Abstrakt
German infinite verbal complexes with three verbs we can observe a phenomenon which so far has been treated as an irregular exception, because in a particular order, so-called ‘312 order’, all three verbs seem to occur in a wrong form, e.g.:

(1) Er bedauert, es nicht verhindert haben zu können.
    He regrets it not prevented have to can
    “He regrets that he has not been able to prevent it”

Corpus research shows, however, that the putative exception has a systematic character and can be observed over a longer time in German. This talk therefore tries to take a different perspective: the problem does not lie in the exceptional expressions, but rather in our theory of German grammar which so far has not been able to derive the structures as regular. We present an optimality theoretic account of sentence final verbal complexes in German which is able to derive all systematically occurring expressions. The account comes with the cost that some thus far widely shared assumptions have to be revised. These assumptions concern the role of the infinitive marker ‘zu’ as well as the role of participial and infinitival morphology.