries, and Discourse

(1) *Incentives*. The importance of incentives in successfully implementing organizational change is a frequent topic in the change management literature.⁶³ The above framework reveals in a more differentiated way the conditions under which incentives are an effective way of implementing change and reducing resistance.

(a) Kotter and Schlesinger (2008; pp. 1, 6) criticize bonus systems because companies could be blackmailed by their employees. From an interaction-theoretical perspective, however, this criticism does not hold up. Bonuses—as a form of positive incentive—could be an effective way of rewarding socially desirable behavior in tournaments or teams. If bonuses motivate employees or managers to act in a socially desirable manner, they will have no incentive to be free riders or join a cartel. Indeed, the absence of bonuses could lead to free riding or cartel formation. From this point of view, the two choices are either to provide bonuses and accomplish a win-win solution or to decide against bonuses and create a social dilemma. In the right circumstances, bonuses can be thought of as a necessary investment toward organizational change.

However, the amount of change that can be accomplished by means of bonuses is limited because of the mutual welfare maximum. The welfare maximum in the above social dilemma is illustrated by (3; 3). To reach this maximum, companies have to pay bonuses to cooperating employees and managers not only when some colleagues are shirking but also when everyone is cooperating in a socially beneficial way. The latter situation could become quite expensive and, indeed, the additional cost of the bonuses can exceed the welfare maximum: (3+b; 3+b). In short, companies can effectively motivate change by means of positive incentives only when these incentives are cost-neutral⁶⁴ or if the work done to earn the bonuses results in such an increase in profits that the firm can permanently afford to pay bonuses. If neither situation pertains, change managers may need to look at commitment mechanisms as a viable alternative.

(b) Beer et al. (1990; pp. 9–12) conclude that companies should reward managers who promote innovation with better career possibilities. Companies should also support departments that are extremely innovative. From an interaction-theoretical perspective, these are functional incentives. However, as in the discussion above, these incentives should be either cost-neutral or result in profits that exceed their costs.

(c) According to Waddel and Sohal (1998; p. 547), change managers could adapt dysfunctional incentives by strategies of participation and communication. An interaction-theoretical perspective can specify this approach and highlight the conditions under which participation and communication can alter dysfunctional incentives. If cartels or free riders are blocking organizational change, communication and participation could be helpful if change managers use the gained information to adjust the governance structures. Change managers could gather a lot of helpful information through participa-

⁶³ Cf. Waddel and Sohal (1998; p. 547), Kanter (1989; pp. 91-92), Kotter and Schlesinger (2008; pp. 1, 6), and Beer et al. (1990; pp. 9–12).

⁶⁴ For examples cf. Shin et al. (2012; pp. 742-743).

tion and communication and use it to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of governance structures.

(2) *Commitment*. From an interaction-theoretical perspective, commitment mechanisms should not be (mis-)interpreted as mechanisms for punishment. On the contrary, commitment mechanisms could work to the best interests of employees and managers. The purpose of these mechanisms is to establish an environment in which employees and managers do not have to fear exploitation by shirking colleagues. Therefore, instead of creating a climate of fear, commitment mechanisms with their sanctions do the opposite: they reduce the fear of exploitation by protecting hard-working and ethical employees and managers.⁶⁵

However, commitment mechanisms have their limits. (a) Companies can sanction socially undesirable behavior only if such behavior is observed. Many modern value creation processes require employees who are extremely specialized, meaning that it is sometimes impossible for managers to even know, much less understand, exactly what they are doing, leaving open the opportunity for malfeasance.⁶⁶ (b) Organizational change can also cause monitoring problems. Structures are changed, new processes are implemented. Therefore, monitoring can fail because there is yet no empirical knowledge as to the appropriate efficiency or effectiveness of the changed procedures. Shirking employees or managers could exploit this knowledge gap. (c) Companies that operate in an extremely dynamic environment require highly motivated, innovative, engaged, and autonomous employees. These qualities cannot be enforced by commitment mechanisms because it is nearly impossible to sanction for example missing intrinsic motivation. If commitment mechanisms fail, incentives could be an effective alternative in this situation.

(3) *Company culture*. Incentives and commitment mechanisms can also be informal. For example, company culture may militate against free riders or cartels.⁶⁷ The organizational change literature focuses on the relevance of corporate culture, too.⁶⁸ The interaction-theoretical perspective reveals that culture does not only affect the aims of employees and managers. For example, a pervasive culture of change will have an influence on who is hired in the first place. Also, company culture may encompass informal norms that influence behavior. Are employees and managers who seriously implement organizational change resented as making everyone else look bad? Or are they admired by their colleagues? Informal norms can have a strong influence on the socially desirable behavior of employees and managers.⁶⁹

(4) *Discourse*. The perspective that change management can overcome social dilemmas and thereby establish mutual benefits is extremely conducive to productive dialogue about the necessity for and implementation of change. These discourses complement participation, communication, or information strategies. Interaction-theoretical approaches, which can generate win-win solutions by eliminating free riders and cartels, can be a powerful way of reducing resistance. A clear win-win focus by change management thus helps facilitate productive discourse between change managers, employ-

⁶⁵ Cf. Schein (2003; pp. 5–6). For a literature review, see Bovey and Hede (2001a; p. 372, 2001b; p. 534).

⁶⁶ Cf. Aghion and Tirole (1997; pp. 4–5).

⁶⁷ Cf. Kreps (1990).

⁶⁸ Cf. Ford et al. (2001), Hannan and Freeman (1984), Klein and Sorra (1996), Krüger (2010), Nemeth (1997), Rumelt (1995), and Strebler (1994).

⁶⁹ Cf. Miller (1992; pp. 204–206).

ees, and managers.⁷⁰ Compared to participation, communication and information, a functional discourse focuses in the first step on necessary governance structures to overcome socially undesirable behavior.

The idea of the discourse is not to concentrate primarily on the company's or the employees' respectively the managers' aims. The challenge is to focus on suitable governance structures which generate mutual benefits for employees, managers and the company. A discourse which concentrates on the governance structures to create win-win can be more successful than approaches within a win-lose paradigm.⁷¹ Also, discourses about appropriate governance structures to organize win-win solutions do not require commitment to the individual aims or the targets of the company as many scholars recommend.⁷² Employees and managers have only to commit to the collective aims and to the necessary governance structures. A functional discourse uses thus participation, information and communication to find congruent collective aims and suitable incentives or commitment mechanisms to establish mutual benefits and to reduce resistance. Compared to negotiating of meanings between managers and employees,⁷³ discourses are an effective alternative. However, employees will only accept win-win solutions if change managers and the company are credible. If the staff expects that the initiators pursue a hidden agenda and tarnish this as win-win, organizational change will also fail.

Conclusion

The potential of interaction-theoretical approaches to organizational change can be summarized as follows:

(1) They enable dealing with pluralistic aims, opinions, and motivations. Compared to other approaches that concentrate on congruent aims, change managers taking the interaction-theoretical approach have an opportunity to implement organizational change in a pluralistic environment. Change managers do not have to balance conflicting aims; they can concentrate on mutually accepted governance structures that create win-win solutions.

(2) The focus on win-win solutions can help overcome resistance to organizational change by redirecting cartels and free riders into more productive interactions. The interaction-theoretical perspective highlights that interactions do not have to be zero-sum games. However, in many cases, dysfunctional governance structures lead to win-lose or, even worse, lose-lose situations. Thus, change managers will win the "hearts and minds" of employees, managers, and shareholders if they implement functional governance structures.

(3) An important condition for win-win solutions are functional governance structures. Indeed, this stands not in conflict to action-theoretical approaches. In many cases, change managers can only succeed if they combine interaction- and action-theoretical approaches. The adaption of governance structures creates the environment in which action theoretical approaches become effective.

⁷⁰ Cf. Maurer (1996; p. 60).

⁷¹ Cf. Hardy (2005; p. 67), Pies et al. (2009a, 2009b, 2010).

⁷² Cf. Shin et al. (2012, 727–728).

⁷³ Cf. Thomas et al. (2011).

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