EAWOP Small Group Meeting on:

Organizational frame conditions and their meaning for change recipients: Discussing specific challenges for affected employees and the various roles leaders have to cover in organizational change.

Evidence and practical implications

Call for papers

11th-14th of September 2018

Dortmund, Germany

Organizers: Birgit Thomson, Kathleen Otto, Lotta Dellve

We are pleased to announce the call for papers for this *European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology* sponsored Small Group Meeting. The meeting will be held at the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) / Dortmund / Germany.

Conference theme:

Organizations undergoing structural change often fail to strategically, incrementally, and progressively introduce changes. Instead, management often chooses rapid, discontinuous, abrupt, drastic, radical, and short-termed restructuring transformations. Reorganizations often include simultaneous downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, reorganizations (Probst, 2003), and general strategic short-term efficiency orientation, usually related to layoffs. Although organizational prosperity and survival doubtlessly require adaptation, changes can thwart the intended outcomes by having unintended negative impacts on employees (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Otto, Rigotti, & Mohr, 2013).

Given that the general focus in change literature is on strategic and managerial aspects of change this small group meeting will provide further important insight on the change recipients´ perspective and the change impact on them. In our understanding, all organizational groups who have limited influence on the change decision itself or the implementation of change measures are considered change recipients (e.g., employees and their line manager).. These groups play a key role for the success or failure of change. Meeting the demands for

these key players might be particularly challenging in drastic as opposed to incremental and plannable changes. A better understanding of the psychology of change can prepare key persons such as line managers for their double role as both change recipient and change agent. The following examples may illustrate emerging research questions when it comes to change recipients' reactions:

In terms of the change recipients' perspective much is still unknown regarding the effects of different forms of restructuring, how they are implemented, and what features they include. It might be relevant to differentiate the extraordinary cases – affecting the organization as a whole (e.g., closure), – from daily restructuring events – impacting only specific parts of the organization (e.g., change of leaders), slow from fast change processes, anticipated long-term from surprising fast-term changes, or quantitative (e.g., lay-offs) from qualitative changes (e.g., merger; for details, see Levy, 1986; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). Moreover, while there is some agreement on phases or stages of restructuring cases (Skinner, 2004) research indicating the relevance of theses phases for health or job-related attitudes and behavior of employees is still lacking. Research to date has mostly either dealt with the consequences of restructuring on the individual or at the company level. Yet we lack knowledge about the interaction of personal and situational factors by adopting multilevel perspectives including circumstances on higher levels like regional and branch-specific unemployment rates, labor legislation, social security, and cultural differences.

Moreover, little is known about the influence of organizational frame conditions such as organizational structures and resources or cultural aspects in change and how these frame conditions are associated with change recipients options and reactions (e.g. leaderships´ working conditions, leadership behavior and the according impact on individuals). The specific roles and working conditions of leaders in dynamically changing working conditions are under-researched. Hence, the other aim of the second SGM is to analyze the challenges and working conditions of leaders in change considering organizational conditions which frame and determine leaders' working conditions. We want to analyze how far change and resulting working conditions have an impact on leadership behavior or leadership styles respectively.

Finally, how change is perceived by change recipients is heavily affected by social exchange relationships; in particular the role of leaders comes into play (e.g., Otto, Thomson, & Rigotti, in press). Even in face of organizational change leaders have to guarantee that the day-to-day business is done, they are stuck in a sandwich position as the link between the strategic level (which developed a change vision) and the operative level (which have to deal with it). Leaders are those that have to get along with resource loss when it comes to implementation processes, with strain, anxiety, and the anger of their subordinates. They, however, might be affected by job insecurity or the threat of loss of power themselves. Thus, the sustainability of leaders can have implications for themselves as individuals but also for the stability in the organization and the progress of the change process.

We aim to attract empirical and/or conceptual research on various forms of change such as downsizings, M&A, significant restructuring ranging from employee-initiated changes through

their tasks and relationships at work such as job crafting to organizational large scale changes such as restructuring or culture change. This broad variety in the scope and types of change will allow us to investigate at greater depth change recipients' reactions to change, the antecedents of these reactions, the underlying change processes and the organizational consequences and practices following change. We will continue IFPOC´s cooperation on change recipients´ reactions to dramatic change. More specifically, this SGM focuses on the following research topics:

- **Topic 1: Impact of specific forms of change** (downsizing, mergers & acquisitions etc. vs. plannable and incremental internal change)
- **Topic 2: Organizational frame conditions for change recipients and particularly leadership in change** (organizational structures, change related culture, concrete working conditions for supervisors)
- **Topic 3: Leadership activities, behavior and styles related to different organizational frame conditions** (How do change leaders and managers deal with change recipients' responses, how do their communicate given their "sandwich position", i.e. their positive reactions, uncertainties, anger, attitudes, wellbeing and health)

Expected outcomes and contribution of this SGM

This SGM will present an opportunity for change management and occupational psychology researchers to share their findings and discuss them with members of their academic community, improve both research and consider the practical application of findings. The anticipated outcomes of this SGM are:

- A better understanding of change agents' as well as change recipients' working conditions in various forms of change and how these determine change recipients' attitudes towards change and their reactions as well as change agents' leadership behavior / leadership style
- An agenda for future research to advance both theory and practice on these issues
- Extending and strengthening the network of change researchers (IFPOC), as a means for addressing unresolved theoretical and methodological issues
- An opportunity to develop papers for submission to special issues of EJWOP and JCM to at least one of our three main research issues and to plan joined symposia for EAWOP bi-annual conference (in 2019)
- A PhD-course of sustainable leadership and organizational changes will be arranged in connection to the SGM (at University of Gothenburg). This will provide opportunities to further share and develop research in the area with PhD-students.

Meeting format, location and date

The format of this small group meeting (20-25 participants) is designed to foster extensive discussion, constructive feedback and ongoing research collaboration. Each paper will be presented to the entire group of participants. Twelve presentations will be invited from prominent researchers in the area of psychology of change and change management. The meeting will run over two and a half days, between the 11th and 14th of September 2018. The meeting will be held at the premises of the German Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health / BAuA, which is located close to the center of Dortmund. The remaining presentations will be selected through a standard review process, in which submissions will be pre-screened by the organizing committee and then sent out for double blind peer-review.

Submission of extended abstracts

Extended paper abstracts (up to 1,000 words) should be submitted by the 31st of May 2018 to Kathleen Otto (kathleen.otto@staff.uni-marburg.de), either as an MS Word or pdf document. Participants will be notified of the decision by the 15.07.2018. Accepted abstracts will be distributed among meeting participants before the meeting. Abstracts of empirical papers should contain information about the methods, sampling and sample size, measures and results. Conceptual papers should address specific unanswered questions and/or make specific and novel predictions. All identifying information should be removed from abstracts before submission. The author(s) should also submit a cover letter with their details and a statement that the work submitted has not been previously published.

References

Brown, A. D. & Humphreys, M. (2003). Epic and tragic tales: Making sense of change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 39,* 121–144.

Levy, A. (1986). Second-order planned change: Definition and conceptualization. *Organizational Dynamics, 15,* 5-20.

Otto, K., Thomson, B., & Rigotti, T. (in press). When dark leadership exacerbates the effects of restructuring. *Journal of Change Management.*

Otto, K., Rigotti, T., & Mohr, G. (2013). Psychological effects of restructuring. In A.-S. G. Antoniou & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *The psychology of the recession on the workplace* (pp. 261-275). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Probst, T. M. (2003). Exploring employee outcomes of organizational restructuring - A Solomon four-group study. *Group & Organization Management 28,* 416–439.

Skinner, D. (2004). Evaluation and change management: rhetoric and reality. *Human Resource Management Journal, 14*, 5-19.

Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J. & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: principles of problem formation and change resolution*. New York: Norton.