Organization Science

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://pubsonline.informs.org

Managing Organizational Change: Negotiating Meaning and Power-Resistance Relations

Robyn Thomas, Leisa D. Sargent, Cynthia Hardy,

To cite this article:
Robyn Thomas, Leisa D. Sargent, Cynthia Hardy, (2011) Managing Organizational Change: Negotiating Meaning and Power-Resistance Relations. Organization Science 22(1):22-41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0520

Organization Science
Vol. 22, No. 1, January–February 2011, pp. 22–41
ISSN 1047-7039 | EISSN 1526-5455 | 11 | 2201 | 0022
DOI 10.1287/orsc.1090.0520

Managing Organizational Change: Negotiating Meaning and Power-Resistance Relations

Robyn Thomas
Cardiff Business School, Cardiff CF10 3EU, United Kingdom, thomasr4@cardiff.ac.uk
Leisa D. Sargent, Cynthia Hardy
Department of Management and Marketing, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3010, Australia
{lsargent@unimelb.edu.au, chardy@unimelb.edu.au}

Theoretical developments in the analysis of organizations have recently turned to an "organizational becoming" perspective, which sees the social world as enacted in the microcontext of communicative interactions among individuals through which meaning is negotiated. According to this view, organizational change is endemic, natural, and ongoing; it occurs in everyday interactions as actors engage in the process of establishing new meanings for organizational activities. We adopt this approach to study how meanings were negotiated by senior and middle managers in a workshop held as part of a culture change program at a telecommunications company. Our study identifies two very different patterns in these negotiations, constituted by the particular communicative practices adopted by participants. We discuss the implications of these patterns for organizational change in relation to generative dialogue and power-resistance relations between senior and middle managers.

Key words: organizational change; organizational becoming; dialogue; power-resistance relations
History: Published online in *Articles in Advance* March 25, 2010.

Theoretical developments in the analysis of organizations have recently turned to a perspective referred to as "organizational becoming" (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, Carlsen 2006), which draws attention to two important aspects of organizations. First, organizations are viewed not as fixed entities, but as unfolding enactments. "Organization" is an emergent property of change—a temporary pattern constituted by and shaped from microinteractions among actors, situated in their everyday work. Change is endemic, natural, and ongoing. Second, organization is contingent upon language. Organizational structures and processes are held in place through language, whereas changes in patterns of organizing depend upon new language, the meaning of which is negotiated among actors in their communicative interactions. Organizational change thus results from ongoing linguistic exchanges among actors (Ford and Ford 1995, Weick et al. 2005) as they negotiate meaning (Hardy et al. 2005, Tsoukas 2005).

This perspective has important implications for the way in which organizational change is conceptualized and managed. First, although senior managers may intervene in the negotiations over meaning with particular outcomes in mind (Carlsen 2006), it is not helpful to think of change programs simply as the realization of a particular management plan. Instead, a change plan is a "discursive template"—a text produced by a particular author, which has to be interpreted by those whom it addresses in the context of specific local circumstances (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, p. 579). Senior managers may hold privileged positions in terms of their ability to introduce new templates but, ultimately, the meanings of these texts have to be negotiated with other organizational members, as a result of which they may be changed (cf. Maguire and Hardy 2009). Organizational change is thus a "multiauthored" process (Buchanan and Dawson 2007, p. 69) because actors coconstruct shared meanings (Collins 1981). Second, the creation of shared meanings does not, however, necessarily lead to the innovative, synergistic solutions typically associated with successful organizational change initiatives (Hardy et al. 2005) because shared meanings can also be associated with imposed change and compliance (Hardy and Phillips 1998). Therefore, the idea of multiauthored change has been further elaborated with the concept of "generative" (Gergen et al. 2004), "productive" (Tsoukas 2009), and "creative" (Gratton and Ghoshal 2002) dialogue, which is needed to bring about the fresh distinctions, new connections, and novel experiences associated with successful organizational change (Tsoukas and Chia 2002) through the active engagement of a wide range of actors in the negotiation of meaning (cf. Westley 1990). Third, organizational becoming calls into question traditional conceptions of resistance to change, because engagement with new meanings proposed by senior managers or change agents involves challenge and modification by other employees. In the

change literature, such challenges are typically framed as a problem—a dysfunctional response by subordinates to obstruct the efforts of senior managers to bring about change (Dent and Goldberg 1999). In the context of multiauthored change, rather than representing a hindrance, resistance is integral to successful change (Ford et al. 2008), and changes to senior managers' or change agents' discursive templates are to be expected, even encouraged.

We explore these issues by drawing on the perspective of organizational becoming to provide a detailed, real-time analysis of the negotiation of meaning by members of a telecommunications company during a workshop conducted as part of a culture change program. The workshop was one of a series of 80 held throughout the company as a means of involving employees in the change program. The workshops all worked from the same text—a "culture toolkit" that consisted of a brochure, a video, and a set of instructions—and followed the same process. Our analysis of the workshop shows the emergence of two very different patterns in the negotiation of meaning. One pattern conformed to notions of "generative" dialogue, the other to "degenerative" dialogue (Gergen 2003). Both forms of dialogue coexisted in the same workshop and can be traced to the use of different communicative practices, at particular times, by senior and middle managers. We discuss the role that power-resistance relations played in these negotiations and the implications for organizational change.

This study makes three contributions. First, we show how organizational becoming can inform an empirical study of how meaning is negotiated in organizational talk targeted toward organizational change objectives. Second, by studying patterns in the negotiation of meaning and examining power-resistance relations, we develop a model that shows how particular communicative practices can lead to generative dialogue, in which resistance plays a facilitative role, resulting in organizational change based on the transformation of knowledge. Third, we also show how particular communicative practices can produce degenerative dialogue and oppositional power-resistance relations, thereby extending existing models to identify the specific dynamics through which these practices lead to the imposition of meaning in change initiatives and serve to inhibit the production of new knowledge.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We first provide an overview of the work on organizational becoming. Second, we introduce our case study and explain our methods of data collection and analysis. Third, we present our findings and discuss their implications.

Organizational Becoming

Underlying an organizational becoming perspective (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, Carlsen 2006) are two ontological assumptions. First, organizations are not fixed entities, but enactments: "unfolding processes involving actors making choices interactively, in inescapably local conditions" (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, p. 577). "Organization" is an emergent property of this ongoing change—a temporary pattern constituted by and shaped from microinteractions as actors perform their everyday work. Such "performative" accounts of change focus "on situated human agency unfolding in time" and offer insights into the emergence and accomplishment of change (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, p. 572). Change thus becomes the normal and inevitable condition of organization life rather than being seen as exceptional and episodic (Bechky 2006). Organization is a temporary outcome of organizing (cf. Weick 1995), and instead of privileging stability, researchers treat disequilibrium as natural and ongoing (Chiles et al. 2004).

Second, an organizational becoming perspective emphasizes the constructive effects of language (Tsoukas 2005, 2009) as situations are "talked into existence and the basis is laid for action to deal with it" (Taylor and Van Every 2000, p. 58; quoted in Weick et al. 2005, p. 413). Speech acts (Searle 1969), discourse (Phillips et al. 2004), narratives (Buchanan and Dawson 2007), dialogue (Gergen et al. 2004), and conversations (Ford and Ford 1995) thus reproduce—or transform—organizational practices. This perspective views organizations as enacted in the microcontext of communicative interactions among individuals (Boden 1994, Weick et al. 2005) and focuses on "ongoing authoring acts situated in everyday work" (Carlsen 2006, p. 132). Language is a generative mechanism through which the collective actions (Hardy et al. 2005) and discursive coordination (Gergen et al. 2004) that enact organizations are achieved (Robichaud et al. 2004, Heracleous and Barrett 2001), whereas "organizational change is the process of constructing and sharing new meanings and interpretations of organizational activities" (Tsoukas 2005, p. 98).

Language has no inherent meaning however. Language provides the "potential for meaning" (Gergen et al. 2004, p. 45), which is realized only as individuals communicate with each other. Meaning is negotiated among actors over time through dialogue—unfolding social interaction between two or more people that is contextually embedded as well as historically and culturally situated (Gergen et al. 2004). It has been argued that meaning which is coconstructed by a range of actors through dialogue that is "productive" (Tsoukas 2009) or "generative" (Gergen et al. 2004) is more likely to bring about innovative and synergistic organizational change. Such dialogue is unobstructed and extended (Gergen 2003): it builds mutuality through awareness of others and unfolding interaction (Putnam and Fairhurst 2001); it involves affirmation, which serves to acknowledge previous utterances as meaningful (Gergen et al. 2004); and it distributes reasoning so that participants are willing to alter their views (Tsoukas 2009). As a result, a new

common sensibility emerges regarding the matter under discussion (Collins 1981, Hardy et al. 2005). In contrast, when dialogue is "degenerative" (Gergen 2003), discourse is monologic and meaning is imposed through moves that destroy the meaning-making potential of preceding utterances (Gergen et al. 2004). Accordingly, interactions are calculated. At best they are minimally cooperative; at worst, conflict ridden (Tsoukas 2009). Collective action may still result, but it is more likely to be in the form of enforced compliance rather than the synergistic and innovative outcomes often hoped for in organizational change initiatives (Hardy and Phillips 1998, Hardy et al. 2005).

The question remains, How are the meanings that constitute organizational change—and organizations—negotiated? Given that organizations are permeated by hierarchical relations, occupational differences, and vested interests, it is "naïve" to assume that actors share the same goals and interests and to ignore the "red meat" of power and politics (Weick et al. 2005, p. 418). Particular meanings have consequences for the nature of organizing (Gergen et al. 2004), and, as a result, actors struggle "to frame discursive and nondiscursive practices within a system of meanings that is commensurate with that individual's or group's own interests" (Deetz and Mumby 1990, p. 32). Senior managers or change agents may vest their aspirations and expectations in the discursive templates that they use to frame change initiatives (Tsoukas 2005), but middle managers, who are regularly charged with interpreting, communicating, and implementing change (Lüscher and Lewis 2008), may resist these templates and offer alternative interpretations (cf. Maguire and Hardy 2009). Despite their supposed disadvantaged position, those with less hierarchical authority, expert credentials, or economic resources, such as middle managers and other employees, can nonetheless exercise power discursively (Hardy and Phillips 2004, Levina and Orlikowski 2009).

The negotiation of meaning is therefore inevitably infused with power-resistance relations. Traditionally, power and resistance have been treated separately, with the exercise of power seen as domination, and resistance constituting actions taken to challenge it (Barbalet 1985). More recently, Foucault's (1980) work has led to a reconceptualization of this relationship insofar as power and resistance are seen as diffuse, coconstitutive, and multidimensional. There "are no relations of power without resistances: the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Foucault 1980, p. 142). Power and resistance operate as part of the complex web of relations linking actors in everyday organizational life (Kondo 1990) and together comprise a system of relations in which the possibilities for both—as well as tensions between them—coexist (Sawicki 1991). Power is never complete and, instead, is always open to the possibilities of resistance as actors struggle to maintain or promote their preferred meanings (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994). So although senior managers and change agents may be in a privileged position to negotiate meaning (Collinson 1994) insofar as they design and introduce change initiatives, there is no guarantee that their interests will prevail. Such struggles are not necessarily negative or repressive, however, because there is always a creative potential to power-resistance relations as meanings are reordered and renegotiated—power-resistance relations are thus enabling as well as constraining (Mumby 2005).

In sum, the literature indicates that organizational change processes are contingent upon the negotiation of meaning which, in turn, is permeated by power-resistance relations. However, so far we know little about the specific dynamics of these relationships. Our research question, therefore, is, How does the negotiation of meaning influence organizational change, and what is the role of power-resistance relations in these processes?

Methods

We conducted a detailed, real-time analysis of the negotiation of meaning by members of a telecommunications company referred to here as UTel[1] during a workshop carried out as part of a culture change program. Utel is a pioneer in licensing open-standard GSM (global system for mobile communication)/GPRS (general packet radio system), EDGE (enhanced data rates for global enhancement), and WCDMA (wideband and code-division multiple access) technologies to manufacturers of mobile phones and other mobile communication devices. At the time of the study, UTel employed approximately 1,500 employees, most of whom were located at the European head office, with the remainder working in sites in United Kingdom, mainland Europe, Asia, and North America. The company had been formed in 2001, when it "spun off" from being an internal division of GlobalTel, a global telecommunications company that was undergoing major restructuring and redundancies at the time as a result of low-cost competitors and lower growth in the mobile phone market worldwide. As an independent organization, UTel changed from being part of a much larger company that made mobile phones for the end user to one that sold "knowledge" to mobile phone manufacturers. Its success hinged on the replacement of the existing engineering focus, which stemmed from its previous position as a unit that interacted primarily with other divisions within GlobalTel, with a culture that focused on the new customer—no longer the end user of the phone but other companies who manufactured and sold phones.

Senior management, together with external consultants, had devised a cultural change program involving a series of 80 workshops to be rolled out across

the company. Each workshop was organized around a "culture toolkit" that consisted of a brochure, a video, and a set of instructions for conducting the workshops. The brochure, entitled "UTel's Target Culture: Involving Every Employee," specified a target culture for the company in broad terms relating to four drivers of business success (unity in team work, technological innovation, excellent customer service, and leadership) and four shared values (trust, empowerment, commitment, and quality). Given the company's mission—"to make our customers first, best and profitable through innovation, quality, and commitment"—the new culture was expected to be more customer focused. The brochure also described an implementation process involving additional workshops that were to be run by middle managers, which involved using the culture toolkit to review the target culture "to discuss how it affects their team, themselves as individuals, and Utel." The video, shown during the workshop, was a 10-minute question and answer session between the chief executive officer (CEO) and another senior manager. It explained why a new culture was needed and provided further information on the drivers and the values that underpinned it. It also presented a view of the implementation of the new culture, as the CEO stated that the "next step is to involve everybody" through the additional workshops. The instructions specified the activities for each half-day workshop: (a) a presentation of the target culture, using the brochure and accompanying video; (b) a discussion of the relevance of the target culture to the particular group attending the workshop; and (c) exercises to build agreement on actions to be taken to implement the target culture.

The initial workshops were led by head office and senior site managers, and involved middle managers from different engineering and support staff functions. The middle managers were then required to replicate the workshop with their own subordinates, again using the same culture toolkit to provide a broad framework for agreement on the nature of the new culture and how it was to be implemented. The brochure stated that senior managers could not "take all the responsibility [for the change program] by themselves. Everyone has to contribute to create a strong company culture by participating in our 'new target culture program.' " More specifically, the aim was to secure involvement and input from employees and to bring about agreement on what the nature of the new culture should be and how it should be implemented from across the company.

Site Selection

The site was selected, first, because the workshops involved negotiating the meaning of a change program, which was deliberately described in ambiguous terms. The culture toolkit specified the target culture only in broad and vague terms, emphasizing that managers and employees should "build *a* [not '*the*'] strong company culture together" (brochure). The workshops were intended to "complete the picture of [the] target culture" and "agree on action" on how it was to be implemented (brochure). Second, these negotiations involved employees from different levels, locations, and departments in the development and implementation of the new culture. They were led by senior managers from the company's European headquarters and from the local UK site. Other participants were a range of middle managers from the UK site. As such, the negotiation of meaning in the workshop clearly involved two distinct managerial groups—senior and middle managers—and we therefore expected to be able to witness the dynamics of the power-resistance relations between them. Third, the workshop represented a series of structured interactions that could be observed in real time, and which would be repeated in a similar fashion through out the company. Naturally occurring talk in real time—such as meetings and workshops—are excellent sites for finely grained analyses of how events unfold and how plans are translated into action as they are modified, adapted, and changed (cf. Kärreman and Alvesson 2001).

Data Collection

Background information on the change program was gathered through the collection of company documents such as reports, press releases, and preliminary interviews. One of workshops, conducted as part of the change program, was observed by one of the authors, recorded, and fully transcribed. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 18 of the participants, who were asked for their views on different groups in the company and the change program. The interviews lasted between one and two hours in length, were recorded, and were then transcribed verbatim.

The observed workshop lasted three hours and was attended by 3 head office managers, 2 senior managers from the UK plant, and 31 middle managers—support staff managers and senior software and hardware engineers. The participants represented a mix of ethnic groups, ranged in age from early 30s to mid-40s, and were predominantly men (three women were present). A senior site manager from the UK plant started the session by welcoming participants and introducing the head office managers, one of whom provided an overview of the outline and goals of the workshop. Another senior manager made a PowerPoint presentation that described his interpretation of the local culture and its strengths and weaknesses, followed by a general discussion about whether this interpretation was accurate. Following a coffee break there was a discussion about the mission statement specified in the brochure, and the video was shown. Then participants completed a "stop/start/continue" exercise to identify one behavior that was hindering cultural change and needed to

be stopped, one new behavior that needed to be started, and one existing behavior that should be continued, the results of which were collected by the head office managers. The workshop concluded with a discussion of how to implement the change program.

Data Analysis

The interviews indicated that members of five different managerial groups were involved in the workshop: senior personnel who worked at the head office, another group of senior managers who worked at the local UK site, and three groups of middle managers—software engineers, hardware engineers, and support staff (e.g., human resources (HR), finance, sales, and marketing). We categorized all workshop participants as belonging to one of these groups for the purposes of the first stage of analysis (see below) and later collapsed them into two broader groupings of senior and middle managers to carry out the second stage of analysis.

We examined the workshop transcript to explore the negotiation of meaning, i.e., the communicative interactions in which meanings were debated, contested, and/or agreed upon by participants. We selected negotiations around two key meanings represented by the culture toolkit: (a) a *customer focus* as part of the new culture, and (b) the *implementation* of the new culture. Our preliminary analysis indicated that these two sets of negotiations differed markedly. Thus, by comparing these two sets of negotiations, we could pursue "transparently observable" processes (Eisenhardt 1989, p. 537). We extracted all instances of talk about customer focus and implementation from the workshop transcript. We placed all relevant discussion in chronological order and identified who made each intervention, i.e., a specific statement or interjection. We then tracked how the negotiations over meanings unfolded during the workshop by examining the development of different meanings over time, the order or flow of interventions, whether interventions built on or disagreed with earlier meanings, whether different groups engaged with each others' meanings or engaged in defensive reiterations of previously held meanings, and when and how the negotiations of meaning ended. In this way, we were able to establish patterns in the degree to which meaning was coconstructed by a range of actors or imposed by a small group of actors. By comparing the two sets of negotiations, we identified two distinct patterns in how participants collectively negotiated meaning, as discussed in the findings. The appendix provides an abridged version of the transcripts to illustrate the different patterns in the negotiations.

Finally, we reexamined each individual intervention according to whether it was made by senior managers (from the head office or the UK site) or middle managers (software engineers, hardware engineers, or support staff). We then noted the patterns in terms of how each intervention engaged with earlier interventions, e.g., whether it built on, affirmed, asked questions of, or disagreed with earlier interventions, and whether interventions proposed new meanings or repeated earlier meanings. We also noted other patterns such as the use of authority and different ways of referring to the culture toolkit. From this inductive analysis, we established 13 different communicative practices (Table 1). We then compared the use of these practices in the two sets of negotiations and found major differences between those used by senior and middle managers, as discussed in the findings.

Table 1 Communicative Practices

Practice	Description
Inviting	Statements that encourage participation by other actors in negotiation of meanings
Affirming	Statements that agree with alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Clarifying	Questions that open up negotiation of meaning.
Building	Statements that engage with, elaborate, and develop alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Dismissing	Statements that serve to rebuff or ignore alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Reiterating	Statements that return to and repeat meanings
Deploying authority	Statements that contain directives that eliminate alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Invoking hierarchy	Statements that refer to superiors to justify the elimination of alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Reifying	Statements that invoke the culture toolkit to represent a particular, nonnegotiable meaning
Proposing	Statements that introduce a new meaning
Challenging	Statement that reject or critique alternative meanings proposed by other actors
Undermining	Statements that criticize other actors to discredit their proposed meanings
Holding to account	Statements that demand action from other actors (or question a lack of action) to undermine or discredit their proposed meanings

Findings

We first discuss the negotiation of meaning of customer focus and then of implementation.

Negotiations Around Customer Focus

The meaning of *customer focus*, broadly described in the culture toolkit, was negotiated by the participants as they worked through the exercises, referred to the brochure, and reflected on the video during the course of the workshop. Four main strands to these negotiations can be observed, each relating to a different meaning of "customer focus": (a) *who is the customer*? a discussion that ended prior to the conclusion of the workshop

with some agreement over the customer being an external business; (b) the nature of *the relationship with the customer*, which proposed a need for honesty, although this meaning was taken up and superseded by other discussions around the need for a commercial focus; (c) *are we customer focused*? which concluded in agreement that the UK site was customer focused, although, again, this meaning was superseded by the need for a commercial focus; (d) *the need for a commercial focus*, which emerged during the workshop (see Figure 1).

At the start of the workshop, in the opening address by a senior manager, the need to achieve a "common understanding" of *customer focus* was introduced: "It's important that we have a strong UTel culture in this organization to be customer focused, we need to actually get a common understanding . . . and hopefully feed back any concerns and issues that may crop up." A head office manager then put forward a number of suggestions on how customer focus might be defined and understood in terms of a *relationship* with the customer [1].[2] At this point, a senior manager sought clarification on *who the customer is* and whether they are talking about the *end user* (the person who buys and uses the phone) *or another business* (i.e., the customer is another company that sells the phone) [2]. This comment triggered a lively debate among the engineers concerning the question, *who is the customer*? following which a head office manager attempted to return to the nature of relationship with the customer—one in which *the customer is dominant* and UTel merely provides advice [3]. This triggered another question about *who the customer is*, and if it is a business-to-business relationship, how it should be conducted [4].

One of the software engineers then challenged the assumption that the UK site is not already customer focused. A software engineer asserted [5]:

> I believe that we're [local site] customer oriented. I think we are customer focused as an organization and we have been all the way through even in our history. I think we're a customer-focused organization.

A debate ensued over whether or not the UK site is more or less customer focused compared to head office, resulting in the discussion shifting away from the nature of the relationship with the customer to claims that UK site *already is customer focused*. This claim was disputed by some participants [6], but supported by a senior manager as well as software engineers, in particular, who emphasized their existing close relationship with their customers. During this debate, the discussion returned to *who the customer is*, which became further complicated as the *end user was equated with business* [7]. The claim that the UK site is *already customer focused* reemerged [8].

At this point, the importance of a customer focus was challenged at a more fundamental level as one of the support staff argued that there is a *need for a commercial focus* [9]:

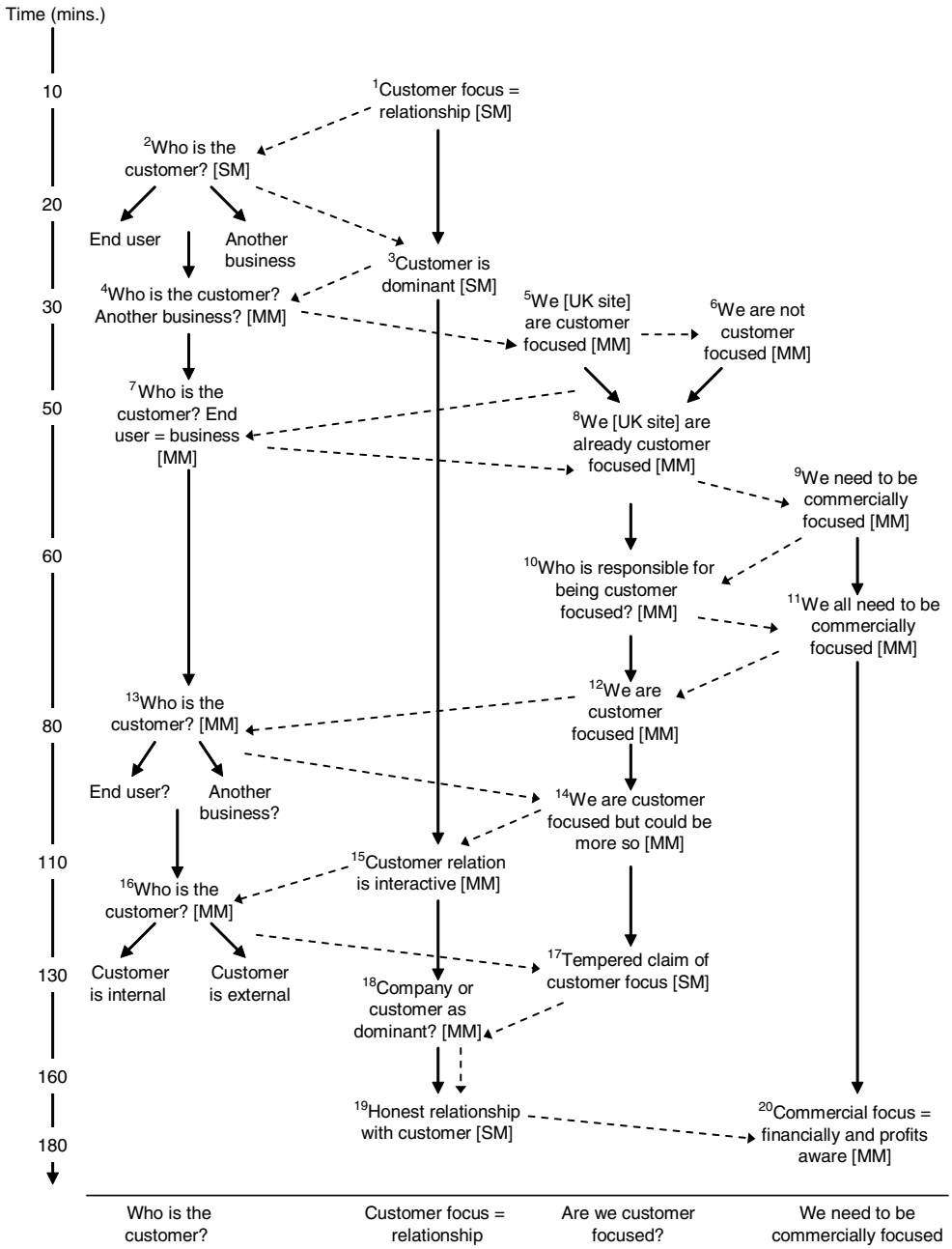
> We are very driven by engineers and the technology . . . people do get caught up with developing incredible products that are fantastic with loads of features but from a commercial focus aren't really needed . . . as an organization we're not necessarily as commercially and business focused as we need to be. (Support staff manager)

This comment was followed by a long silence. An engineer attempted to shift the emphasis away from the accusation that they lack a commercial focus by arguing that it is the sales and marketing staff who are *responsible* for the customer [10], but the discussion quickly returned to the need for a *commercial focus* [11], and that while engineers may be close to the customer, this is not helpful unless they have a commercial focus. Laughter broke out at a comment made by a support staff manager that "we can't agree!" on what customer focus is, followed by a software engineer asking for a show of hands on who believes that they are already *customer focused* [12], which sparked another debate on *who is the customer*? [13], the nature of the *relationship*, and whether the company *is customer focused*. This discussion around *who the customer is* returned to the earlier dichotomy, i.e., the *end user* or the *business* that sells the phone. It arrived at a denouement that, although already customer focused, they could be *more so* [14]. This was interspersed with a discussion of the nature of the *relationship* between company and customer, which should be *interactive* [15]. The debate about *who the customer is* continued, but instead of end user versus business, it switched to *internal versus external* customers [16]. Throughout this discussion, the debate that the company is *already customer focused* reappears [17]. Another hardware engineer returned to the *relationship* with the customer, questioning whether the customer should be dominant because they are "just as confused in terms of what the market's going to do as we are." The debate moved to whether *the customer or company should be dominant* [18].

Following this debate, the video presentation returned to the issue of customer focus, defined in terms of an *honest relationship* [19]. After the video, the stop/start/continue exercise was conducted and the need for a *commercial focus* reemerged [20], initiated by support staff managers but also supported by engineers. A gradual consensus developed regarding the definition of a commercial focus, i.e., as being *financially aware* and helping the company to be *profitable*.

> Commercial . . . to me means . . . UTel profitability. And it doesn't matter a hell of a lot about customer profitability, customer on time, customer this, customer that, and customer the other, I have never yet heard a UTel manager say we've got to make a lot of money. (Support staff manager)

Figure 1 Summary of Negotiations Around Customer Focus



Notes. The left axis numbers refer to time, i.e., the minutes after the commencement of the workshop. The dashed arrows indicate the order of interventions, which are numbered. The solid arrows indicate the development of the different meanings. The phrases at bottom of the figure refer to the different meanings proposed and developed during the workshop. SM, senior manager; MM, middle manager.

By the end of the discussion, the group had come to an agreement that a customer focus is less important than the need for a commercial focus.

In sum, our analysis shows that in negotiating the meaning of customer focus, participants regularly built on earlier interventions by both middle and senior managers to develop an understanding of what a customer focus would be, who the customer was, whether or not they were already customer focused and, eventually, the need for a commercial focus. In this instance, different meanings built on each other, helping to transform knowledge concerning the need for a customer focus—and whether there already was one—into the need for a *commercial* focus. There is evidence of mutual reciprocity, a willingness to be influenced (with both senior and middle managers altering their understandings), distributed reasoning, and the emergence of a common sensibility around a commercial focus.

Communicative Practices. We identified the use of a number of specific communicative practices whereby

both senior and middle managers engaged each other in the negotiation of meaning. For example, although it is a senior manager who initially *invites* a discussion of customer focus and *proposes* the original meaning at the opening of the workshop by making reference to the culture toolkit and saying, "it's important that we have a strong culture" that is "customer focused," it is a middle manager who *challenges* the initial meaning that the company is not sufficiently customer focused.

> Can we have just a hands-up? Who thinks we are customer focused . . . So about 60% . . . think we are customer focused. (Software engineer)

This meaning is then *reiterated* by other middle managers. For example, a second software engineer immediately follows with, "I think we have a perception we're customer focused." Following a restatement of his position by the original software engineer, a hardware engineer further *reiterates* the point by saying, "I think it's an important point that we are customer focused."

It is also a middle manager who *proposes* the new meaning of the need for a commercial focus:

> But you also need to look at the different streams of being customer focused and commercially focused, I'm not sure that as an organization we're necessarily commercially aware. (Support staff manager)

This meaning is again *reiterated* by other middle managers, especially when it is reintroduced in the stop/start/continue exercise. The support staff manager's statement, "I think we've all agreed we need to improve our commercial awareness not our customer focus," is immediately followed by another support staff manager saying, "We need to be more business focused." General agreement is indicated by other middle managers in the form of "yeahs" and nodding of heads, as well as the following:

> What's the interesting thing with all this culture stuff is that there is nothing anywhere about things that matter from our point of view, like profitability and, and our commercial focus. (Software engineer)
>
> Exactly! (Reply from original support staff manager)
>
> Yeah! (Hardware engineer)
>
> And if we're going to start anything, I would love to see some commercial focus. (A third support staff manager)
>
> Is this a "start" or a "continue"? (Another software engineer, referring to the stop/start/continue exercise specified in the template of the culture toolkit)
>
> I'd say "start" having a commercial focus as I am pretty convinced we don't have one. (The third support staff manager)

Middle managers and senior managers *build* on each other's meanings throughout the workshop.

> Certainly from an HR point of view, I think we don't have the commercial awareness that we should have. There are some managers who are OK but there are some who have no idea about how the money is earned on a project—and I don't see that as being commercially focused. (Senior site manager)

Senior managers also seek *clarification* of middle managers' meanings in ways that open up the negotiation of meaning with questions like "what do you mean?" There is only one incident where a senior manager attempts to *dismiss* the meaning proposed by a middle manager by saying, "I don't agree with that." There is also frequent *affirmation* of middle managers' contributions with senior managers making statements like "good point" and "that's a valuable point." And, at the end of the discussion, the need for a commercial focus was affirmed by two senior managers:

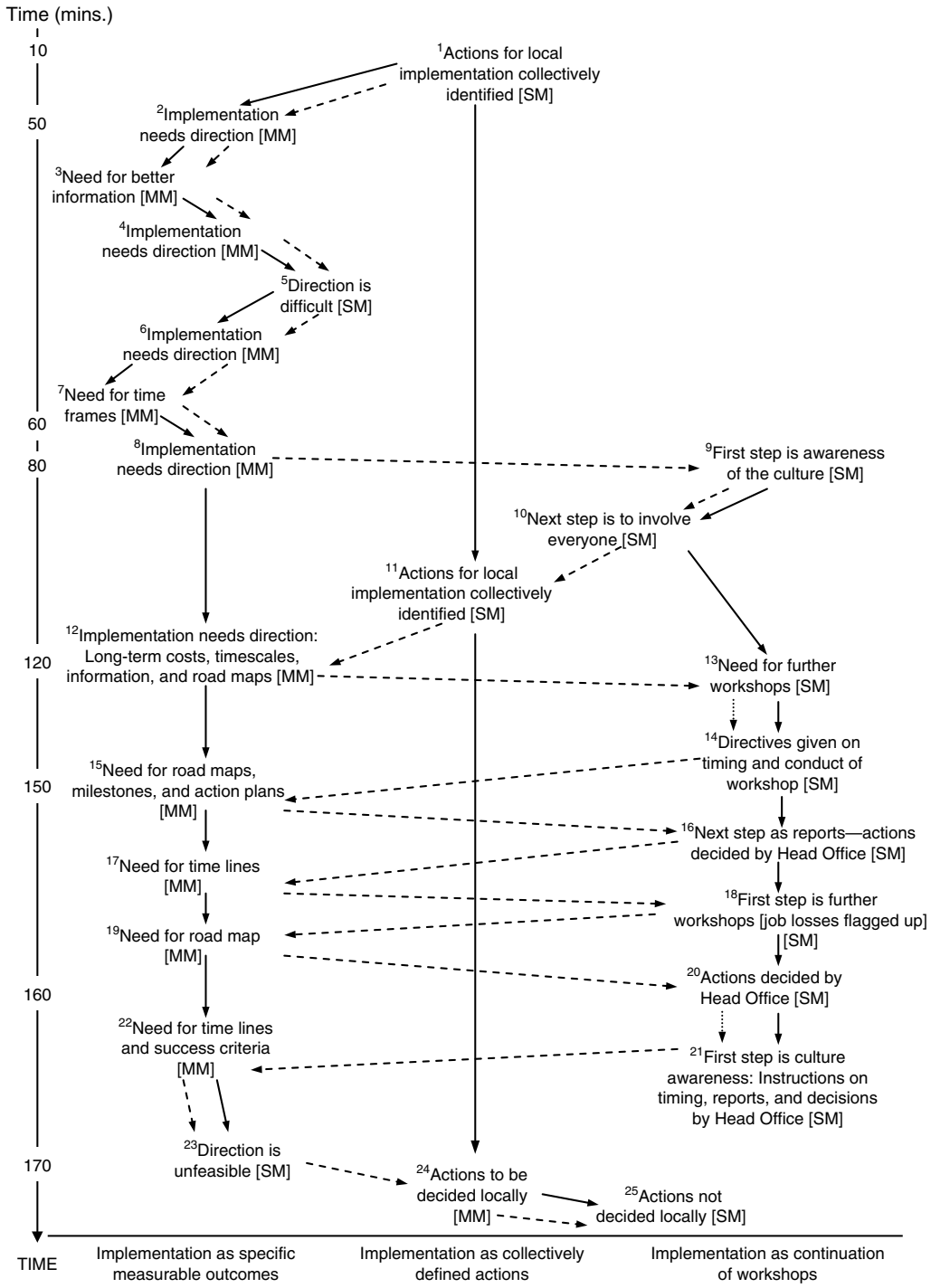
> We should start being profit focused . . . continue to improve the commercial focus of the organization because if you're long term from a commitment point of view we need to be committed to being more commercial focused. (Senior site manager)
>
> OK. (Head office manager)

In sum, we can see that particular communicative practices, i.e., *inviting*, *proposing*, *building*, *clarifying*, and *affirming* on the part of senior managers and *building*, *challenging*, and *reiterating* on the part of middle managers, helped to engage both groups in the negotiations. In this communicative context, a range of senior and middle managers participated in and contributed to different arguments relating to the need for, and definition of, customer focus that eventually culminated in the transformation of the meaning of the target culture—from a customer focus to a commercial focus.

Negotiations Around Implementation

The workshop participants also negotiated the meaning of implementation. In contrast with customer focus, these negotiations were much more polarized with two parallel, separate discussions: one involving senior managers and the other involving middle managers, with little evidence of engagement between them. Despite a head office manager initially encouraging the middle managers to identify the actions required for implementation, subsequent contributions to the debate by senior managers were all attempts to fix the meaning of implementation around their predetermined program. Senior managers defined implementation in terms of the *next step*—a continuation of the workshops—to create *awareness* of the existing culture, whereas specific implementation activities were to be *decided by the head office*. Contrasting with this, engineers and support staff tried to fix the meaning of implementation in terms of local actions, which required *clear direction*, *road maps*, and *time lines.*

Figure 2 Summary of Negotiations Around Implementation



Notes. The left axis numbers refer to time, i.e., minutes after the commencement of the workshop. The dashed arrows indicate the order of interventions, which are numbered. The solid arrows indicate the development of the different meanings. The phrases at bottom of the figure refer to the different meanings proposed and developed during the workshop. SM, senior manager; MM, middle manager.

Figure 2 shows the flows of negotiation around the meanings of implementation. At the start of the workshop, a head office manager sets out one of the workshop's aim as being to arrive at a *collective identification* of the *actions* to be taken to implement the change program at the *local site* [1].[3] Fifty minutes later, a software engineer picks up the issue of implementation, suggesting that it requires a clear *direction*, something that is currently lacking: "We need to know where we're going . . . how we fit in, making sure the whole things hangs together" [2]. A software engineer then suggests that, rather than a lack of direction, the issue is

a *lack of information* [3], although this is countered by another software engineer as the discussion returns to a *lack of direction* [4]. At this point, a head office manager tries to divert the debate by arguing that it is *difficult* to establish a clear direction [5]. Another engineer attempts to press the head office manager for implementation to be defined in terms of the need for *direction* [6]. Some frustration is expressed during this discussion by the engineers, as one asks, "We're having this discussion about [direction] but what's the purchasable point?" A senior manager attempts to clarify the debate by questioning whether the issue they are debating is in relation to implementation being about setting *time frames* [7]. A software engineer returns to the issue of implementation requiring locally agreed *direction* [8]. A senior manager switches the issue to argue that implementation involves an *awareness of the culture* at the different sites [9]. At this point, a support staff manager draws attention to the power of the head office: "You know it's them and us and we always have to do what [the head office] says." The head office manager responds by attempting to block further challenges by invoking the CEO:

> The mission we have now is to send to [the CEO] and to the management team the actions of the current culture that we identify within each site. [The CEO] is very interested . . . in this work. We have been running culture workshops now in [the various sites] and he has gone through the material with myself and sometimes with [another head office manager]. Now he really wants to see what kind of culture you have here and that's the first step. (Head office manager)

This head office manager then defines implementation in terms of the *first step* being an increased *awareness of the existing culture*, which is immediately reinforced by another head office manager.

At this stage, the video is shown: it defines implementation in terms of the *next step*, which is to *involve everyone* [10]. Following the video, a software engineer asks for feedback on whether actions identified in previous workshops were implemented. In response, a head office manager returns to implementation as *collectively identified actions* to be *taken at the local site* [11]. Later, a software engineer again raises the issue of implementation requiring *direction* [12]. A discussion ensues among the engineers that link *direction* to *long-term costs*, *timescales*, *information*, and *empowerment*, and the need for *road maps*. However, this definition is ignored by a head office manager, who returns to implementation as requiring *further workshops* [13]. The discussion among senior managers turns to the *culture kit*, as directives are issued for the specific *timing* and *conduct* of subsequent workshops [14]. In this way, talk is diverted from the need for a clear direction into instructions about the process for conducting future workshops.

Later, the engineers return yet again to the need for *a road map, milestones,* and *action plans* as a necessary part of implementation [15]. At this stage, an engineer takes up the definition of implementation as *next step*—not in terms of future workshops or greater cultural awareness, as suggested previously by a senior manager, but in terms of setting *action plans*:

> It's just [we need] some plan going forward rather than being an isolated activity . . . the bit that's missing to my mind is what the next steps are. We do this but then what's the next step? (Software engineer)

In response, there is a strong assertion of control ("Well what we [head office] have decided is that we will . . . ") as a head office manager defines *next step* as *reports* and *actions* to be *decided by the head office*, contradicting an earlier point that actions are to be collectively identified [16]. A hardware engineer returns to the need for a *time line* [17], while a head office manager returns to the *first step* being the need to conduct *further workshops* by August [18]. The same manager refers to possible job losses: "We don't know if you're going to be here in 2003–2004." Again, a software engineer raises the need for *road maps* [19], and, again, a head office manager defines implementation in terms of a set of *activities decided by the head office* [20]. This is reinforced by another head office manager who returns to the *first step*, requiring greater *cultural awareness*, emphasizing *process* rather than activities, setting out *instructions for timing*, *reports*, and noting that decisions will *taken by the head office* [21]. There is another attempt to define implementation in terms of *time lines* and *success criteria* by a support staff manager [22]: "What's the success criteria?" Measurement is dismissed as *unfeasible* by a head office manager (contradicting the earlier video) [23]. A hardware engineer returns to the original definition, reminding participants that implementation was defined as *collective actions* to be *taken by the local site* [24]. This is directly refuted by a head office manager, who thereby contradicts the opening statement at the start of the workshop and the message from the CEO in the video by saying, "that's not the actions that you should be doing [in the local site]" [25].

In sum, our analysis shows that different groups tried to impose their preferred meaning of implementation. Instead of participants building on earlier interventions, there was a far higher incidence of interventions that refuted or challenged opposing meanings. As a result, meanings became polarized—senior managers returned time and time again to the process of implementation (the continuation of the workshops), whereas middle managers continued to emphasize the need for actions and measurable outcomes. Thus, two parallel discussions emerged around the defense of preferred meanings, with little evidence of relational engagement.

Communicative Practices. The process of negotiating the meaning of implementation shows a different set of communicative practices than those used in relation to

customer focus. Senior managers repeatedly reproduce the original meaning of implementation as indicated in the culture toolkit, despite an initial *invitation* to middle managers to participate in identifying implementation actions:

> And we're here today to learn more about your current culture in [the local site] but also together to identify actions that you can take here in [the local site] to support the target culture. (Head office manager)

When middle managers attempt to *propose* alternative meanings of implementation, senior managers repeatedly *dismiss* them and *reiterate* their original meaning. In addition, they *deploy authority* by drawing on their position in the hierarchy to silence middle managers—many of their interventions involve direct orders to their subordinates. They also *invoke hierarchy* by referring to other members of the top echelons of the organization to back up their meaning of implementation. As a senior site manager comments: "[The CEO] is very interested . . . in this work."

Rather than being the subject of negotiation, repeated attempts are made to *reify* the culture toolkit by senior management by presenting it as having a nonnegotiable and fixed meaning regarding implementation. Instead of using it to facilitate the negotiation of different meanings, senior managers use it to promote and legitimate their preferred meaning. Senior managers refer to the culture toolkit (in the case of the video), point at it (in the case of the PowerPoint slides on the timeline), and wave it about (in the case of the brochure), as they invoke it to justify adhering to their specified implementation plan, rather than modifying it in light of the points raised by middle managers.

As the workshop progresses, senior managers escalate their use of coercive communicative practices, deploying a number of them simultaneously. For example, in the following intervention, a head office manager *dismisses* a request to change the timing of the workshops, *reiterates* the meaning proposed by another senior manager, *invokes hierarchy*, and *reifies* the culture toolkit:

> I think the first step is really to create an awareness about . . . [the] culture . . . . And then as [another senior manager] says, what will happen in August [pointing to the timeline on PowerPoint] is that the result, the outcome of all the different workshops . . . will be compiled into an analysis, a report that will be presented to the [head office] management which [a third senior manager] and I are part of. And then there will be decisions taken about what the next step is. (Head office manager)

Middle managers employ some of the same communicative practices that they used in the case of customer focus. For example, they initially *challenge* the senior managers' meaning and *propose* an alternative one, which they continue to *reiterate*. However, they do not engage in any *building*, and in response to continued attempts by senior managers to reproduce their own preferred meaning of implementation, middle managers also resort to a different approach with their communicative practices. They try to *undermine* management by making statements critical of senior managers to discredit their meanings and *hold them to account*; i.e., middle managers demand actions from senior managers that would contradict their proposed meaning of implementation and/or question a lack of action on the part of senior managers in ways that discredit their meaning.

In sum, senior managers used *dismissing*, *reiterating*, *deploying authority*, *invoking hierarchy*, and *reification*, especially toward the end of the workshop when they escalated and intensified the use of these practices, "bundling" multiple communicative practices into their interventions. Middle managers attempted to resist senior management's meaning through *challenging*, *reiterating*, *holding to account*, and *undermining*. Rather than build on these alternative meanings of implementation proposed by middle managers during the workshop, senior managers explicitly invoked a reified version of the culture toolkit to signal a single, nonnegotiable meaning:

> You should have . . . the video . . . . I will e-mail you the slides that we presented today [and] the agenda for the three hour meeting that you'll have with your staff; going through the stop/start in the workshops, that'll be in your slides; instructions on how to run the discussions; and also the template for the stop start workshops. The templates that we want you to work on are template two and template four, those two templates once you've conducted the workshops with your staff. I need them in by the end of August. So you need to conduct your workshops with your staff by the end of August. At the end of August I send all my information to [head office] who will make a presentation to [the CEO]. Have you got brochures for everyone? (Senior manager, holding up a copy of the brochure, and referring to the video and the exercise templates in the culture toolkit)

As senior managers relied on the increasing use of interventions that served to reinforce their preferred meaning of implementation toward the end of the workshop, middle managers appeared to give up trying to negotiate its meaning, and around the two-hour mark, the number of middle managers' interventions started to decline. Thus, the communicative practices adopted by senior and middle managers in relation to implementation reinforced the polarized meanings of the two groups.

Discussion

In this section, we develop a model showing how the intersection of particular communicative practices by the two groups of managers led to different dynamics in the negotiation of meaning that have implications for organizational change. We also explore how our study contributes to other work on generative forms of

dialogue, through such means as "great talk" (Gratton and Ghoshal 2002), "honest conversations" (Beer and Eisenstat 2004), and "decisive dialogue" (Charan 2006), as well as provides new insights into how resistance contributes to organizational change.

Dynamics in the Negotiation of Meaning

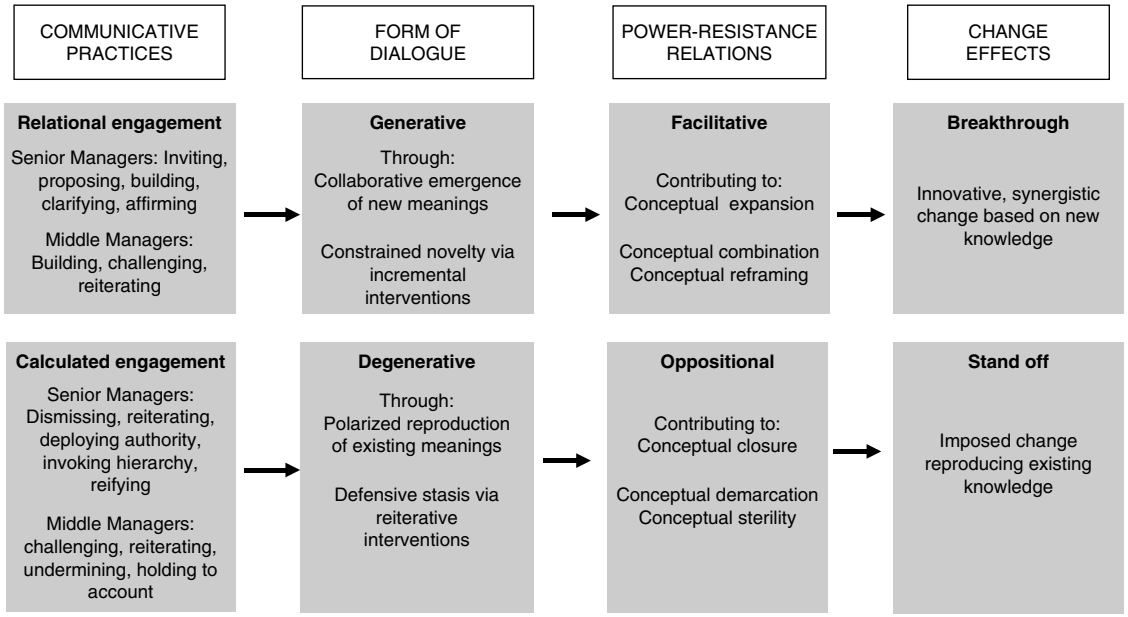
The two sets of dynamics in the negotiation of meaning are represented in Figure 3. The first dynamic results from the intersection of two sets of communicative practices: inviting, proposing, building, clarifying, and affirming by senior managers, and building, challenging, and reiterating by middle managers. The intersection of these practices produces what we refer to as a *relational engagement*, by which we mean that both parties take active responsibility for the joint tasks in which they are involved and suspend "irreducible social vulnerability and uncertainty as if they were favorably resolved" (Möllering 2006, pp. 110–111). This, in turn, helps to produce generative dialogue, characterized by what Tsoukas (2009) refers to as the *collaborative emergence* of new meanings, insofar as a range of middle and senior managers contribute to identifying the need for a commercial focus, which was not part of the original discursive template but which emerged during the workshop. The dialogue is also characterized by *constrained novelty* as participants make small modifications at each dialogue turn. Interventions follow from the initial meaning of customer focus but, at the same time, help to construct another meaning (i.e., the need for a commercial focus), which is both novel—it is different to the original meaning—and familiar in that it emerges incrementally as a result of a series of ever-changing modifications that build on each other.

Power-resistance relations are *facilitative* insofar as middle managers engage in communicative practices that might be construed as "resistance to change" in that they challenge senior managers' meanings. It is this resistance that leads to the emergence of the need for commercial focus, i.e., it is the willingness of middle *and* senior managers to engage with each other which gives rise to *conceptual expansion*, *combination*, and *reframing* (see Tsoukas 2009). Specifically, the meaning of the customer is semantically expanded to include the end user, other businesses, and internal members of the organization over the course of the workshop. Concepts are combined as the new business-to-business customer is linked to the new post-spin-off, business-to-business organization. Reframing arises as the focus changes from a customer focus to a commercial focus. From these facilitative power-resistance relations comes a *breakthrough* in the form of new knowledge about the need for the creation of a commercial focus, and not just a customer focus, as part of the change program—knowledge that is, in Carlile's (2002) terms, created and validated between the two groups of managers.

In this way, our model shows how particular sets of communicative practices can create generative dialogue in which facilitative power-resistance relations help bring about change that is informed by new knowledge. It also shows a second dynamic stemming from the intersection of a different set of communicative practices. Specifically, implementation is associated with a *calculated engagement*, where "individuals confine themselves to minimally cooperative behaviors, or behaviors that aim to maximize individual or sectional gains, or protect turf" (Tsoukas 2009, p. 5). Senior managers engage in dismissing, reiterating, deploying authority, invoking hierarchy, and reifying the culture toolkit, whereas middle managers rely primarily on challenging, reiterating, holding to account, and undermining. This leads to *degenerative dialogue* where, instead of the collaborative emergence of new meaning, there is the *polarized reproduction* of two sharply contrasting existing meanings of implementation: one articulated in the discursive template, and the other proposed by middle managers early on in the workshop. Nor does any form of constrained novelty occur. Instead, we see evidence of a *defensive stasis* with both senior and middle managers reiterating their preferred meanings time and time again as they take their turn in the dialogue.

When the different groups struggle to impose their preferred meanings, we characterize power-resistance relations as *oppositional* (cf. Ashforth and Mael 1998). Here, there is little evidence of the meanings related to implementation being opened up in the negotiations. Instead we see a process that might be described as *conceptual closure* as different meanings are fixed by both sides. This can be clearly seen in instances of reification, where senior managers reel off the implementation procedures as set out in their discursive template (the culture toolkit) to reinforce their preferred meaning. In addition, rather than being combined, *concepts are demarcated*. With neither side willing to engage in the communicative practice of building, there is no way to bring the two meanings together or to use one to inform the other. Finally, *conceptual sterility* arises with the dialogue losing momentum as senior managers engage increasingly in coercive communicative practices (i.e., greater use of dismissing, reiterating, deploying authority, invoking hierarchy, and reifying, and bundling them together in a single intervention), and the number of interventions by middle managers gradually declines. The result is a *standoff* as both sides steadfastly refuse to acknowledge the others' meaning, and despite attempts by middle managers to give an alternative definition of implementation, their statements are ignored and existing knowledge (e.g., understandings articulated in the initial discursive template) is reproduced.

Figure 3 Dynamics in the Negotiation of Meaning



Managing Change

This study makes important contributions to the existing work on generative forms of dialogue and productive conversations (see Mengis and Eppler 2008 for a summary of this literature). First, it provides a way to ground some of the more general prescriptions that feature in this literature in more specific forms of interaction. For example, exhortations for senior managers to "balance" power structures (Mengis and Eppler 2008, p. 1303), to "protect" subordinates (Beer and Eisenstat 2004, p. 86) and give them "permission" to engage in conversation (Gratton and Ghoshal 2002, p. 222), fail to address the nuances whereby such forms of participation have to be enacted through communicative practices over time. Similarly, recommendations to link new statements to previous contributions (Mengis and Eppler 2008) or to institutionalize questioning and doubt (Gratton and Ghoshal 2002) do not take into account the idea that "linking" can take a number of different forms from building to dismissing, whereas "questioning" can range from challenging to undermining. Our study provides insights into the types of specific communicative practices—such as building, challenging, affirming, etc.—that can enact and sustain these more general prescriptions.

Second, the work on conversations and dialogue tends to assume that meaning is fixed and predetermined, whereas we highlight how the same communicative practice may lead to quite different outcomes depending on the temporal and relational dynamics of the microcontext in which it is used. For example, to say that the conversation should be about issues that matter (Beer and Eisenstat 2004) or based on meaningful issues (Gratton and Ghoshal 2002) misses the point that an issue may *cease* to be meaningful if actors are not willing to participate in negotiations. In our study, both senior and middle managers felt that implementation was meaningful at the beginning of the workshop. The former initiated a discussion on its meaning, whereas the latter engaged in this discussion by offering alternative meanings. By the end of the workshop, however, implementation had ceased to be meaningful to middle managers who gave up trying to define it. In other words, it is not the case that an issue is or is not meaningful. Rather, issues are *made* meaningful (or not) through communicative practices. Similarly, middle managers' use of reiterating in response to senior managers' attempts to build on their definitions of customer focus involved a collaborative engagement by both parties. In contrast, their use of reiteration in response to senior managers' attempts to dismiss alternative meanings of implementation represented a defensive maneuver. In other words, the impact of a particular communicative practice depends upon who is employing it, when, and in response to what.

Finally, in showing that the same conversation (in this case, the workshop) produced both a breakthrough and a standoff, depending on the way in which particular communicative practices were juxtaposed over time, we redress the tendency of the literature to categorize a particular conversation as either effective or ineffective (e.g., Gratton and Ghoshal 2002, Beer and Eisenstat 2004). Our study shows that the same conversation can be both. The existing literature has little to say about the impact of communicative practices as they interact over time *within* a particular conversation. Instead, this literature tends to focus on more generic recommendations that operate at the level of a particular conversation, i.e.,

how to create a good, great, or honest conversation. This, however, serves to reify the conversation, rather than showing the ways in which the conversation is brought into being on an ongoing basis through the interaction of communicative practices.

Resistance and Change

This study also provides a number of insights into the work on resistance in organizational change. First, it shows how resistance can play a facilitative role in organizational change. The conventional wisdom in the change literature is that resistance is an inevitable and natural reaction, triggered because individuals are fearful, have resistant personalities, or misunderstand the benefits of the proposed change (Dent and Goldberg 1999, Bennebroek Gravenhorst and in't Veld 2004, Symon 2005). In other words, resistance is typically framed as a negative "Newtonian" response of workers "kicking back against management control" and hindering change initiatives (Thomas and Davies 2005, p. 685). Such occurrences justify activities by senior managers or change agents to quell "insubordination" (Hardy and Clegg 2004) and "correct" recalcitrant individuals (Symon 2005). In contrast, our study shows that, rather than a hindrance to change, facilitative resistance contributed to it through conceptual expansion, combination, and reframing. As Ford et al. (2008) have pointed out, thoughtful resistance can play a much more important role in sustaining organizational change than unquestioning acceptance.

Second, this study shows how facilitative resistance is produced from the intersection of specific communicative practices of senior *and* of subordinate managers. In this way, we provide empirical evidence to support claims that the greater involvement of middle managers in taking on an active role in leadership and change is advantageous (e.g., Lüscher and Lewis 2008, Pearce and Conger 2003). We also show the types of communicative practices that differentiate facilitative from oppositional resistance. In the terminology of Ford et al. (2008, p. 372), the communicative practices that constitute facilitative resistance involve a series of "counteroffers," i.e., "a move in a conversation made by someone who is willing and receptive to the request yet is seeking some accommodation" (p. 373). In other words, subordinates are willing to demand an accommodation (through such communicative practices as building, challenging, and reiterating), and senior managers or change agents are willing to make an accommodation by engaging with these meanings even though they are different from the ones they originally proposed. Thus, facilitative resistance requires counteroffers to be made by both groups of managers or, in the terminology of Ford et al. (2008), change agents and change recipients.

Third, this study indicates what is likely to happen when senior managers are unwilling to make such accommodations; i.e., degenerative dialogue and oppositional power-resistance relations result in imposed change based on existing, rather than new, knowledge. We therefore offer empirical support for the idea that senior managers or change agents "who are resistant to the ideas, proposals, and counteroffers submitted by change recipients" (Ford et al. 2008, p. 367) may be as much to blame for failed change initiatives as so-called resistance by subordinates. Change may still ensue but, by holding to existing assumptions and refusing to engage with alternative meanings, senior managers reduce the chances that it will be innovative or synergistic. The resulting vicious circle of imposition and opposition enacts a degenerative dialogue and oppositional power-resistance relations where managers employ more coercive communicative practices (e.g., dismissing, deploying authority, invoking hierarchy, and reifying) more intensively (in our case, they bundled these practices so that a single intervention accomplished multiple practices). In turn, middle managers become less likely to engage with senior managers' meanings and are more likely to defend their own. In this way, senior managers, by resisting (perceived) resistance from subordinates, help to bring that resistance into being (cf. Prasad and Prasad 2000).

Finally, our study shows that communicative practices do not only underpin change, they are also constitutive of the hierarchical relations that permeate organizations. For example, in the case of implementation, senior managers engaged in communicative practices that reproduced hierarchical distinctions between the two groups. These practices—dismissing, deploying authority, invoking hierarchy, and reifying the culture toolkit—represent important means through which power is exercised. For example, dismissing is a declarative speech act (Cooren 2004)—an authorized pronouncement that instructs (Searle 1969) and, as such, derives from seniority. To invoke authority and hierarchy is to reaffirm differences in status and rank that position people at different levels in the organization. Reifying the culture toolkit draws on senior managers' declarative powers (Tsoukas and Chia 2002) in producing the discursive template and privileges its meanings in terms of how the change is framed. In this way, senior managers' use of communicative practices served to reproduce existing hierarchical relationships. Middle managers play an equally important role in these processes. By holding their senior managers to account by demanding success criteria, time lines, and action plans, middle managers' communicative practices also served to reproduce these relationships by acknowledging—and helping to bring into being—senior managers' responsibilities. Thus, what may appear to be solid organizational structures and processes are held in place through language and the negotiation of meaning.

In sum, organization and change emerge at the interstices of power *and* resistance among senior and subordinate groups, whether they are senior and middle managers, managers and employees, or change agents and change recipients. For this reason, we caution against conceptualizing successful change implementation as solely "the change agent's job" and making them wholly responsible for "the relationship with recipients, as well as the tactics of change implementation" (Ford et al. 2008, p. 373). In fact, we counsel against the language of change "agent" and change "recipient" altogether, because it sets up a duality in which change is conceptualized as a one-way process and which fails to locate subordinate actors as coconstructors of change. We propose that change emerges at the interstices of power-resistance relations in which both senior and subordinate actors are implicated.

Conclusions

This study provides further empirical support for performative accounts of change by using an organizational becoming perspective to learn more about the negotiation of meaning and power-resistance relations in the context of organizational change (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). Process studies of organizing that focus on the emergent "activities by which collective endeavours unfold" have, in the main, been theoretical (Van de Ven and Poole 2005, p. 1387). Our study shows how these evanescent processes emerge in naturally occurring organizational talk targeted toward specific organizational change objectives. By studying patterns in the negotiation of meaning and examining how power-resistance relations between senior and middle managers influence them, we develop a model that shows how particular communicative practices can lead to generative dialogue, within which resistance plays a facilitative role. In this way, we show how the dynamics of conceptual expansion, combination, and reframing explicated by Tsoukas (2009) play out in an organizational setting and, furthermore, how they lead to organizational change that is more likely to be synergistic and innovative because it is based on the transformation of new knowledge. We also identify another set of dynamics in which power-resistance relations are oppositional. So far, this dynamic of degenerative dialogue has not been empirically investigated. Our study helps to elaborate the way in which particular communicative practices produce conceptual closure, demarcation, and sterility, showing that although change may still occur, it is more likely to be imposed and based on existing knowledge held by one group and not necessarily shared by the other.

Our study has the following limitations. First, we focused on two managerial groups for analytical purposes, but we acknowledge that there were differences within each of these groups and, furthermore, that power-resistance relations permeate beyond a simple senior/middle manager dichotomy. Second, we recorded and analyzed only the talk of the workshop participants. Talk is an embodied activity and occurs in the context of other aspects of interaction—the tone of voice, facial expressions, body language—not included in our analysis. We also accepted the text of the workshop at "face value" because we were unaware of behind-the-scenes agendas, personal relationships, and in-jokes that would have provided a "subtext" to these negotiations. Finally, we focus on a three-hour workshop to conduct an in-depth, finely grained analysis of the construction of meaning in keeping with an organizational becoming perspective. However, this means that we were unable to study what happened in other workshops, or whether the outcomes of this workshop scaled up to impact on wider organizational relations. Nor were we able to examine the backdrop of organizational restructuring and job losses, as well as a downturn in the industry, which form part of the wider organizational and socioeconomic power-resistance relations within which the workshop was located (Contu and Willmott 2003).

These limitations notwithstanding, there is considerable potential for further work based on this approach. One issue that invites further investigation is "resistance to resistance" by senior managers; i.e., resistance by subordinates is integral to the transformation of knowledge, and yet dominant actors may well respond to it in ways that preclude such an outcome. Such reactions may help to account for the failure of change programs, but these processes have not yet been fully investigated. There are also opportunities for a more explicit consideration of both power and resistance in change processes. For example, through the selective use of communicative practices, senior managers may be able control certain meanings—perhaps those on which their managerial prerogative is founded—while allowing more open dialogue around meanings that are less sensitive and thereby giving subordinates the illusion of being "autonomous agents whilst still 'enacting' organizational rituals" (Kosmala and Herrbach 2006, p. 1401). Similarly, there is scope for more nuanced conceptualizations of resistance that incorporate a consideration of ambivalence (cf. Piderit 2000) because, as our study shows, resistance can veer from facilitative to oppositional during a single workshop. Finally, there is a need for more work on communicative practice in organizations to examine what it is that actors do as they continuously construct reality (cf. Jarzabkowski 2005). Although we have identified certain practices linked to generative and degenerative dialogue, this is not to suggest in any way that these are the only communicative practices that can be used, and further exploration of these processes is needed. The meanings out of which organizations emerge are coconstructed by actors, and we need to know more about the interactions among different groups

of organizational members if we are to understand the processes whereby organizations come into being.

Acknowledgments

Robyn Thomas acknowledges the support of the UK Economic and Social Research Council's Advanced Institute of Management for fellowship funding received during the period of this research [Award RES-331-25-3009].

Endnotes

[1]The company name and other details have been disguised.
[2]The numbers in square brackets in the subsection Negotiations Around Customer Focus provide a cross-reference to Figure 1 and Table A.1 in the appendix.
[3]The numbers in square brackets in the subsection Negotiations Around Implementation provide a cross-reference to Figure 2 and Table A.2 in the appendix.

Appendix

Table A.1 Negotiations Around *Customer Focus*

Text from workshop	Negotiation of meaning
SSM1: [I]t's important that we have a strong UTel culture in this organization to be customer focused, we need to actually get a common understanding . . . and hopefully feed back any concerns and issues that may crop up. [. . .]	The importance of a *customer focus* is introduced by a senior manager. [1]
SSM1: I have a couple of questions for you, we talk about the consumer market but our market really is the business-to-business market. It's our customers who are the people that are dealing with consumer market. [. . .]	A senior manager asks whether the customer is the *end user versus a business.* The issue becomes, *who is the customer*? [2]
HO1: [S]o it's really up to the customer: If he wants to put in as you say the game or horoscope or a laptop synchronization. I mean that's for our customers to decide . . . you have to understand the end customer.	The head office manager returns to the customer relationship in which the *customer is dominant.* [3]
SE1: I wonder if there's an opportunity to revisit the mission statement. I think we should be making sure that our customers are business-to-business customers and we should be fitting in when they want to launch. Now when a customer walks through the door he wants to hear that—he's got a date in his mind, if we can hit that date, whether it's first in the market or not, he makes that decision but we should just ensure that we hit *their* project dates. [. . .]	A software engineer asks *who the customer is* and whether it is *another business.* [4]
SE1: I believe that we're [local site] customer oriented. I think we are customer focused as an organization and we have been all the way through even in our history. I think we're a customer-focused organization. [. . .]	A software engineer argues that the UK site is customer focused. There is a shift from defining the nature of the relationship with the customer to claims that UK site *already is customer focused.* [5]
HE1: External customers I think, it would have to be, to be honest . . . we're miles away from the customer and have been for quite a few years now, so I'd kind of struggle with that. [. . .]	A debate follows in which software engineers emphasize their existing *close relationship with customer*; this is disputed by some other participants. [6]
HO2: But maybe you mean different things with customers, my interpretation is that when you say customer you mean the end user. [. . .]	The discussion returns to *who the customer is.* [7]
SE3: So I think we are focused on our customer's needs and how we can address them.	The claim that UK site *already is customer focused* reemerges. [8]
SS2: But you also need to look at the different streams of being customer focused and commercially focused, I'm not sure that as an organization we're necessarily commercially aware. [. . .]	The importance of customer focus is challenged; instead there is a *need for a commercial focus*. [9]
SE5: But it's the job of sales and marketing to go out and assess what the end users really want in terms of features, and feed that back?	There is an attempt to shift to emphasis to who is *responsible* for the customer. [10]
SSM2: As an organization as we're expecting a lot of our engineers and project managers to be going out to our customers and putting those deals and contracts in place. But the engineers who are going out and meeting customers need to be commercially aware. They need to be aware of the contracts they're putting in place and the implications of the contracts because if we don't meet them we annoy our customers and they disappear. [. . .]	The discussion returns to the need for a *commercial focus*: regardless of whether the engineers are close to the customer, they still need to be commercially aware. [11]

Table A.1 (cont'd.)

Text from workshop	Negotiation of meaning
SE1: Can we have just a hands-up? Who thinks we are customer focused . . . [many hands go up]. So we're about sort of 60% would you say that think we are customer focused. [. . .]	A software engineer returns to his claim that they are *already customer focused*. [12]
HE4: I think it's an important point that we are customer focused. I think there is some confusion about who the customer is. [. . .]	The discussion returns to *who the customer is—end user versus business*; the claim that the company *is already customer focused* continues. [13]
SE1: I think it's important to recognize that we are still learning how to be a platform provider and you know we're not there yet. [. . .]	There is some tempering of the claim that they are already customer focused with the recognition that they could be *more so.* [14]
HE4: I'm a little bit unsure what we're talking about when we talk about customer focus. Are we talking about delivering precisely what our customers are asking for or are we talking about having an interactive discussion with them to understand what the market really wants and setting our mission on that basis . . . . I don't think as an organization we've got that interactive discussion, we make lots of promises to all our customers but we don't seem to prioritize things . . . we just promise.	The discussion returns to the nature of the *relationship as interactive.* [15]
SE5: As I see it, we've got a customer focus for internal and external. A lot of people go out and actually talk to the customers and they actually focus on satisfying their customers' needs. So depending where you are, what level you are, you have a focus on customer needs. [. . .]	The discussion returns to *who the customer is*, but instead of end user versus business, it switches to *internal versus external*. [16]
SSM1: What you seem to be saying is there's the internal view which seems to be wonderful, and the external view has a slightly different tinge to it. [. . .]	More tempering of the view that they *believe that they are* already customer focused but *not all (external) customers might agree.* [17]
HE4: Well I'm struggling to find the . . . point of talking to the customers. I don't believe the customers have any more idea than we do of where they want to go . . . they're just as confused in terms of what the market's going to do as we are. [. . .]	The discussion shifts back to the *relationship* but views vary over *whether the customer or the company should be dominant.* [18]
HO3 [in video presentation]: We talk to the customers. The key thing is having good relationships with customers to give them good support to make them feel that we are good suppliers to them . . . we can also talk freely . . . to our customers. Therefore, we can talk about the problems and we can be honest. [. . .]	The video presentation returns to the issue of customer focus, defined in terms of an *honest relationship.* [19]
SE6: The interesting thing with all this culture stuff is that there is nothing anywhere about things that matter from our point of view, like profitability and, and our commercial focus. [. . .]	This is also supported by the engineers. [20]
Flip chart from exercise states: STOP—unrealistic timescales; START—profit focus; CONTINUE—improve commercial focus	The importance of customer focus has now been replaced by the need for a *commercially focus*.
SSM2: We should continue to improve the commercial focus of the organization . . . we need to be committed to being more commercially focused.	
HO1: OK	

Notes. HO, head office manager; SSM, senior site manager; SS, support staff manager; SE, software engineer; HE, hardware engineer. The numbers beside each participant in the left-hand column indicate the order in which the person first participates in the discussion. The numbers in the right-hand column provide cross-references to Figure 1. The use of an ellipsis in brackets, (i.e., [. . .]) following a statement indicates that interventions by one or more participants have been edited out.

Table A.2 Negotiations Around *Implementation*

Text from workshop	Negotiation of meaning
HO1: So I'm here today of course to start the implementation of our target culture program . . . another purpose is of course to build global commitment and agree on actions to support the target culture. And we're here today to learn more about your current culture in [the local site] but also together to identify actions that you can take here in [the local site] to support the target culture. [. . .]	A head office manager states *implementation* of the change program begins with the workshop; implementation is defined in terms of *actions* to be *collectively identified* that can be *taken at the local site*. [1]
SE1: I think one thing that's missing [from the implementation of the culture change program] is that we need to know where we're going . . . how we fit in. [. . .]	A software engineer defines implementation. [2]
SE2: I think it's more to do with information. [. . .]	Another software engineer suggests that implementation is lacking *information*. [3]
SE3: I think until we make up our own mind [about where we are going], we are actually not very flexible.	Discussion returns to *lack of direction*—more direction will make implementation easier. [4]
HO2: The problem is that it's not easy, it's much harder.	A head office manager presents direction as being *difficult*. [5]
HE2: But what is the purchasable point there [HE1]? We're having this discussion about [direction] but what's the purchasable point? [. . .]	A hardware engineer returns to definition of implementation as *lacking direction*. [6]
SSM2: But isn't [HE2] really saying . . . how do we [manage] time frames? [. . .]	A senior manager asks whether hardware engineer means *time frames*. [7]
SE1: I think we need to know where we're going at [local site] first. [. . .]	A software engineer returns to *need for direction* at the *local site*. [8]
HO1: What we're trying to do is to identify what kind of culture do we have in [the head office]; what culture do we have in [different sites in different countries] . . . we really must identify at each site what kind of culture, current culture we have. [. . .]	A head office manager refers to need for *awareness of culture* at different sites. [9]
CEO [in video presentation]: I think it [the change program] starts with communicating clearly to make really clear what you mean, what you think is the new culture. The next step is to involve everybody through the workshops. . .[video ends]. [. . .]	The video defines implementation in terms of the *next step*, which is to *involve everyone* and to involve *measurement*. [10]
HO1: Yes . . . of course, we saw and talked about all these actions . . . . We want you to help us identify actions that . . . the organization should take . . . . We have another template [for an exercise which is] more into what kind of actions could you take in [the local site] to support the target culture. [. . .]	The head office manager returns to implementation as defined in terms of *collectively identified actions* to be *taken at the local site*. [11]
SS1: [We need to] start defining where we're going; start defining long-term costs [. . .]	A discussion ensues linking direction to *long-term costs*. [12]
HO1: [Y]ou came up with very good actions. What do you think? [turning to SSM2] If we let all employees in [local site] go through these exercises [templates] here in the workshop do you think you could work with the results to make improvements [in local site]?	The head office manager returns to implementation as *further workshops*. [13]
SSM2: I think the idea of this was to try and take this further into the organization with the line managers and they can have a group to deal with [in subsequent workshops]; and maybe we can provide some of the material that goes with it.	Directives for *timing* and *conduct* of subsequent workshops are issued by senior managers who refer to the *culture toolkit*. [14]
HE4: What's the context of this work? We do this work, we give the results back by the end of August, and then there isn't really a road map of what actually happens . . . we've done two of these workshops now and nothing has really happened has a result of it. So what physical stuff is going to happen? [. . .]	Engineers return to need for a *road map*, *milestones*, and *action plans.* [15]
HO1: Well what we [the head office] have decided is that we will, of course, receive the report with the actions from each site, and the management team in [the head office] will also decide what kind of actions we will agree on and work on during the next coming year. So you will have a report, you will have a presentation during the next meeting [at the head office].	A head office manager defines *next steps* as *reports*; *actions* will be *decided by the head office* (contradicting the earlier point that actions will be collectively identified). [16]

Table A.2 (cont'd.)

Text from workshop	Negotiation of meaning
HE5: Is there some sort of time line or something?	A hardware engineer returns to the need for a *time line*. [17]
HO1: We have the target up here [points to flip chart] and we are here today. The first step is to try to [understand] the different current cultures within the organization today and the goal is to create one company, one culture but it's also an ongoing process.... We're going to, of course, put the target culture into a lot of different activities. We don't know if you're going to be here in 2003–2004. But we have a goal to create, work as one company with one culture and we're today and this is the road that we're going to take. So the end of August is the first step.	The head office manager returns to implementation defined in terms of the *first step*, which is to conduct the remaining workshop (by August), and also mentions possible job losses. [18]
SE4: We need to present that road map to the team before we get intothis.	A software engineer returns to need for a *road map*. [19]
HO1: We [head office] have a project plan describing in more detail what kind of activities we will take in the future. But it's also important not to talk too much about the future—what we are going to do as the next step.... I don't think we have the time or the possibility to go through different activities.	The head office manager returns to definition of *activities* as *decided by the head office*. [20]
HO2: I think the first step is really to create an awareness about...[the] culture, and creating some common language and shared values.... And then as [SM1] says, what will happen in August is that the result, the outcome of all the different workshops...will be compiled into an analysis, a report that will be presented to the [head office] management which [SSM2] and I are part of. And then there will be decisions taken about what the next step is.	Another head office manager returns to implementation as the *first step*, which is *culture awareness*, and repeats *instructions for timing*, implementation defined in terms of a *report*, and that decisions are to be *taken by the head office*. [21]
SE5: I think actually the question is, based on [HE2's] question before, what's the success criteria?	A software engineer defines *time lines* as *success criteria*. [22]
HO2: ...I'm not sure it's possible to put down an objective metric or measure where you determine whether you've succeeded. [...]	This is challenged by a head office manager as *infeasible*. [23]
HE2: Can I make a suggestion for something we could do locally? ...Could each manager then take for example three or four of the actions and say "right I'm now going to implement these within my team."... Then at least we're showing some results.	A hardware engineer returns to the original definition of implementation as *actions* to be *decided by the local site*. [24]
HO1: [T]hat's not actions that you should be doing [in the local site].	This is directly refuted by a head office manager. [25]

Notes. HO, Head office manager; SSM, senior site manager; SS, support staff manager; SE, software engineer; HE, hardware engineer. The numbers beside each participant in the left-hand column indicate the order in which the person first participates in this discussion and are not necessarily the same individuals as in the negotiations around customer focus. The numbers in the right-hand column provide cross-references to Figure 2. The use of an ellipsis in brackets (i.e., [...]) following a statement indicates that interventions by one or more participants have been edited out.

References

Ashforth, B., F. A. Mael. 1998. The power of resistance: Sustaining valued identities. R. M. Kramer, M. A. Neale, eds. *Power and Influence in Organizations.* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 89–120.

Barbalet, J. M. 1985. Power and resistance. *Brit. J. Sociol.* **36**(4) 531–548.

Bechky, B. A. 2006. Gaffers, gofers, and grips: Role-based coordination in temporary organizations. *Organ. Sci.* **17**(1) 3–21.

Beer, M., R. A. Eisenstat. 2004. How to have an honest conversation about your business strategy. *Harvard Bus. Rev.* **82**(2) 82–89.

Bennebroek Gravenhorst, K. M., R. J. in't Veld. 2004. Power and collaboration: Methodologies for working together in change. J. J. Boonstra, ed. *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning.* Wiley, Chichester, UK, 317–341.

Boden, D. 1994. *The Business of Talk*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Buchanan, D., P. Dawson. 2007. Discourse and audience: Organizational change as multi-story process. *J. Management Stud.* **44**(5) 669–685.

Carlile, P. R. 2002. A pragmatic view of knowledge and boundaries: Boundary objects in new product development. *Organ. Sci.* **13**(4) 442–455.

Carlsen, A. 2006. Organizational becoming as dialogic imagination of practice: The case of the Indomitable Gauls. *Organ. Sci.* **17**(1) 132–149.

Charan, R. 2006. Conquering a culture of indecision *Harvard Bus. Rev.* **84**(1) 108–117.

Chiles, T., A. Meyer, T. Hench. 2004. Organizational emergence: The origin and transformation of Branson, Missouri's musical theatres. *Organ. Sci.* **15**(5) 499–519.

Collins, R. 1981. On the microfoundations of macrosociology. *Amer. J. Sociol.* **86**(5) 984–1013.

Collinson, D. 1994. Strategies of resistance: Power, knowledge and subjectivity in the workplace. J. M. Jermier, D. Knights, W. R. Nord, eds. *Resistance and Power in Organizations.* Routledge, London, 25–70.

Contu, A., H. Willmott. 2003. Re-embedding situatedness: The importance of power relations in learning theory. *Organ. Sci.* **14**(3) 283–296.

Cooren, F. 2004. Textual agency: How texts do things in organizational settings. *Organization* **11**(3) 373–393.

Deetz, S., D. K. Mumby. 1990. Power, discourse and the workplace: Reclaiming the critical tradition. *Comm. Yearbook* **13** 18–47.

Dent, E. B., S. G. Goldberg. 1999. Challenging "resistance to change." *J. Appl. Behav. Sci.* **35**(1) 25–41.

Eisenhardt, K. M. 1989. Building theories from case study research. *Acad. Management Rev.* **14**(4) 532–550.

Ford, J. D., L. W. Ford. 1995. The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations. *Acad. Management Rev.* **20**(3) 541–570.

Ford, J. D., L. W. Ford, A. D'Amelio. 2008. Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Acad. Management Rev.* **33**(2) 362–377.

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. C. Gordon, ed. Harvester Press, Brighton, UK.

Gergen, K. J. 2003. Action research and orders of democracy. *Action Res.* **1**(1) 39–56.

Gergen, K. J., M. Gergen, F. J. Barrett. 2004. Dialogue: Life and death of the organization. D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, L. Putnam, eds. *Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. Sage, London, 39–60.

Gratton, L., S. Ghoshal. 2002. Improving the quality of conversations. *Organ. Dynam.* **33**(3) 209–223.

Hardy, C., S. Clegg. 2004. Power and change: A critical reflection. J. J. Boonstra, ed. *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning.* Wiley, Chichester, UK, 343–365.

Hardy, C., N. Phillips. 1998. Strategies of engagement: Lessons from the critical examination of collaboration and conflict in an interorganizational domain. *Organ. Sci.* **9**(2) 217–230.

Hardy, C., N. Phillips. 2004. Discourse and power. D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, L. Putnam, eds. *The Handbook of Organizational Discourse.* Sage, London, 299–316.

Hardy, C., T. Lawrence, D. Grant. 2005. Discourse and collaboration: The role of conversations and collective identity. *Acad. Management Rev.* **30**(1) 1–20.

Hardy, C., I. Palmer, N. Phillips. 2000. Discourse as a strategic resource. *Hum. Relations* **53**(9) 1227–1247.

Heracleous, L., M. Barrett. 2001. Organizational change as discourse: Communicative actions and deep structures in the context of information technology implementation. *Acad. Management J.* **44**(4) 755–778.

Jarzabkowski, P. 2005. *Strategy as Practice: An Activity-Based Approach.* Sage, London.

Kärreman, D., M. Alvesson. 2001. Making newsmakers. Conversational identity at work. *Organ. Stud.* **22**(1) 59–89.

Knights, D., T. Vurdubakis. 1994. Foucault, power, resistance and all that. J. M. Jermier, D. Knights, W. R. Nord, eds. *Resistance and Power in Organizations*. Routledge, London, 167–199.

Kondo, D. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Kosmala, K., O. Herrbach. 2006. The ambivalence of professional identity: On cynicism and jouissance in audit firms. *Hum. Relations* **59**(10) 1393–1428.

Levina, N., W. J. Orlikowski. 2009. Understanding shifting power relations within and across organizations: A critical genre analysis. *Acad. Management J.* **52**(4) 672–703.

Lüscher, L. S., M. W. Lewis. 2008. Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: Working through paradox. *Acad. Management J.* 51(2) 221–240.

Maguire, S., C. Hardy. 2009. Discourse and deinstitutionalization: The decline of DDT. *Acad. Management J.* **52**(1) 148–178.

Mengis, J., M. J. Eppler. 2008. Understanding and managing conversations from a knowledge perspective: An analysis of the roles and rules of face-to-face conversations in organizations. *Organ. Stud.* **29**(10) 1287–1313.

Möllering, G. 2006. *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity*. Elsevier, Amsterdam.

Mumby, D. K. 2005. Theorizing resistance in organization studies: A dialectical approach. *Management Comm. Quart.* **19**(1) 19–44.

Pearce, C., J. A. Conger, eds. 2003. *Shared Leadership: Reframing the How's and Why's of Leading Others.* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Phillips, N., T. Lawrence, C. Hardy. 2004. Discourse and institutions. *Acad. Management Rev.* **29**(4) 1–18.

Piderit, S. K. 2000. Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Acad. Management Rev.* **25**(4) 783–794.

Prasad, P., A. Prasad. 2000. Stretching the iron cage: The constitution and implications of routine workplace resistance. *Organ. Sci.* **11**(4) 387–403.

Putnam, L. L., G. Fairhurst. 2001. Discourse analysis in organizations. F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, eds. *Handbook of Organizational Communication*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 78–138.

Robichaud, D., H. Giroux, J. R. Taylor. 2004. The metaconversation: The recursive property of language as a key to organizing. *Acad. Management Rev.* **29**(4) 617–634.

Sawicki, J. 1991. *Disciplining Foucault*. Routledge, London.

Searle, J. 1969. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Symon, G. 2005. Exploring resistance from a rhetorical perspective. *Organ. Stud.* **26**(11) 1641–1663.

Taylor, J., E. Van Every. 2000. *The Emergent Organization: Communication as Its Site and Surface.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Thomas, R., A. Davies. 2005. Theorizing the micro-politics of resistance: New public management and managerial identities in the UK public services. *Organ. Stud.* **26**(5) 683–706.

Tsoukas, H. 2005. Afterword: Why language matters in the analysis of organizational change. *J. Change Management* **18**(1) 96–104.

Tsoukas, H. 2009. A dialogical approach to the creation of new knowledge in organizations. *Organ. Sci.* **20**(6) 941–957.

Tsoukas, H., R. Chia. 2002. On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organ. Sci.* **13**(5) 567–582.

Van de Ven, A. H., M. S. Poole. 2005. Alternative approaches for studying organizational change. *Organ. Stud.* **26**(9) 1377–1404.

Weick, K. E. 1995. *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Weick, K. E., K. M. Sutcliffe, D. Obstfeld. 2005. Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organ. Sci.* **16**(4) 409–421.

Westley, F. R. 1990. Middle managers and strategy: Microdynamics of inclusion. *Strat. Management J.* **11**(5) 337–351.

Robyn Thomas is a professor of management at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, United Kingdom, and Ghoshal Fellow of the Advanced Institute of Management Research. She received her Ph.D. in management from the University of Glamorgan, United Kingdom. Her research interests center on critical and discursive approaches to analyzing management and organization, particularly in respect to managerial and professional identities and organizational change.

Leisa D. Sargent is an associate professor at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She received her Ph.D. from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto and is an associate professor at the University of Melbourne. Her research interests are change, identity, and careers.

Cynthia Hardy is a professor of management at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She is an honorary professor at Cardiff Business School and codirector of the International Centre for Research on Organizational Discourse, Strategy, and Change. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Warwick. Her research interests revolve around discourse, identity, institutional change, and interorganizational collaboration.