

PRAISE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL EDITION

“Engage! is a delight to read. Combining all kinds of insights best summarized by Kurt Lewin: ‘There is nothing as practical as a good theory.’ The book is loaded with cases that make the point. And cultural change is not treated as a side dish. Chapeau to the authors. A must-read.”

– FONS TROMPENAARS, *Author of Riding the Waves of Culture, consultant, trainer, thought leader*

“Engage! is a practical guide on how to create and preserve psychological safety when it is urgently needed: in times of change.”

– AMY C. EDMONDSON, *Professor at Harvard Business School, Author of The Fearless Organization*

“Engage! combines tools and tales, metaphors and methods, philosophical and practical insights. Reading the book is a journey in itself, made doable by coordinates that are both inspiring, fact- and evidence-based and practical. ‘Embarking’ is made feasible, if not attractive and easy. With the collective nature of change in organizations as a focal point, the book as such is a tribute to the essential role of language in, and the linguistic nature of change processes. It is a real travel guide providing the reader with principles, suggestions and guidelines rather than dictate where to go. It is never hermetic or too prescriptive, but context-sensitive, stressing contingency and dynamic learning. The tone and the content of the book are stimulating, constructive and appreciative. The character is creative and ‘change-minded,’ but also pragmatic and functional: no ‘l’art pour l’art’ as the purpose of change is to contribute to better organizations for society and in service of all stakeholders involved. *Engage!* is a rich, multifaceted and intriguing story based on a variety of ideas and perspectives ranging from Schumpeter and Jim Collins to *Game of Thrones* and *Alice in Wonderland*. It is adventurous like no other book on the topic without being superficial or ‘non-evidence based.’ A warning could be that the (strong) form and style are consistent and attractive, but sometimes do not facilitate thorough reflection on the pros and cons of explicit and implicit claims. Also – as ever – the transfer from paper to practice is a point of attention, for the reader, even with this book.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery taught us an important lesson: ‘If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.’ *Engage!* does indeed engage change professionals and others involved in change processes. It helps us to long, but also provides us with the necessary wood and nails.”

– STEVEN TEN HAVE, *Professor of Strategy & Change, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, partner at Ten Have Change management*

“The only thing that never changes is change itself. It is a famous quote that every manager knows. It inspires and makes us attentive that everything around us is continuously changing. At the same time, it has also made the concept of change a buzzword that we use without even thinking its exact meaning. The result is that too many businesses change simply because change is fashionable. *Engage!* is a book about change, but it has a different message. Change needs to be reckoned with, but you need to be prepared, you need to understand why it is needed, and what it can bring. The authors of *Engage!* make it a mission to approach change in a way that makes sense and makes it work for you! Those who look for change with a purpose, look no further, *Engage!* is the answer.”

- DAVID DE CREMER, *Provost Chair and Professor in Management and Organisation at National University of Singapore Business School and former KPMG chaired professor in management at the University of Cambridge*

“This book is a beauty. The notion of change as an adventure is immensely appealing to me. With this book in hand, I feel like plunging myself into the adventure of change. Come what may! This book strikes a rare balance between academic soundness and rigor on the one hand, and practical utility on the other hand; it reads like a field book, more than an academic text. It also strikes a balance between offering a comfortable step-by-step approach on how to lead a change initiative on the one hand, and a keen eye on the uncertainties and sheer unpredictability on the other hand. I think everyone who is either responsible for organizational change, participating in or learning about it, should read this book!”

- OMAR SOLINGER, *Associate Professor of HRM and Organizational Behavior, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

PRAISE FOR THE (FIRST) DUTCH EDITION

“Engage! is an extremely well-written book that translates scientific knowledge and theory on the turbulent practices of organizational change to instantly applicable insights and guidelines. The authors take the reader on a lively journey covering the how and why behind change, highlighting vision, co-creation, learning, management, momentum, and most importantly engagement as the primary success factors. A real must-read for any manager, director, or consultant working on change issues!”

- GEORGE A. ROMME, *Professor of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)*

“Engage! is an original travel guide for change professionals. This book breaks complex issues down into practical recommendations for change processes.”

- THEO CAMPS, *Chairman of the Board at Berenschot Groep BV and Full Professor of Organizational Sciences and Public Administration at Tilburg University’s TIAS School for Business and Society*

“A highly relatable and readable book with excellent real-life examples and practical tips. Manages to strike a balance between operational workability and theoretical background. A travel guide that also focuses on the “soft side” of culture change. The ideal book for change adventure leaders.”

- GERARD DE REUVER, *President of DSM Biochemical, formerly DSM’s Crisis and Change Director*

“This book is both practical and in-depth. The authors are successful in getting down to the core of deep organizational change: a challenge that involves people and where shaping a shared learning process and the ability “to learn to learn together” come first. This book is intended as a travel guide that combines real-life experiences with scientific insights on deep organizational change. The Change Canvas working framework offers specific tools. This refreshing and innovative book inspires readers to reflect and act. Anyone undergoing and leading deep organizational change should read this book. I’d say, *“Engage!”*”

- FRANK LAMBRECHTS, *Associate Professor of Organizational Learning and Change, Faculty of Business Economics, Hasselt University, Belgium*

“*Engage!* makes change management fun! Using inspiring examples, the authors show what organizational change involves. The insights are based on scientific research and made accessible to a broad readership. Various exercises help the reader gain awareness of what is going on at his or her own organization. I advise anyone dealing with organizational change to read this book!”

– MARJOLEIN CANIËLS, *Professor of Organizational Learning, Open University of the Netherlands*

“*Engage!* is my kind of book. The authors are aware that deep change can succeed only with a learning mindset and a dialogic approach. They stress that change is, above all, a collective learning process that revolves around “learning to learn together,” where organizational change capability hinges on the presence of a learning culture. This book is a practical travel guide that is the product of co-creation by professionals from the worlds of science and practice. The value added comes from the fact that the book offers both scientific insights and practical tools to use when embarking on deep change. This book uses clear language, attractive visuals, and plenty of explanation using numerous empirical examples. An absolute must-read!

– ANNET VAN DE WETERING, *Appreciative Inquiry Specialist, Metanoia Consulting*

“Highly relatable, very readable, and easy to put into practice. An excellent blend of theory and practice! Finally a book about organizational change that faces up to the turbulent reality of organizational change, while also offering tools based on scientific insights that help you, mindfully and fully focused, make it through the learning cycle that goes with organizational change. As the authors rightly say, an organization is never “done,” but permanently “under construction.” *Engage!* is chockablock with scientific insights and real-life examples of change with respect to the role and identity of organizations and how to effectively create a change movement. A must-read for boards and managers who need inspiration and support in so-called deep organizational change processes.”

– MARIËLLE DE HULSTER, *Head of HR at DSW Zorgverzekeraar*

Engage!

Travel Guide for Change Adventures

Woody van Olffen

Raymond Maas

Wouter Visser

Warden Press

ISBN Paperback: 978-94-92004-85-7

ISBN E-book: 978-94-92004-86-4

Original title: *Engage! Reisgids voor veranderavonturen*
(Culemborg: Van Duuren Management, 2019 [2nd edition]).

Translated from the Dutch by Erwin Postma.

Cover design: Arjen Snijder, Loon

Interior design and lay-out: Andre Klijsen / Villa Y, Henxel

Art work: Cube Collective, The Hague

Photo authors: the authors

© 2019 Woody van Olffen, Raymond Maas, Wouter Visser

This edition published by Warden Press, Amsterdam
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

wardenpress.com

**“We have to continually
be jumping off cliffs
and developing our wings
on the way down”**

RAY BRADBURY

Table of Contents

Preface to the International Edition 11

PART ONE: EARTH

- 1 Welcome Aboard! 15**
 - 1.1 Change: Faster and Always Different 15
 - 1.2 Organizations in Constant Switching Mode 16
 - 1.3 The “Process Anatomy” of an Adventure: Choices x Chance x Unintended Outcomes 18
 - 1.4 Change as a Learning Adventure 21
 - 1.5 The Structure of this Book 22
Close-Up 23

- 2 Our Universe 27**
 - 2.1 Deep and Superficial Change 27
 - 2.2 Different Behavior as the Only Change Criterion: The Tarzan Model 30
Close-Up 33

- 3 Push and Pull: Necessity and Desire 37**
 - 3.1 Stability, not Change, is the Norm 37
 - 3.2 Push and Pull: Necessity and Passion 38
 - 3.3 What Will Be *Our* Learning Adventure...? Defining Your *Core Change Theme* in 4 Steps 40
Close-Up 43

PART TWO: IN ORBIT

- 4 Our Launch Pad: the Change Canvas 47**
 - 4.1 The Engage! Process Model for Change Adventures 47
 - 4.2 Canvas Purpose and Overview 50
Close-Up 52

- 5 The Storyboard 57**
 - 5.1 Building Inspiration and Vision 57
Close-Up 61

- 6 The Switchboard 65**
 - 6.1 Imagining and Visualizing the Change in Concrete Terms 65
 - 6.2 A Compass: the First Proof of Change 68
Close-Up 69

- 7 The Actionboard 73**
 - 7.1 Helping Each Other Learn 73
 - 7.2 The “What” 73
Close-Up 78

8 The Crew 81

- 8.1 The Right People in the Right Roles 81
- 8.2 Forging the Crew into a Close-Knit Collective 84
- 8.3 The Snowball Effect: Recruiting More Change Agents 86
Close-Up 87

9 The Culture on Board 91

- 9.1 This Is How We Do: Things to Recognize Organizational Culture By 91
- 9.2 Organizational Culture and Organizational Change 93
Close-Up 96

10 Building Impulse 101

- 10.1 Inspire Each Other! Get Others Involved Through Dialogue and Co-Creation 101
- 10.2 Prioritize Behavior: Willing, Endorsed, Able, and Enabled 102
Close-Up 105

11 Controlled Flight 111

- 11.1 Embedding the Change in the Organization: Make It a Project 111
- 11.2 Project Management 101 112
- 11.3 Setting Up a Change Project/Program 114
Close-Up 117

PART THREE: DEEP SPACE

12 Momentum 121

- 12.1 Perpetuating the Movement: Focus on the Touchpoints 121
- 12.2 Keep Your Eye on the Ball: Ensure Permanent Focus on the Change 122
- 12.3 Feed and Grow the Movement: Tap Into Inner Motives 123
- 12.4 Going Viral: Make the Change *Contagious* 125
- 12.5 Scrum Instead of Plan: Make the Learning Cycle “Small” 127
Close-Up 129

13 Red Alert! 133

- 13.1 Resistance Is Not a Red Alert 133
- 13.2 Examples of Genuine Red Alert Signs 133
- 13.3 Detecting and Using Red Alerts 135
Close-Up 136

14 The Void 139

- 14.1 And It Suddenly Went Quiet... 139
- 14.2 Addressing Doubts 140
- 14.3 What Is Resistance? 141
- 14.4 Just Do ... Nothing! 143
Close-Up 144

15 Aye Aye, Captain! 149

- 15.1 Management Versus Change Leadership 149
- 15.2 What Good Change Leaders Do and Don't Do 150
- 15.3 Self-Connection: Authentic and Honest Leadership 152
- 15.4 On the Soapbox: How to Tell an Engaging Story? 153
Close-Up 155

16 The Dark Force 159

- 16.1 The Role of Power and Politics 159
- 16.2 Political Skills for Change 160
Close-Up 162

17 Strange New Worlds 167

- 17.1 When on Mars, Do As the Martians Do 167
- 17.2 The Change Culture and Differences Between National Cultures 169
Close-Up 171

18 1, 2, 3... for God's sake! 173

- 18.1 Leavers and Remainers: Protect the Organization's Strengths 173
- 18.2 Help Employees Adapt 175
Close-Up 177

PART FOUR: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**19 The Logbook** 181

- 19.1 "Capturing" and Saving Lessons Learned for Future Reference 181
- 19.2 Spreading Lessons Learned 182
Close-Up 183

20 Major Maintenance 187

- 20.1 The Learning Culture as the Core of Change Capability 187
- 20.2 Maintaining the Learning Culture: Keep Inspiring Each Other 188
Close-Up 190

21 Meanwhile, On the Long-Range Scanner... 195

- 21.1 A Keen Eye on the Future 195
- 21.2 Where to Next, Traveler? 196
Close-Up 198

Scientific Background 201**About the Authors** 203**Notes** 205**Literature** 211**Index** 218**Index of Names** 223

Preface to the International Edition

Engage! is a travel guide that will inspire and support you as you embark on a change adventure at your organization. In writing it, we drew on our personal experiences and scientific insights in the deep organizational change domain. Action without knowledge is reckless and knowledge without action has no impact. Thanks to our background in research and organizational consulting, the book has become a blend of theory and practice, of action and reflection. And this is precisely the blend we think can nurture and channel the adventurous spirit around deep change.

Based on our experiences and feedback from readers of the initial Dutch edition, we have enriched this international edition with further background and several new close-ups. As a result, this edition goes into defining the change concept in greater detail and focuses more on the “hard” change project organization. We also deal with recent developments (such as Big Data and nudging), and we have included more examples that are set in the international domain. To make the travel guide even easier to use as a practical guide, we have added a keyword index and numerous notes to further tighten and update links between our book and international scientific literature.

As we consider this book only the beginning in further deepening and enriching insights into adventure-based change, we want to invite you to share with us and other readers any ideas, suggestions, real-life examples, dilemmas, and illustrations you have in relation to the issues addressed in this book. With the aim of creating an *Engage! learning community*, we have built a website (engagechangebook.com) that offers additional material, including articles and videos, and set up a LinkedIn group (*Engage! Platform for fellow adventurers*), which we invite you to join. These resources are intended to forge mutual inspiration and understanding and application of insights on adventurous change. And to boost our scientific research and develop further book content for future editions. To learn through co-creation. Will you join us? We’re counting on you!

The Netherlands, June 2019

Woody van Olffen
Raymond Maas
Wouter Visser

PART I

EARTH



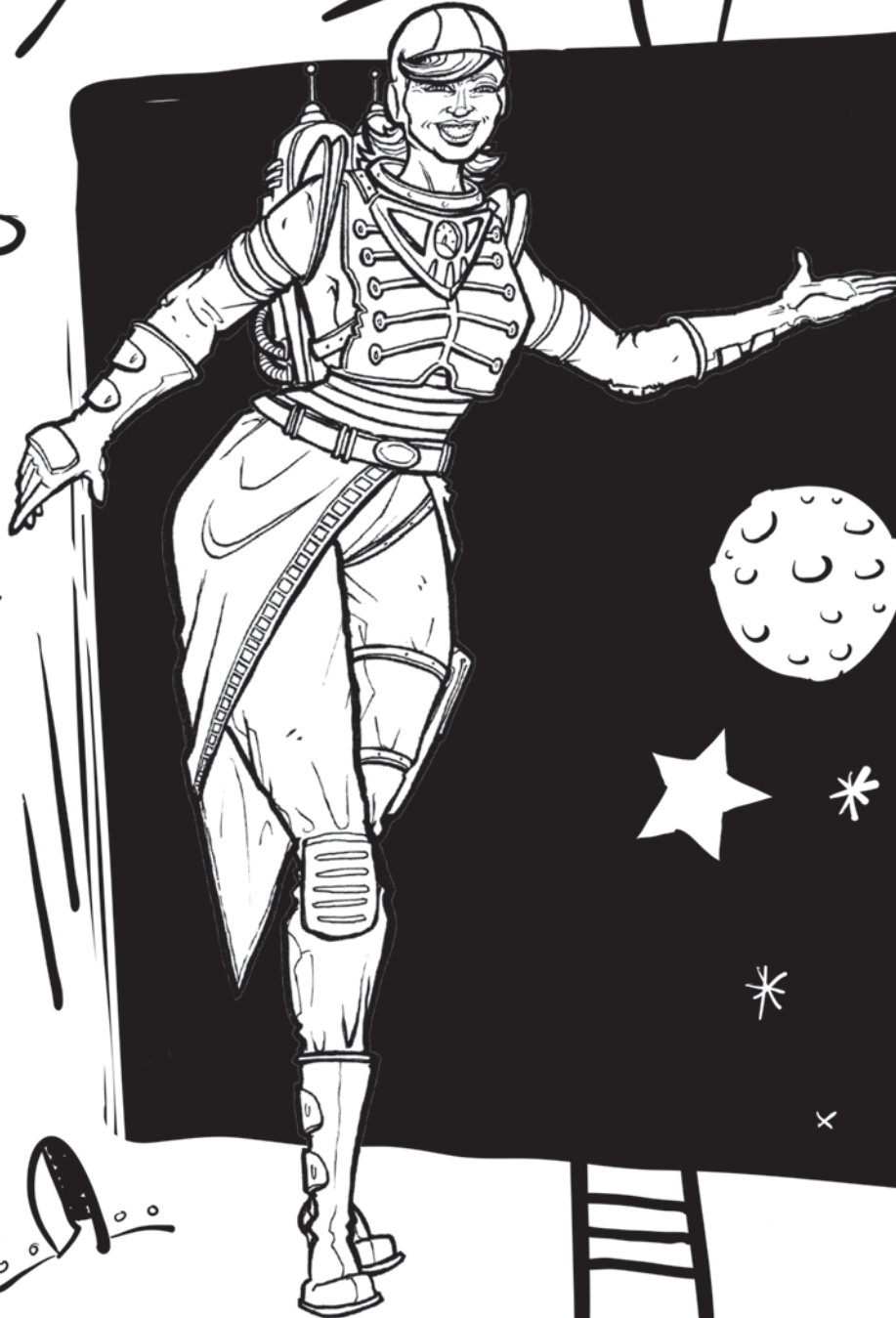
What will be our adventure?

WELCOME Aboard!

Don't voyage!



To Boldly Go Where
NO ONE
HAS GONE BEFORE!



DEEP CHANGE



BLEEP
BLEEP

1 Welcome Aboard!

On how we all switch between tasks faster than ever and what this means for adventurous change

1.1 Change: Faster and Always Different

Why is there so much that needs to be changed, overhauled, tweaked, and adjusted these days? Has there always been so much change going on around us? Go on to YouTube, find a game show or crime drama series from thirty to forty years ago and see for yourself. Watch an episode of Columbo, Dallas, The Price is Right, or The Gong Show. What stands out? As you watch these vintage TV shows, you are bound to experience any of the following emotions: restlessness, impatience, and after a while even irritation. It's all so slow! Lengthy dialogue, 'pointless' side tracks, and lots of silences where nothing seems to be happening. Where's the remote? Apparently, we were not as quick to feel restless and bored in those days. People would spend whole evenings watching this kind of 'slow' entertainment. Anyone with children today will be familiar with children's short attention span and love of games with lots of action, variety, and pace. Children nowadays rarely make it to the end of an old-fashioned game of Parcheesi. Anything that is not dynamic, fast-paced, and varied makes us restless and impatient. And so, we have shows like the Late Show and Ellen, with six-minute interviews and short skits, pop-up restau-

rants, and pop-up museums for instant satisfaction. We are forced to mentally tune in to speed and change, even if it wears us out. Even the recovery period after a burn-out has to be fast. The ability to be patient, to find rest, or to pause for reflection seems to be increasingly scarce in our lives these days. Basically, when we say that the pace of life has increased, we mean that we are doing more different things in less time. In other words, we are constantly "switching" between activities and tasks. Just look at your own day-to-day activities and take stock of how many different things you do, and how often you switch. Just now, as we were sitting here working on this book, we were called by a client who wants us to host a strategic session with his management team and we answered

Anything that is not dynamic, fast-paced, and varied makes us restless and impatient. ”

an email from a student about an essay. And all the while, WhatsApp messages from family and friends about plans for the weekend keep coming in, and the painting contractor giving our office a fresh lick of paint needed our go-ahead on several occasions. Within a time span of only a couple of hours, we switched or were forced to switch between roles and activities four to five times. The burden of this modern switching is further added to by the fact that we also constantly need to switch to new activities or ideas. All in all, we need to constantly adapt and learn amid the turbulence. And this will be a lifelong thing, so futurists tell us. So, we'd better buckle up!

1.2 Organizations in Constant Switching Mode

What goes for individuals in modern society also goes for organizations. At organizations, too, people switch, learn, and unlearn at ever greater pace nowadays.

Forced by new competitors, technological advances, new rules and regulations, changing business models, and more, organizations are also in constant switching mode. On the

one hand, they are keeping up with changes “from the outside,” while on the other trying to shape changes themselves, such as through innovation, by launching new products, applying new processes, or changing their approach in gaining a competitive edge. It's a matter of keeping up or dropping out. “Creative destruction” is what Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter called it.¹ Innovation is elbowing out old technologies and old ways of doing business and organizing. Organizations are thus themselves making the carousel turn faster and faster, forcing others to also shift into a higher gear or be left behind. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the Red Queen effect, named after the Red Queen from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, who has to run faster and faster just to stay in the same place (see Close-Up 1.2). It represents the dynamics of an economic system – capitalism – that, although we have installed it ourselves, has started to control us to a growing extent.

But what is it that we are being sucked into? What is it that causes organizations to have to switch and learn at ever greater pace? The answer lies in a series of developments in our

“It is this accelerating societal merry-go-round of change, innovation, and destruction that has pushed us and our organizations into an unrelenting race of change and adaptation.”

Source of Change	Examples	Impact on (People at) Organizations
Technological innovation	New products, shorter life spans.	Constantly updating knowledge and skills Keeping up with the latest, less job security.
	Automation, digitalization, robotization, big data (analytics).	Instant comparisons, transparency, rapid spreading of innovations leading to quicker saturation.
Social innovation	Home working, remote working and learning, social media, working in teams and on (short-term) projects, networking, crowdsourcing, open innovation.	24/7 availability, fading boundaries between work and private life, frequent changes to work context and contents, lots of simultaneous attention from and for many parties.
Demographic transition	Population aging, higher levels of education.	Need to work longer (and perhaps elsewhere), retire later and, therefore, to stay up to date longer.
Social change	Multiple role perceptions, multi-ethnicity, higher labor force participation rate, loss of “idiosyncrasies” and “local flavor”.	More different people to work with, working multiple jobs and different jobs in a career, combining work with caring for a loved one.
Culture change	Shift in values and preferences, such as slow = boring, stagnation = decline, young = beautiful, old = ugly, doing things differently = better. This triggers a response: slow living and renewed regard for local culture.	Cultural pressure to join the change, to be “young,” to know and have an opinion about everything, to “follow” everybody, to pioneer. Confusion on identity and individuality.
Economic change	Globalization, deregulation, liberalization. The 24-hour economy, and the backlash: economic protectionism and nationalism.	Increasing competition and consequent pressure to change. Protective structures.
Ecological change	Depletion of natural resources, energy transition, sustainable development.	Waste reduction, recycling, ethical, sustainable and ecological investments, corporate social responsibility (CSR), shared value (co-)creation.

Table 1.1 The Boosters Behind the Accelerating Switching Society

environment. Table 1.1 provides a brief recap of the sources of change that have accelerated the pace of our lives over the past three decades.

It is this accelerating societal merry-go-round of change, innovation, and destruction that has pushed us and our organizations into an unrelenting race of change and adaptation. This requires permanent alertness to yet another new or differently performed task.

And this, in turn, brings permanent uncertainty about whether or not what you do is and will continue to be good enough. You can feel it push you, especially during a rare moment of downtime. On a day off or when you have cleared your diary and gone on vacation. Or when your smartphone battery is dead or the internet is down. Or when watching one of those slow TV shows from the 1980s.

“In this book, our focus is on organizations that are seeking to take an active hand in shaping their future.”

There are many attractive sides to living in that merry-go-round: innovation, growth and development opportunities, promising prospects for the future, inspiration, creativity, and excitement. Still, on a more critical note, this modern life is certainly not inherently “good” or “inevitable.” After all, the flip side of increased efficiency and wealth potentially includes stress, (job) insecurity, instability, inequality, and alienation. Alienation from local and individual idiosyncrasies, as well as from values other than purely economic ones, such as freedom, leisure time, family life, peace and quiet, reflection, and spirituality. That said, slow living does seem to be making a cautious comeback of late, much like a pendulum swing in the opposite direction. Whichever way you look at it, each generation makes its own choices in politics, the economy, and legislation, choices in terms of the values they want to pursue and the kind of society they want to build. And within a changing society, each organization can choose how it wants to relate to the changes that are occurring, to what extent it wants to adapt, ride the wave of change, go against changes, or introduce changes itself. At the same time, economic reality is often ruthless. When you fail to adapt one way or another, you will not survive or be condemned to a marginalized existence. In this book, our focus

is on organizations that are seeking to take an active hand in shaping their future. It is the kind of pursuit that sometimes requires a drastic change of course, and then another one and another one. It is always touch and go. The change in itself can, therefore, be considered an adventure. This book is about how to embark on such change adventures together and how to, as one of the adventurers, take on a leading role, to feed the process and be a positive force in helping it progress.

1.3 The “Process Anatomy” of an Adventure: Choices x Chance x Unintended Outcomes

But what exactly are the characteristics of an adventure? For one possible answer to this question, we can turn to the narrative arc of fantasy TV series with lots of adventure, such as *Game of Thrones*. This arc differs greatly from that of a conventional chivalric epic, as there is no central hero, such as Frodo or Arthur, whom we follow along a linear storyline through to the glorious end. But it is not a classical tragedy like *Hamlet* either, with a doomed unhappy ending that is palpable from the start. Instead, fantasy series of the likes of *Game of Thrones* have numerous storylines where ambitions and choices are sometimes successful but just as often fail due to opposition or pure bad luck, in a world

where the distinction between “good” and “evil” is far from clear-cut. A world where heroes do not always prevail, and where villains are not always defeated. Storylines stop abruptly or unexpectedly go off into an entirely different tangent. Unpredictability reigns. Where that is concerned, adventure stories are basically just like real life, which might just explain why they are so popular...! Academic literature on organizational change also breaks down into two such extreme story types. They reach back to deep-rooted differences in the perception of the relationship between the organization and its environment. These two types of stories, which are often used in case descriptions and popular books on organizational change, have a remarkably different “tone of voice.” Although they are often used in their purest form, they are also mixed sometimes. For the sake of clarity, we will refer to these two types of stories as heroic epics and tragedies.

Heroic epics are derived from so-called strategic choice theory (Child, 1972; 1997), describing organizations as rational collectives that try to design sophisticated strategies and responses through well-thought-out analyses of their environment and their capabilities. It allows them to survive amid the external threats posed by competitors, innovations, or macro-economic head winds. Being master tacticians and strategists, successful managers are the heroes of these tales. Through clever maneuvering, looking ahead, and anticipating, they secure a prosperous future for the organization. Change is a process of smart adaptation. If pulled off, it is a matter of “all is well that ends well” thanks to the influence

and agency of the managerial heroes. Popular books (such as Jim C. Collins’ *Good to Great*) and management journals such as *Harvard Business Review* are filled with these kinds of heroic change epics, claiming that there is a lot we can learn from them.

And then there are the (classical) change tragedies based on population ecology theory (Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1989). In these accounts, organizations are portrayed as vulnerable little ships on the waves of immense oceans. These oceans represent organizations’ fiercely complex environments, which are entirely unpredictable and uncontrollable for a “small” organization. Just think about all those developments in the realms of international trade policy, the climate, and technology. Little ships that happen to be well-equipped when they set off may stand a chance of weathering the storm, they may survive through “natural selection,” but others will go down. Attempts to adapt and offer resistance are doomed to fail, as chance (a massive wave or brief respite in the storm) determines your fate. Case studies on change tragedies (such as at Polaroid or Nokia) consequently often explain how things such as new technology or innovations have wiped out entire industries (“creative destruction”) and made others thrive (drones, robotics). It is basically the changing environment and chance that determine what happens.

Although they may sound very easy to grasp, the processes of realistic contemporary organizational change are, like a Game-of-Thrones storyline, generally a lot more complicated than they seem. A case in point is the elaborate case study of NorthCo Automotive by

MacKay and Chia (2013), highlighting the deep interaction of heroic epics and tragedies, which influence each other in a myriad of unpredictable ways in (strategic) change processes. It is not either one or the other, as choices (“heroic epics”) and eventualities (“tragedies”) actually make up a tight-knit duo. This case study shows how, for example, a great plan comes to nothing due to a sudden drop in demand. Or how, when the boss of a certain company died unexpectedly, her successor decides to throw the strategy out the window. The new strategy involves partnering with another company, which turns out to be surprisingly innovative, enabling the company to tap into new markets. But the strategy that was ditched allows an old competitor a way back into the market, putting pressure on the company’s share of the home market. Et cetera, et cetera.

Chance and luck (within the organization’s environment) thus drive the direction, timing, and consequences of all those well-intentioned choices and actions. And these consequences, in turn, create the new environment to which you are exposed. Every choice or action comes with “unintended side effects” that get in your way later, often much later as it takes time for them to materialize. Or they might just give you an unexpected boost. Choices you made can haunt you for years. The mere making of a choice *itself* already creates an unintended side effect in the form of all the consequences of not choosing any of the other options that were available! And as soon as they have been triggered, these effects occur entirely separately from the organization (they are, as it were, unowned), albeit that

they can still, directly or indirectly, influence the organization. Take President Donald Trump, for example, a man whose actions trigger all kinds of processes and counter-moves in his (immediate) environment – by the FBI, by the press, by people in his own party, by the Democrats, and by the general public – which he no longer has under control. Leaders with a deep thirst for action but without any kind of “process awareness” are likely to create an unstable environment around themselves, one that may ultimately catch them off guard. Or not, as the case may be.

Every decision or event sets things in motion and may, therefore, in one way or another, have an effect elsewhere. As a result, each and every choice does not have one or two possible outcomes, but rather a whole raft of them. Which of these outcomes will actually materialize depends on incidents, chance, choices, and yet more side effects. So, when we assume this perspective, there is indeed a structure or anatomy to an adventure, but only on the level of the process, not on the level of the outcome (see Figure 1.1). Such a deep process vision invites us to see change neither as a heroic epic, nor as a doomful tragedy, but instead as something that emerges from interaction between those two kinds of tales, and therefore as an exciting adventure. To embark on an adventure and survive, you need to combine passion and action with a keen understanding of the environment and the unexpected effects of one’s own actions. Only then will you be able to work through the uncertainty, one moment at a time. In fact, this goes for organizations as well as for all of us in our private lives...!