

INNOVATION AS A REMEDY TO GROUP RESENTMENTS INSIDE AN ORGANIZATION. REPORT FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

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Abstract: In the article, the authors focused on the problem of causes and the possibilities of leveling resentimental barriers (negative group emotions) within the organization, limiting innovation of the selected Silesian micro and small enterprises. A morphogenetic causal analysis (M. Archer) of the emergence of resentimental barriers limiting the course of innovation will be presented. The empirical basis for the analyzes was created by the results of focus research carried out on a group of selected managers and SME employees.

Keywords: innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises, group resentment, organizational morphostasis and morphogenesis, morphogenetic causal analysis, qualitative analysis FGI.

1. Introduction

The processes of innovation implementation in an organization are determined by the factors of both, external and internal character. Barriers are some of them, defined as forces counteracting innovation initiation and development. The authors of the work *Barriers to Social Innovation* (Mendes et al., 2012, p. 28) distinguished two types of barriers occurring in the process of innovation implementation: structural barriers and agency barriers. Structural barriers are related to the complexity, uncertainty of social processes and their effects, and also to the factors resulting from social, political and economic context. Agency barriers, connected with action to be exact, concern the behavior of organization participants. They are linked with, among others, engagement in the process of innovation implementation and interactions between them. Amongst them, resentimental barriers play a significant role. How should they be conceptualized? According to the conception of group resentment by Max Scheler (1997), it may be assumed that the situation of occurrence of a permanent,

incoherent social structure, e.g. class tensions or tensions among the interest groups inside the organization, specific thinking systems justifying social, economic inequalities and similar derivative types of interactions of exalting some at the expense of others, with legal or organizational regulations in force equalizing everyone, results in the fact that the group resentiments triggered by them limit the actions leading to organizational change. Such conditions form resentimental barriers inside the organization and in its surroundings.

The authors concentrated on the problem of causes of creating and possibilities of leveling resentimental barriers (negative group emotions) inside the organization, limiting innovativeness of the selected Silesian micro and small enterprises.

For accuracy of reasoning, the notion of innovation, key for the research problem raised, should be made more precise. In the project 'With matrix to innovative entrepreneurship' the operating definition of innovation was adopted, which strictly corresponds with innovation depiction as action synthesis. It emphasizes the role of economic effectiveness and organizational efficiency: innovation is multi-faceted activities leading to creation, next to implementation of new solutions, that enable the achievement of competitive advantages, both of economic and organizational character with reference to the environment. In a minimum variant, innovation brings organization survival in a permanently changing environment (Weryński et al., 2014, p. 15). Above, a wide and holistic approach to the problem of innovation and accompanying dimension of time and space, to the process of innovativeness, allowed to formulate a conceptual and operational basis for the research presented.

In order to analyze causal mechanisms determining the creation of group resentiments and appropriate resentimental effects, resulting in dysfunctions in the field of innovativeness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in a broad sense, and indirectly in their environment, the roots of resentiments should be investigated. The authors also refer to the assumptions of morphogenetic theory and critical realism. Following Bhaskar (1998), it was assumed that the reality of the examined phenomena and social processes do not only manifest themselves in their empirical state, but mostly in causality. Causal mechanisms are real, when coming from the existing relation between social beings, from relation between the attributes, forces of social and cultural structures and agency capabilities of individual and group subjects. The aforementioned causal forces are not of necessary character (Archer, 2003, p. 36). Not all the mechanisms, linked with proper structures or social actors, are activated in morphogenetic processes. Therefore, the direct empirical research does not provide the proof for the 'reality' of causal forces. The actions of resentimental structural and cultural contexts should be treated as causal forces that are only partially subjected to a direct empirical observation. Depending on the configuration of the aforementioned contexts and the character of interactions amongst them and agency of social subjects, there are causal forces too, which are inactive in a given context and time, but may be activated in another configuration of environment's factors. Thus, a necessity of analytical curiousness arises when searching for the

relationships, relations between a sphere of contexts and agency in a temporary diachronic order.

What features characterize the state of morphogenesis in relation with the state of morphostasis of a given organization? Archer determines the basic features of the main opposing states of all social institutions. In this approach, morphogenesis is a set of processes that have a tendency for development or change of (1) form, e.g. institutional change, executing the already existing group interests and values legitimizing them, (2) structures, that may be made more precise as changes between the elements of structural and cultural level or changes in a relation between the collective action subjects in the organization, finally, (3) changes of the state of balance between the elements of organizational structure and culture and the level of agency of acting subject. However, morphostasis refers to such processes that have a tendency for maintaining the elements above without changes (Archer, 2015, p. 17).

In what conditions do the existing resentimental potentials lead to morphogenesis, and when to organizational morphostasis? The situation of morphostasis is specific for the fact that, despite the existence of permanent resentimental contexts, concerning absolute or relative organizational tensions, resulting in the reduction of formally and legally guaranteed individual and collective agency, does not lead to change in the way of management in the given organization and its organizational culture in a broad sense. If structural and cultural tensions do not relate to all the spheres, it means that proportionally lower resentimental potential will generate proportionally lower morphogenetic pressure. Such conditions will be closer to the state of morphostasis. In the emergent structural and cultural conditions, the emergence of ecosystems determining innovative processes is hindered.

Furthermore, in a situation of permanent tensions in organizational structure and culture as well as in derivative conflict interactions between the collective action subjects that refer to the sphere of power, economy, prestige at the same time, the existing resentimental potential leads to change in the elements of legal and normative legitimization as well as organizational culture. In result, such tensions lead to morphogenesis, that is the state of emergent structural, cultural features and interactions between them as well as individual and collective agency, conducting innovativeness.

The state of resentimental contexts and action of resentimental effects may be investigated if their complex status is taken into consideration, as the elements of multi-level (micro-, meso- and macro-) and dualistic, because objective (structure) – subjective (agency), reality. Inside it, two separate types of causal forces perform (Archer, 2013, pp. 311-316). In order to diagnose them and search for their genesis and directions of conditioning of the contemporary organizational behavior, the authors used research procedures, including a diachronic time and causal order, characterized by the utilization of qualitative method (focus group interview, FGI). The procedures encompass the distribution of frequency of occurrence of the emerging opinion categories, obtained in a computer program atlas.Ti and morphogenetic causal analysis. The procedural approach above allows analyzing the elements of structural and cultural features

of a given organization as well as agency capabilities of organizational subjects. The authors stated two basic research questions: (1) how the fixed negative group emotions – resentiments – determine innovative activities in the state of morphostasis (lack of change) and (2) how in the state of morphogenesis (undergoing change) of the organization? In turn, two research hypotheses, which are a development of earlier ideas (Weryński, 2018), are based on the theory of structure and agency as well as on conceptualization of the society in the state of morphostasis and morphogenesis (Archer, 2015, pp. 16-46).

(H1) In a situation of organization remaining in the state of morphostasis, that is a lack of changes or with limited changes, not disturbing the basic parameters of organization functioning and the interests of the main action subjects, the existing resentimental structural and cultural contexts (tensions) usually hinder the creation of innovation and reinforce the relation of agency.

(H2) In the state of morphogenesis, that is awaiting changes or introducing changes in the basic parameters of organization functioning and balance of interests of the main action subjects, resentimental contexts (tensions) not only hinder the creation of the aforementioned innovation, but also intensify the states of morphogenesis.

2. Research methods and techniques

The basic research method, serving for verification of two hypotheses above, is morphogenetic causal analysis. Its deductive analytical scheme will constitute the methodological meta-frames (reference point, data systemizing pattern) for the analyzes of roots and duration, identified on the basis of literature review, observation and focus group interviews as well as theoretical deduction, concerning the detailed resentimental effects which are the results of concealed to a lower or greater extent, often not socially explicit, determining mechanisms.

The elements of author scheme of causal explaining for the analysis of concrete cases of resentimental mechanisms' action among the selected Silesian SMEs:

1. Emergent structural conditions (group interests) exist, that differentiate the members of organizations and institutions in regards to access to power, wealth, prestige. Following Scheler (1997), it may be continued that, within the frames of the aforementioned conditions, all rights (civil, employee, social) are formally guaranteed. However, the life of an organization, actual practice, remains in contradiction with the official legislation, accepted organizational regulations.
2. Emergent cultural conditions (sets of standards and values, organizational cultures) exist, which validate the structural conditions, legitimizing at the same time the relations of exalting some subjects and demeaning others.

3. Structural and cultural tensions create resentimental contexts for individual and group reactions. The greater difference between legal, formal group prestige in an organization and the balance of forces in the organization, the bigger potential of resentimental tensions.
4. Structural and cultural resentimental contexts determine agency of individual and group action subjects in the organization.
5. The action subjects process the external resentimental conditions internally (emotionally, reflexively), through a mechanism of internal conversation, on the point of contact of two aforementioned contexts and individually configured concerns (motivations).
6. Depending on the type of reflexivity adopted (communicative, autonomic, meta-reflexive, fractured reflexivity) by the subjects in the organization and the feeling of continuance or discontinuance of the action contexts, the subjects in a different way execute their agency in relation to the external conditions (Archer, 2003, pp. 342-361; 2007). Innovative activities are promoted by the type of autonomic reflexivity (criticism towards the environment leading to action) and, to some degree, of meta-reflexivity (criticism towards oneself and environment, leading to system change).
7. The subjects interact adversely to the organizational structural and cultural conditions, creating collective action subjects (with capability of agency) inside the organization. The interactions of the members of such groups, in relation to the primary action subjects (with a limited agency), are a manifest of tension existence and an expression of resentimental mechanisms.
8. Resentimental effects, emerged in the organization, constitute an effect of group overwork (by collective action subjects at the expense of primary action subjects) of the relations between the forces of agency and structural-cultural forces.
9. In what conditions does the existing balance of structural-cultural and agency forces contribute to the organizational morphostasis? The agreement amongst the main collective action subjects related to the existing relations between the structural context (group interest) and cultural one (dominating ideas and values), or acceptance of the existing tensions between the structural and cultural context, blocks the development of new collective action subjects, that is inter-group interactions leading to the creation of new collective action subjects - status quo organizational change.
10. In case of organization remaining in the state of morphostasis, the existing resentimental structural and cultural contexts are usually limited to the creation of inter-organizational innovations, but they also block their participation in innovative ecosystems.
11. In what conditions does the existing balance of cultural-structural and agency forces lead to organizational morphogenesis? A lack of agreement amongst the main action subjects (possessing agency) in terms of the existing balance of forces between the

structural and cultural contexts, or the creation of new collective action subjects (new difference of interests, new ideas and values), which question the existing balance of structural-cultural forces, leads to organizational morphogenesis. At the same time, the number of primary action subjects decreases, who are deprived of agency.

12. In the state of organizational morphogenesis, resentimental structural and cultural contexts facilitate the creation of innovative ecosystems. In consequence, resentimental tensions lead to organizational change, emergence of new collective action subjects and ecosystems positively stimulating the course of innovative processes in various organizational practices.

For research on the problems characterized above, also a qualitative method of interview was used. To be exact, a technique of focus group interview (FGI) was adopted. Focus research encompassed 80 graduates of Silesian technical and economic universities. The selection of the participants for focus groups was of deliberate character. The representatives of three main domestic economy were subject to research: light and heavy industry, services, trade and additionally, scientific and research institutes in equal proportions. Focus groups were filled in equal percentage with the representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the achievement of fully representative distribution of social and demographic attributes among the particular focus groups was not as important as saturating them with people of maximally differentiated and grounded attitudes, knowledge, opinions about innovation and innovativeness.

People were assigned to four out of eight examined groups, who may be described as possessing organizational agency capabilities, that is belonging to management staff at the enterprises, working in marketing, HR departments or directly dealing with the problem of initiating, testing and implementing of product, organizational and process innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. In other words, those examined play organizational roles of initiators, testers and users of innovation. For the four remaining groups such people were selected who may be described as primary action subjects, possessing limited agency capability in the organization.

It was also assumed, according to the rules of grounded theory (Konecki, and Chomczyński, 2012, pp. 285-287; Hensel, and Glinka, 2012, pp. 89-113), that data gathered in the groups should be compared with one another in a continuous way, next, ordering and interpreting codes should be distinguished for the research material from FGIs.

3. The creation of resentimental barriers. Case study

Below a case study will be presented concerning the creation of resentimental barriers in the process of creating an organizational innovation in a medium-sized enterprise from the

Silesian province, performing in the industry of installing photovoltaic cells and panels and solar collectors (renewable energy sources - RES). The elements of causal explaining scheme, mentioned in the earlier methodological point, will constitute a basis for the analysis of concrete case study of the action of resentimental mechanisms and effects.

A great and spectacular success of the enterprise on the market of mounting and servicing photovoltaic panels occurred in years 2009-2015. In the peak time of enterprise's development, business activity was conducted on the territory of the whole country. The success was connected with a proper diagnose by the business owners, on the one hand, of social demand for independent sources of electricity from the state grid. On the other hand, the owners quickly noticed the possibilities of coordination of orders gaining for their own company with participation in the procedure of obtaining European funds by the customers at the same time, using the institution of self-government administration as intermediaries. This resulted in the offer of co-financing from EU sources up to 80 per cent of order value for the potential RES customers. Knowledge about the strategic European Union policy directed to propagating and financing, within the frames of RES Structural Funds, technological competencies possessed and correct diagnosis of the needs of Polish medium class, getting richer and taking pro-ecological attitudes, allowed building quickly, not a small, local company anymore, but a medium-sized enterprise, employing about two hundred people at their best times.

The analyzed enterprise was established as a small family company, in which trust among the members was built on the grounds of social capital of binding character. This type of relationship is specific for primary groups (family, neighbor and peer groups). The interest of such company is associated with the interest of the family. In relations amongst the members of the examined enterprise, for obvious reasons, there were no elements of social bridge capital (based on trust towards generalized 'others'). It is characteristic for task groups that are bound by material bonds, not emotional ones, of people who have common social goals, interests.

The presented case study shows a problem of the enterprise growing too fast, in which the way of management, evolution of organizational culture, competencies delegating and trust towards co-workers in more complex processes of organizational, process and social innovations, does not keep up with the growth of the number of customers and revenues. As one of the respondents said, related to the other board members in this enterprise: *innovation was somehow implemented to wrong structures, such structures that allowed making a lot of money in short time, which came from European Union for these things, home, solar installations. The turnover increased for them a lot, employment rose rapidly but the management system remained like in a small business with several people, not in medium-sized enterprise.*

In a situation of the necessity of employing new, numerous employees, who were connected by a different type of relationship with the organization than the family members, the mutual trust between the board and masses of new employees should be built on a different type of social capital rather than binding capital. The way of enterprise management should change as

well. However, the board did not make an effort to notice new employees as partners, helping the family in business development, who can be trusted. Instead of trusting the employees and building an innovatively managed enterprise, performing in the industry of innovative technologies, they concentrated on technological innovation in the area of monitoring and invigilation of assemblers – professionals working independently on the territory of whole Poland. The aforementioned observer spoke about this time of enterprise's activity in this way: *Such an innovation was implemented that the tools were introduced that were supposed to invigilate the assemblers and sales representatives. They (owners) brought great executives from western corporations for themselves. They were able to pay them, but the mania of a lack of trust and inspection increased. Each innovation was implemented in the area of inspection and invigilation. In the places easy to cheat the managers introduced an electronic inspection. In a way like, I don't know, they work in Coca-cola like that, I think. Those sales representative had their car door closing and opening and stops reported.*

The way of employee staff management and enterprise management was initially based on a traditional, paternalistic relation, a direct contact of a patron with an employee (face to face). It was also specific for a limited degree of responsibility and competencies delegating. At the same time, the family of the owners felt obliged to help the employees with other issues apart from work, they cared about an authentic staff integration, emotional bonds were built close to family ones, father-son like. In paternalistic management, so called 'manual' one, the enterprise generated income, was competitive in a turbulent meso-structural environment. Business activity, conducted in a regional scale in Upper Silesia, could be planned, controlled, settled though an everyday contact with assemblers and thanks to worked-out, commonly accepted community of organizational values.

Nevertheless, within time, as the number of tasks and employees was growing, the management style was coming closer to an autocratic pattern. The board still set the goals on their own as well as team tasks leading to goals achievement, they divided workload themselves concerning setting the goals among the employee groups working in the field. A process of management alienation from real problems was advancing, as the assemblers were working independently from the management in more distant places of the country from the headquarters. The organizational culture, existing in the enterprise, became a reflection of an autocratic, impersonal management style. It legitimized the relation of exalting the employees, who strictly and without criticism executed the management's orders and demeaning the independent and critical people, who did understand the old-style management way specific for the people from headquarters.

The commune and family management style concerning employees remained in the official declarations, but in practice it was limited to pointless meetings, not translating into agency increase of field employees in the areas requiring solving technological or organizational problems individually. Within time the declared management style became more and more distant from the real management style. It came down to taking attitudes of a lack of confidence

in rank-and-file innovation proposals, reinforcing the culture of distrust towards the independent field employees, that is assemblers-specialists.

The existing contradictions between the declared and executed management (power) style and the related pay systems and open information about bonuses assigned (element of group prestige inside the organization) were intensifying the inequalities in the subsequent years. They escalated double axiological awareness amongst employees, who were forced to 'play the game' of building a community team, at the same time the potential of resentimental tensions was increased amongst the enterprise's staff (the stage of organizational stagnation). The employees subject to the action of resentimental mechanism were forced to work out the aforementioned conditions in an emotional and reflexive way. The group of employees connected with the company for the longest time – veterans from the region of Upper Silesia, accepted facades, appearances of traditional, paternalistic management style, they were specific for communication reflexivity, that is the need of acceptance and confirmation of usefulness for the organization (the board), before they started any task. However, the independent assemblers from other regions of the country took different attitudes. Amongst the dominant part of the newly employed workers, mainly from the provinces distant from the headquarters, started to dominate a type of autonomic reflexivity, critical towards the management style represented by the board. Criticism and visible distance towards the enterprise's executives had their roots in the system of bonuses and motivation (strict subordination), but above all, in the increasing invigilation executed using digital technologies (GPS). It resulted in the creation of collective action subject, which could magnify, coordinate the frustration of field employees, organize temporary go-slow strikes.

Toxic interactions between the board representatives and employees, as well as everyday organizational behavior of the members of the analyzed team revealed the existence of tensions, were an expression of the action of group resentment. They also brought particular resentimental effects. Demobilization resulting from a structural, chronic lack of confidence, limiting the possibilities of professional development for the group of assemblers-specialists, had its reflection in the enterprise's functioning. The numerous group of employees, who established an opposing, collective action subject, made a decision to change the employer. They got employed in a competitive enterprise, on similar positions. The aforementioned observer summed up the action of resentimental mechanism and effect in the following way: *An effect was that employees stopped working efficiently. Someone mistook net with gross sum and it brought the business down, as it made a great loss and it got messy again. With this loss, instead of going forward and take it easy. So it got crazy again. Straight to bankruptcy.*

At the end of this analysis one may try to look at the fall of the examined enterprise from the view of positive effects of resentimental tensions for the development of individual and collective organizational subjects. In analogy to the conception of positive functions of conflict by Lewis A. Coser (2001), a possibility exists to find positive functions of resentiments in an organizational life, or broader, of negative emotions (Turner, and Stets, 2009), which are

a result of tensions in the structure and/or culture of the organization. Negative emotions, for example the feeling of jealousy close to resentment, in a situation of lack of acceptance for the innovation in the closest environment, the way it was in the examined enterprise, for the potential creator of innovation, generate the need of omitting the mechanisms of social investigation, institutional and personal barriers limiting the possibilities of his creative development. Additionally, the fear of disturbing the existing balance of interests amongst the members of the researched organization, which could result in formal sanctions, e.g. through using an increased inspection of his organizational behavior, magnify resentimental emotions of the potential innovator. In effect, the autonomic action subjects work out emotionally and reflexively their interactions in a resentimental organizational context. Next, they take a decision to migrate to a new environment, open to the introduction of technological, organizational, process changes or social innovations.

Helmut Schoeck notices positive functions of braking the environment's jealousy by innovators, who migrate to conducting ecosystems for them, motivated to action by negative emotions. At the same time they increase their creative potential. However, he emphasizes the necessity of openness existence to spatial mobility (migration) and incentives, including institutional ones, for social mobility (social promotion) for innovation development in a given culture and civilization (Schoeck, 2012, pp. 402-404).

Conclusions

In the examined Silesian enterprise, amongst the potential partners of innovative business, social and institutional activities occur the deficits of social bridge capital, deficits of confidence in institutions and generalized 'others', lack of tacit and reflexive knowledge amongst the potential creators, users and recipients of innovation, limiting the possibilities of building innovative ecosystems (Hudson, 1999, p. 61; Bukowiecki et al., 2012). In the situations of open inequality of innovator's pay system, individual and group jealousy is observed, often included in institutional action towards the creators, initiators and executors of innovation.

In the state of organizational morphostasis, structurally and culturally conditioned group resentiments, as well as destructive group emotions that are close to them, limit the existing potential of social capital (trust towards interaction partners) in a given organization, they weaken the existing organizational culture as well permanent institutional and personal relations (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Putnam, 1994, 2000). In a situation of organization remaining in the state of morphostasis, the existing resentimental structural and cultural contexts usually limit the creation of innovative ecosystems too.

In the state of morphogenesis, that is awaiting changes or introducing changes, resentimental contexts not only limit the creation of innovative ecosystems, but also magnify

the state of morphogenesis. In consequence, resentimental tensions lead to the creation of new collective action subjects, social morphogenesis positively conditioning innovative processes in the environment. Resentimental effects occurring in the state of morphogenesis, for example adopting the attitude of change acceptance as a negation of a previous state, as well as in the morphostatic environment (the stage of double axiological awareness and migration), constitute a result of emotional, reflexive work-out, done by the subjects affected by resentment and the consequence of their feedback (agency) to organizational structural and cultural conditions.

The case study of the fall of the medium-sized enterprise from the industry of photovoltaic services and after conducting a morphogenetic causal analysis on this example concerning the occurrence of resentimental effects, allowed positively verifying two research hypotheses (H1 and H2). Further research is required in terms of their use for analysis of broader resentimental contexts in organizational meso- and macrostructures.

A way to reduce the resentimental barriers in the analyzed organizational reality is to introduce a participant management style, often innovative one in Polish conditions, expressed by a balanced development of products, processes, organization but also horizontal structures, autonomic expert groups. It would also be necessary to introduce a participant communication inside the organization, especially with innovative activities, flexible one and based on confidence in employees when delegating competencies in an innovation process.

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The research analysis, used in this paper, was based on source materials obtained during the conduction of focus group interview with the project participants: ‘Silesian personnel for innovative entrepreneurship’ as well as studies on executive projects conducted within its frames in year 2018; the financing source of the project: EFS RPO WUP Katowice.

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