



International Monitoring (IMO)

The overall objective of the project is to establish a continuous International Monitoring (IMO) and linked fields of action on the topic of innovative ability. By this means we support the thematic development of the BMBF R&D program "Working - Learning - Developing Skills. Potential for Innovation in a Modern Working Environment" and foster sustainable competitiveness of Germany and Europe in a global context.

Global Dilemmas

In the course of its monitoring process, the IMO Project has identified five global dilemmas. These dilemmas are attributed a dual function in the scope of the project: On the one hand they serve as a theoretical reference framework to structure the interdisciplinary monitoring results, i.e. they help to put information from various disciplines into a common context. On the other hand, these dilemmas constitute elementary problems of economic acting in general and for innovative ability in particular. These dilemmas and their individual dimensions of socio-economic pressure are the focus of discussions during our International Conference and will be shortly outlined below.

Metadilemma: Sustainability vs. Short-Term Profit Maximization

The current financial and economic crises at least have made one thing clear: marketradical paradigms of economic action reduced purely on monetary profits pose an imminent threat to long-term stability of both individual economic subjects and the entire economic system. On the one hand the call for social, economical and ecological sustainability of enterprises grows louder. On the other hand, however, in the light of increasing global market dynamics and the resulting increasing competition, these same enterprises have to deal with rising pressure to increase their short-term profits. This very incompatibility of the short-term profit maximization doctrine and the principle of sustainability thus constitute the metadilemma of today's economic acting in profit-oriented economic sectors. The purely economical maxim of (short-term) realization of maximum profits forces economic subjects to act ruthlessly and is inconsistent with anticipatory, responsible and permanently successful management. This is why this metadilemma indicates one of the most

fundamental problems when dealing with management tasks in profit-oriented areas of economy.

In terms of organizational innovative ability this action-immanent conflict can be described by four dilemmas. These are characterized by necessary prerequisites for innovative and sustainable enterprises conflicting with different dimensions of economic pressure:

Dilemma 1: Responsible Utilization of Human Resources vs. Cost Pressure

describes the requirements of a comprehensive, anticipatory and responsible management of personal knowledge potentials, skills and competences under the simultaneous economic pressure to cut costs. This conflict area consequently is located within the social dimension of sustainability. It primarily, but not exclusively, relates to how organizations deal with the available human potential of their employees. In contrast to the increased appreciation of the “Human Factor” in the knowledge-based and information society, organizations faced with increasing cost pressure still often resort to reduction of labor cost and short-term profit maximization instead of aiming for sustainable safeguarding the future. The paradigm change in the perception of the employee from yesterday’s cost factor to today’s asset has by far not been implemented into economic practice yet.

Dilemma 2: Long-Term Strategies to Increase Innovative Ability vs. Pressure to Succeed

describes the increasing demand for basic structural and process changes in organizations to strengthen innovative ability while being faced with the necessities of quick success. Here, success must not be measured in purely financial terms, but as a general correspondence of the results of long-term change processes with the individual target settings. Traditional innovation research usually observes strategic change processes from a paradigm of technological product innovations. It is therefore no wonder that social and organizational prerequisites for innovative enterprises, as subsumed under the term “innovative ability”, receive only little attention even in corporate practice. Management reasoning often remains reductionist and figure-oriented, leading to the fact that such complex and hard to quantify influences of organizational changes that foster innovative ability bear only little weight in strategic decision processes.

Dilemma 3: Time for Learning Processes vs. Time Pressure

describes the individual, organizational and social necessity for learning and development processes under conditions of increasing time constraints on work. The dilemma on the one hand addresses time pressure for the individual leading to stress, insecurity and growing psychological strains right up to Burnout syndrome. On the other hand, enterprises faced with globalization, growing dynamics and a flexibilization of economy also have to deal with increasing time pressure in their operative everyday work. This often shows in neglect of development and change processes, a lack of customer service or in an innovationhampering corporate culture. Here time pressure, especially on the organizational level, mirrors the economically determined pressure for success, cost reduction and flexibilization. Ultimately, even on the level of society there are signs of increasing time pressure which are characterized by a comprehensive dynamization of the lifeworld and the resulting social acceleration.

Dilemma 4: Demand for Stability vs. Flexibilization Pressure

describes the demand of individuals, organizations, networks and societies for safety of current and planability of future processes. At the same time they face an increasing economical and social pressure towards continuous change, permanent adaptation and the according disintegration of existing structures. Besides the structural perspective of flexibilization the dilemma also focuses on the processual view of dynamization, acceleration and change. The results of increased flexibilization for both working and private life are serious. They become visible in a spectrum starting from general social acceleration to individual psychological illness. Still, flexibility is the prerequisite for a maximum of acting capability, self-determination, creativity, freedom and creativity. This is why it is all the more crucial to find a balance between flexibility and stability as well as between dynamics and deceleration. The goal must be to establish optimal conditions for innovative and competitive people, enterprises, networks and societies.