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Organizational and Political Mindfulness as Approaches to Promote Social Sustainability

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Introduction: Organizational Mindfulness in Permanent Reorganization

Guido Becke

This artec-paper contains contributions to the International Workshop 'Mindful Change in Times of Permanent Reorganization', which was organized by the artec | Research Centre for Sustainability Studies at the University of Bremen. This workshop that took place on October 22nd and 23rd 2012 is part of an actual research and development project called '8iNNO – Organizational Mindfulness as a Basis for Firms' Innovation Capacity'.

Since the 1980ies, more and more economic organizations of different industrial and service sectors have been confronted with volatile socio-economic environments that can above all be attributed to economic globalization. Economic organizations of different sectors often respond to dynamic socio-economic environments by radical and / or permanent change. Although these change approaches intend to enhance organizational viability and competitiveness in volatile environments, unintended side-effects often impair firms' innovation capacity and social resource-base, as organizational trust, loyalty and reciprocity, or endanger 'decent work'.

Goals of the Project 8iNNO

Our research project 8iNNO intends to analyze unintended effects of permanent reorganization in respect to firms' innovativeness and social integration. Moreover, it seeks to explore and develop research-based concepts for organizational change that enable firms to combine innovativeness with social integration in permanent change. We argue that firms' long-term viability can be fostered, if they are capable of developing a dynamic stability with regard to their internal and external social-resources base. In this regard, adaptive trust cultures are critical to firms' viability in unpredictable and dynamic environments. Adaptive trust cultures embrace innovativeness and social integration at organizational level. However, it is an open research question how dynamic stability fostered by adaptive trust relations can be attained and sustained. In our view, the concept of organizational mindfulness may provide answers to this research question.

The Concept of Mindfulness

We utilize the concept of mindfulness as a sensitizing concept. This concept is for two reasons a conceptual attractor to our research project:

Firstly, mindfulness is closely linked to the idea of permanent change. In the individual perspective, mindfulness denotes human beings' actual awareness in respect to ongoing mental streams of thoughts, images and feelings. Moreover, this awareness is focused on the socio-spatial, natural and material environments human beings are related to. Different religious traditions of mindfulness, as e.g. Buddhism and Christian mysticism, refer to the idea that these environments are in a constant flux.

Secondly, we were highly inspired by the concept of organizational mindfulness which was originally developed by Kathleen Sutcliffe and Karl Weick (2007) in respect to so-called 'high

reliability organizations'. This term denotes organizations that are highly attentive to changes in risky and volatile environments. HROs build up an intra-organizational infrastructure of mindfulness which enables them to anticipate and effectively cope with unexpected events, often harmful to their existence.

This concept of OM is grounded in a risk and safety research perspective. However, we are convinced that it can be fruitfully applied to other empirical fields of social scientific research. Therefore, organizational mindfulness is conceptually extended to organizational change.

In the contributions to this artec-paper, you will be introduced to this re-conceptualized version of organizational mindfulness and key research results. In our research perspective, organizational mindfulness is regarded as a key concept to explain why organizations are capable of developing and maintaining dynamic stability in permanent change.

What are the focal points of reference of the international workshop?

This international workshop mainly dealt with conceptual potentials and limits of organizational mindfulness with regard to organizational change:

- **Firstly**, it intends to reflect and discuss **whether organizational mindfulness or mindful change can be utilized** as concepts **for analyzing and designing organizational change** in times of dynamic environmental flux. Therefore, the workshop aimed to discuss the conceptual potentials and limits of organizational mindfulness regarding permanent change processes with colleagues from different disciplines, and research perspectives. In our perspective organizational mindfulness addresses unnoticed innovation potentials of permanent reorganization as well as its unintended negative side effects regarding social integration and the quality of work.
- **Secondly, the international perspective** lies at the heart of this workshop. It is inspired by a conceptual and empirical blind spot in the academic debate of organizational mindfulness. This blind spot refers to the institutional settings organizations are embedded in. These institutional settings, e.g. different systems of Industrial Relations and labor law regulations, may support or restrict organizational mindfulness in permanent change. For instance, in countries with a long standing tradition of democratic dialogue, as in most of the Scandinavian countries, one would expect a higher degree and extension of mindful change in reorganization processes. This assumption was one of the reasons why we were especially interested in inviting researchers from Scandinavia. In our view, dialogue is an essential core element of organizational mindfulness. Another important reason why was our interest to initiate a dialogue on organizational mindfulness with researchers focusing on high reliability organizations.
- **Thirdly**, the workshop referred to the **societal level of mindfulness** being closely linked to the institutional perspective. The socio-psychologist Ellen Langer is a pioneer in addressing the societal level in respect to research on mindfulness. In her cognition-based view, individual mindfulness can alter problematic patterns of human perception and behavior, thereby making a contribution to solve social problems. However, the societal perspective of mindfulness has been paid little attention to in the concept of organizational mindfulness and related research. Therefore, the interrelation between organizational mindfulness and mindfulness at the societal may hold promising future research perspectives.

- **Finally**, the **interrelation between social sustainability and organizational or political mindfulness** has scarcely been discussed before.

This artec-paper is comprised of four presentation manuscripts to the International Workshop that originate from the context of the 8iNNO-research project. The first contribution by Guido Becke conceives of organizational mindfulness as an approach to develop and sustain economic organizations' social-resources base in times of permanent reorganization. The second contribution written by Miriam Behrens and Peter Bleses refers to a core element of our re-conceptualized understanding of organizational mindfulness, i.e. dialogue at organizational level. In the third article, Sylke Meyerhuber explores the importance of trust for a social sustainably development of postmodern organizations. Finally, Eva Senghaas-Knobloch widens the perspective of mindfulness by addressing political mindfulness at global level and linking it to the core concepts of care and social sustainability.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank people and institutions without whom this workshop would not have been taken place. First of all, I would like to thank our **keynote speakers** Prof. Kirsimarja Blomqvist (University of Lappeenranta, Finland), Prof. Bernd Hofmaier (University of Halmstad, Sweden), Prof. Claus Rerup (University of Western Ontario, Canada) and Prof. Eva Senghaas-Knobloch (University of Bremen, Germany). I am convinced that their keynotes will be an important source and inspiration of further research on organizational mindfulness.

As indicated before, this workshop is part of the 8iNNO-research and development project. I am very grateful to have collaborated with a very **inspiring team** consisting of Miriam Behrens, Peter Bleses, Inna Kracke, Andrea Meier, Sylke Meyerhuber, Sandra Schmidt and Eva Senghaas-Knobloch. Very special thanks go to my colleague Inna Kracke who has done a tremendous job in mindfully organizing this workshop. Moreover, I would like to thank very much my colleagues Kristin Jahns, Raphaela Wehl and Anna Wetjen as well as our student colleagues Andrea Dannheisig, Yann Fingerhut, and Jasmin Hentschel for their very supportive helping hands before and during the international workshop.

Complex research and development projects, as 8iNNO, require an appropriate **financial funding and administrative support**. Therefore, we are grateful to have received project funding by the German Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Funds. We have appreciated very much the administrative assistance of the Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Center (PT-DLR). Especially, I would like to thank Dr. Ursula Reuther and Dr. Claudius Riegler for their very helpful, reliable and flexible assistance.

Outlook

All contributions to the international workshop will be published in an edited volume by Springer Press, presumably in summer 2013. Moreover, this book will contain papers from other researchers who focus on organizational mindfulness, dialogue, trust or the societal dimension of mindfulness.

This edited volume that primarily addresses researchers in Organization, Labor or Sustainability Studies can be cited as follows:

Guido Becke (Ed.): Mindful Change in Times of Permanent Reorganization. Organizational and Institutional Perspectives. Heidelberg, Dordrecht: Springer.

Moreover, a more design-oriented book referring to the introduction of mindful change in economic organizations will also be published in 2003 by Schäffer-Poeschel edition. It primarily addresses practitioners, i.e. managers or experts in Human Resource Management and Organizational Development as well as employees' representatives, as works councils. This book is titled:

Guido Becke, Miriam Behrens, Peter Bleses, Sylke Meyerhuber, Sandra Schmidt (2013): Organisationale Achtsamkeit – Veränderungen nachhaltig gestalten. Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel.

We hope that this artec-paper and these books will enrich the academic and practices-related debate regarding organizational mindfulness.

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Organizational Mindfulness in Permanent Change – Promoting Social Sustainability at Organizational Level

Guido Becke

Introduction

The concept of Organizational Mindfulness (OM) can be applied to permanent reorganization. This concept can be regarded as a cornerstone for promoting a socially sustainable development of organizations. This especially means, that OM can contribute to develop and to regenerate organizations' social-resources base in permanent reorganization.

This paper is organized as follows:

It starts with looking at permanent reorganization as a threat to social sustainability at organizational level. Afterwards, the concept of Organizational Mindfulness is reviewed in respect to permanent organizational change. On this basis, I then will re-conceptualize the concept of organizational mindfulness introducing you to its mindful infrastructure that is required for mindful change. Against the background of the 8iNNO-research project, key processes of mindful change are sketched. In my conclusions, I will concentrate on benefits and limits to organizational mindfulness in permanent reorganization, and address further research questions.

1. Permanent Reorganization as a Threat to Social Sustainability at Organizational Level

Since the 1980ies, economic organizations of different sectors have faced increased environmental uncertainty and competition that – above all – can be attributed to processes of economic globalization. The increase of economic globalization can be – to a larger extent – attributed to political decision-making processes at international, European, and national levels. During the 1980ies neo-liberal policy patterns that promoted unconstrained markets emerged and became widely accepted since. In this view, states have been increasingly turned into locational competitors to provide capital or transnational corporations with efficient business opportunities. In the neo-liberal paradigm, economic growth and competitiveness can be attained by cut-backs of welfare states, supply-side oriented labor-market reforms fostering atypical forms of employment, the liberalization of finance and capital markets, and privatizing public services and infrastructure.

Against this background of enhanced economic pressure and more unpredictable socio-economic environments, flexibility and agility are often conceived as prerequisites of economic organizations' long-term viability and competitiveness. In this view, permanent reorganization is regarded as an appropriate means to organizational viability in turbulent environments.

Permanent reorganization is fostered by the introduction of shareholder-value regimes at organizational level. Moreover, it is closely linked to the management concept of 'internal marketization'. This concept promotes the idea to selectively open up the internal organization of firms to market pressures in order to attain profitability and competitiveness. Internal

marketization is driven by dynamic economic goal attainment exerting a continuous pressure on business units and employees to increase efficiency and profitability.

However, permanent reorganization often induces unintended negative side-effects in respect to organizational effectiveness, social integration at organizational level and to the quality of work. In our four in-depth case studies in firms related to public transport, ICT-services and social services, we detected disturbances of social trust and an impaired quality of work. I will just mention a few overarching results:

First, dismissals were perceived by employees as a deterioration of trust relations; especially in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) of ICT-services lay-offs were conceived as an even traumatic breakage of the established organizational culture resulting in an erosion of trust.

Second, change communication turned out to be an Achilles heel of trust maintenance in permanence reorganization. This is reflected in obscure management goals of reorganization, a lack of transparency regarding the process design of reorganization, and top managers' reluctance to address vague decision-making situations, thereby spreading rumors that destabilized trust relations.

Third, a decrease of trust was caused by discontinuous direct employee participation in change initiatives. Employees' initiative to participate in organizational change was disappointed by managers who denied feedback and mostly blocked the realization of employees' ideas.

Fourth, employees often perceived an imbalance of reciprocity in reorganization processes. For instance, de-layering and dismissals enhanced work intensification and psycho-social stress and questioned employees' job stability or went along with wage-cuts. However, gains in favor of the workforce were scarcely visible after the organizational turnaround. This imbalance was perceived by employees as a violation of 'psychological contracts' at work resulting in an erosion of trust.

Such detrimental effects on social trust relations and the quality of work can impair the adaptability and innovativeness of organizations in dynamic environments. Approaches of permanent reorganization often regard economic organizations as profit maximizing entities based on economic exchange, and utilizing employees as 'human resources'. However, this view neglects that economic organizations can also be conceived as 'moral economies'. These are based on a commonly shared sense of mutuality, and on continuous reciprocal social exchange between management and employees. In 'moral economies', employees are recognized as resourceful human beings with specific work-related interests, expectations, and needs. Therefore, their readiness to support organizational change and to mobilize individual resources for change initiatives, e.g. local expertise and tacit knowledge, depend on their social recognition at organizational level.

Our empirical findings indicate that permanent reorganization can endanger the dynamic stability of organizations' social-resources base that promotes organizational viability in volatile socio-economic environments. Dynamic stability means that this social-resources base can be developed, adjusted, altered or regenerated in the face of dynamic environments by social interactions between different actors at organizational level and / or between intra-organizational and extra-organizational actors.

I would like to unfold my understanding of 'social resources' which is used with regard to the organizational perspective:

First, social resources are generated in relatively permanent social interactions between different actors, as management, employees or works councils, in the workplace. Within such interactions social resources can be modified, violated, consumed or regenerated depending on the continuity, scope and quality of social exchange in specific economic organizations.

Second, social resources cannot be entirely mobilized and utilized for economic goals. In social interactions, actors draw on their subjectivity. Economic organizations are solely interested in mobilizing and capitalizing on aspects of human subjectivity that are compatible with economic goals. However, employees always bring in their entire subjectivity in the workplace which also entails unwanted dimensions of their subjectivity, e.g. individual obstinacy.

Moreover, social resources are very fragile. For instance, if employees perceive violations to 'psychological contracts', trust may rapidly erode.

Furthermore, the employment relationship at organizational level always entails a mutual interdependence between management and employees, even if power and authority are distributed unevenly. This interdependence generates at least informal power resources employees can draw on, thereby blocking the utilization of social resources for economic goal attainment.

Social resources, as social trust, organizational loyalty or reciprocity, are of vital importance for firms' innovativeness and long-term viability. Such social resources enable firms to develop collective capacities of action that are required for organizational adaptability to volatile environments. This can be illustrated by the example of social trust which is a key social resource for organizational viability, competitiveness and innovativeness. For instance, employees will bring in their tacit knowledge in innovation and change processes, if they trust in managers or the organization that their contributions are not exploited at their expense.

The dynamic stability of the social-resources base is essential for social sustainability at organizational level. In a resource-based perspective, sustainable development is defined as "protecting the richness of the world's resources in such a way that their utilization does not destroy them but rather leaves equal opportunity for future generations to benefit from them as well" (Docherty et al. 2009, 3). The concept of sustainable development entails three different, but interrelated dimensions, i.e. ecological, economic, and social sustainability. The term social sustainability can be used in two ways: In a normative way, social sustainability is related to human dignity and human rights (ibid.), and social cohesion (Littig and Grießler 2005). In an analytical way, two lines can be distinguished. First, the term can be utilized to explore the relationship between nature and society. Second, it refers to the social dimension of sustainability in its own regard. In this view, social sustainability can be used to analyze the regeneration of human health resources focusing on sustainable work systems (Docherty et al. 2009; Becke 2012). Moreover, it refers to the investigation of requirements and processes of dynamic stability of the social world that is generated in social interactions.

Social sustainability at organizational level can be defined as the dynamic stability of organizations' social-resources base in volatile and unpredictable socio-economic environments. I would like to investigate how economic organizations operating in such environments can develop and regenerate its social-resources base in permanent change processes. It is ar-

gued that the concept of 'organizational mindfulness' provides an answer to this research question.

2. Organizational Mindfulness – A Concept for Organizational Change?

The original concept of organizational mindfulness was developed by Kathleen Sutcliffe and Karl Weick in respect to risk and safety research. It highlights a perspective of collective and organizational learning in respect to the anticipation of and the coping with unexpected risky events harmful to organizations and their viability. The concept of organizational mindfulness relates to the quality of organizations' attention in volatile and unpredictable environments (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007, 32). Weick and Sutcliffe had a specific type of organizations in mind conceptualizing organizational mindfulness, i.e. 'High-Reliability Organizations' (HRO).

In my view, research in permanent reorganization processes bears a striking similarity to organization studies in HROs: In both cases, dynamic and unpredictable environments challenging firms' organizational adaptability and threatening their viability are highlighted. Hence, it can be concluded that the concept of OM can also be extended to organizations that operate in unpredictable and dynamic environments. Moreover, the research question, how organizations can cope with unexpected and harmful events is shared by research related to HROs and research in organizational change.

Organizational mindfulness can be conceived as a sensitizing concept for mindfully designing organizational change. Organizational mindfulness (OM) can serve as a key concept for organizational (social) sustainability in volatile environments. This conceptual linkage between social sustainability, organizational change and OM opens up a new terrain for organization and sustainability studies. Moreover, it fosters the development of new change approaches focusing on 'mindful change' in volatile socio-economic environments.

However, the original concept of organizational mindfulness contains some problematic points. Therefore, it needs a re-conceptualization in respect to organizational change.

First, a problematic underlying assumption of this concept refers to its generalizability. This concept is presented by Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) as a concept that can be utilized for the entirety of HROs, thereby neglecting the institutional and societal contexts HROs are embedded in. For instance, legally established institutions in the workplace make a difference for organizational mindfulness because they can shape procedures as well as contents the infrastructure of organizational mindfulness relates to. In Germany, the institution of works councils is the mandatory and representative body of "all salaried employees ... of an eligible establishment" (Müller-Jentsch 2003, 46). Works councils' participation rights also refer to occupational health and safety and health promotion in the workforce. Against this background, works councils are a potential important actor in the intra-organizational design of a mindful infrastructure and its related procedures.

Second, the original concept of OM primarily focuses on enhancing organizational performance, especially in respect to organizational reliability and organizational functioning in unpredictable environments. Social relations in the workplace and employees are above all dealt with in a functionalist perspective. This functionalist and performance-driven focus contains some blind-spots.

It widely neglects negotiation and conflict. For example, conflict may arise from different interests or discrepancies between actors' situational definitions and interpretations of unexpected events. Conflict may also refer to different viewpoints in respect to the containment of unpredicted environmental events. Hence, the issues of negotiation, power and conflict resolution are not dealt with in the original concept of OM.

The original concept of OM proves to be ambiguous in respect to the quality of social relations at organizational level: On the one hand, this concept is sensitive to the quality of social relations as a prerequisite of organizational mindfulness (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007; Weick 2003). On the other side, this sensitivity is not mirrored in core processes or principles of organizational mindfulness.

Finally, in the functionalist perspective of OM, the quality of work and potential health-related effects on employees in coping with the unexpected are not taken account of. For instance, the containment of unexpected events in HROs often goes along with a high degree of psychic stress and exposes employees, as firemen, to extreme psycho-physical vulnerability in their work operations, as fire-fighting activities. This conceptual blind spot refers to the question whether organizational mindfulness can be achieved without taking systematically care of organizational members. Therefore, organizational mindfulness has to pursue multiple goals (see also Rerup and Levinthal 2013) beyond organizational functioning and reliability.

3. The Concept of 'Mindful Change'

I would like to point out the concept of 'Mindful Change' which reflects our re-conceptualization of organizational mindfulness regarding permanent change. In order to distinguish this concept from the original version of OM, we term our concept as 'Mindful Change'. In my view, organizational mindfulness denotes organizations' capacity of action to develop and regenerate dynamic stability in respect to organizations' social-resources base. Organizational mindfulness intends to anticipate and constructively deal with unintended effects of permanent reorganization regarding environmental adaptability, social integration and 'decent work' at organizational level. Moreover, it seeks to explore and unfold (unnoticed) innovation potentials in change processes.

Mindful change requires a specific, facilitating mindful infrastructure at organizational level that involves organizational routines, spaces of dialogue and key principles or core processes for mindful organizing.

Organizational mindfulness embraces two distinctive variants of organizational routines (Jordan et. al. 2009, 468): The first variant, i.e. "interactive routines" (ibid.), refers to practices of reflection in work-related operations and interactions. Interactive routines enable employees and managers at team level to anticipate and to deal with unintended effects of permanent reorganization on the spot, thereby preventing or containing its negative effects or initiating further coping measures at organizational level. Mutual recognition is a core requirement for effective interactive routines.

The second type of organizational routines supports 'reflection-on-action' outside of work processes (Jordan et al. 2009), as e.g. multi-actors' steering committees of reorganization or procedures of employee appraisals. It is vital for mindful change that steering committees embrace a variety of actors representative for organizations or change initiatives. This variety offers ample opportunity for collective reflection on (unnoticed) innovation potentials and un-

anticipated effects of reorganization. Moreover, mindful decision-making on reorganization processes can be facilitated. Such committees can be conceived as key routines to design frame conditions of permanent reorganization, thereby facilitating the development and re-generation of organizations' social- resources base.

Spaces of dialogue can be regarded as social spaces of direct participation, collective inquiry and exchange between employees or between employees and managers, thereby facilitating collective and organizational learning in respect to mindful organizing. In spaces of dialogue, reciprocity between management and employees can be balanced.

Finally, mindful organizational infrastructures contain key processes of mindful change that are directed to enhancing and regenerating the dynamic stability of organizations' social-resources base in permanent reorganization. Mindful change is based on the following six key principles or mindful organizing:

- a) Organizing perspective diversity
- b) Promoting negotiation and conflict resolution
- c) Developing and establishing trust anchors
- d) Promoting sustainable work systems
- e) Facilitating experimental change
- f) Developing and regenerating organizational stability anchors

The following four principles are just very roughly characterized:

Organizing perspective diversity refers to dialogue across hierarchical levels and intra-organizational units. It builds up a participative platform for collective reflection on permanent change and organizational learning.

Promoting negotiation and conflict resolution is related to the development and establishment of procedures that prevent escalating conflicts and facilitate integrative bargaining in permanent reorganization.

The latter principle is complemented with **developing and establishing trust anchors** that fulfill an intermediary function to address and resolve conflicts in organizational change, as rules and procedures or institutions, as works councils.

Promoting sustainable work systems refers to the regeneration of employees' health resources in organizational change processes.

Facilitating experimental change

A core problem of radical or permanent change refers to abolishing procedures and structures that are regarded as outdated, not adaptive or not appropriate to altered circumstances. Then these procedures and structures are often replaced by novel ones that often induce unintended negative side effects on working conditions, co-operation or organizational functioning. These novelties were often not tested before.

The idea of experimental change is related to this change problem. Experimental change is organized in pilot projects involving actors across hierarchical levels and often also across departmental boundaries to develop and test solutions to a specific problem. Existing procedures and structures that are perceived as inappropriate are replaced after a pilot project has been successfully tested. Experimental change facilitates organizational mindfulness by en-

abling experimental and collective learning. Moreover, it fosters the containment of negative side effects related to pilot projects. In the case of the public transport company, maintenance workers and their supervisors developed and tested a new procedure related to the fine-tuned planning of work orders within a pilot project. The developed procedure was altered several times until it was collectively accepted.

However, the pilot project indicated that best effects were to be attained by involving other maintenance units. Therefore, the pilot project opened up spaces for further innovation and co-operation across cost-center boundaries.

Developing and regenerating organizational stability anchors

Stability anchors can be defined as factors that maintain at least a minimum of stability in organizational change. These anchors facilitate comparatively stable patterns of mutual expectations between organizations on the one hand and their members and external stakeholders on the other hand. Moreover, stability anchors may support intra-organizational social integration, especially trust relations in permanent reorganization. Finally, stability anchors enable organizations to maintain basic structures, procedures and routines that are vital for organizational functioning in permanent reorganizations processes. In respect to the intra-organizational level social trust, social recognition, and reciprocity are fundamental stability anchors.

In our case studies, professional identities turned out to be a core stability anchor in reorganization processes. This can be illustrated by the example of the social services provider. In this case, social workers objected to the centralization of different, formerly decentralized houses for clients criticizing this as hospitalization of their clients. The centralization concept contradicted to their professional understanding of social work. Therefore, they insisted to maintain their self-regulated work autonomy as a prerequisite of a social work sensitive to clients' demands and need. Their resistance to reorganization partially decreased when their work autonomy was maintained and clients approved of their new surroundings.

Mindful organizing has to take account of stability anchors vital to organizational sustainability, e.g. by organizing dialogue processes and negotiations between management and workers on professional standards. This may include a potential adaptation of stability anchors to altered circumstances in reorganization processes.

4. Conclusions

The concept of organizational mindfulness can be extended to organizations different from HROs. Moreover, it can be applied to permanent organizational change. In the perspective of social sustainability at organizational level, organizational mindfulness can contribute to the development and regeneration of organizations' social-resources base, thereby facilitating organizational innovativeness. OM enables organizational reflexivity of permanent change processes regarding unintended and unexpected side-effects detrimental to organizations' social-resources base and in respect to innovation potentials. The establishment of dialogue, organizational routines sensitive to organizations social-resources base, and core processes of mindful organizing provide a basis for reflective organizational learning towards organizational mindfulness.

However, our case-study results also indicate that ‘mindful change’ and a related mindful infrastructure are not sufficient to promote social sustainability of organizations. It also takes corresponding actors’ attitudes that are sensitive to mindful organizing. Otherwise, available structures, routines and procedures of OM are not utilized (effectively). A lack of such attitudes can be attributed to the ‘long shadows of change history’ at organizational level. Our case studies showed that negative previous experience with organizational change, as disrupted change participation, fostered detached attitudes towards mindful change. The interplay between actors’ attitudes and mindful infrastructures provides a basis for further research on mindful change.

Furthermore, our case studies indicated that OM is facilitated in firms that can draw on an organizational storage of dialogue-related experience and knowledge. In this respect, social institutions in the workplace significantly matter. In organizations with well-established works councils, dialogue-oriented mindful infrastructures are more common and socially acknowledged by intra-organizational actors.

Building up a mindful infrastructure turned out as a challenge in organizations where organizational routines were rejected as sources of inertia by top management. At organizational level, dialogue can be a contested terrain. Establishing dialogue remains a fragile project, if top managers primarily conceive of spaces of dialogue as a threat to their power and authority.

Social trust can be a result of mindful organizing. However, social trust is also a requirement for building up mindful infrastructures of organizational change. The probability to promote organizational mindfulness is very low in organizations with a long-standing and deeply rooted culture of mutual mistrust between management and employees or even within the workforce. Therefore, it has to be further examined, under which specific conditions the establishment of organizational mindfulness can flourish. In this regard, the influence of social institutions or different institutional settings organizations are embedded in requires further analysis.

Permanent reorganization confronts mindful organizations with the problem to maintain mindful organizational awareness. This also requires the availability of resources for mindful organizing. This problem can be especially vital for organizations that operating in socio-economic contexts that exert strong and often continuous economic pressure, e.g. in public services or in health and care services. Under such restrictive conditions, resources for mindful organizing, e.g. time for dialogue and participation, are threatened. Hence, opportunity structures for political mindfulness at societal level may facilitate organizational mindfulness.

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Mindful Dialogue is the Key

Miriam Behrens & Peter Bleses

Guido Becke already explained that changes in organizations cause uncertainty and fear for the employees and the middle management regarding their future career. This uncertainty can have negative effects on the capability for changes in organization. Often, employees are not prepared to expose themselves to an uncertain future. This is particularly the case where building trust is difficult due to negative past experiences.

A lack of readiness to change on part of the staff can be a major problem for organizations. This is especially the case where organizations are forced to adapt to unavoidable external requirements, which in turn leads to internal change processes.

Consequently, organizations have to focus on how to support the readiness to change of the employees (and the middle management)! They have to deal with the permanent uncertainty in a supporting way. This requires that organizations learn how to handle these uncertainties within an ongoing process.

The main question is therefore:

How can an organization keep and foster the readiness to change?

Our answer is:

Organizations have to change mindfully – and within this process the mindful dialogue is the key!

This answer is based on our empirical findings: These findings illustrate that mindful dialogue is essential for the organizations ability to change. The mindful dialogue is important for both, the decision-makers and those who cannot co-decide. The dialogue allows the mutual perception of the expertise and views of all engaged organizational groups. The influencing factors for decisions will become more visible. Hence, uncertainty and fear can be reduced.

The mindful dialogue should become the core concept of the communication systems in organizations. Without using the mindful dialogue the concept of organizational mindfulness would be unsuccessful (this is what Guido Becke clearly presented).

We will now discuss the following questions:

- First: What is the relevance of the mindful dialogue within a mindful organizational change?
- Second: What are the requirements and how should the dialogue be set up to foster mindfulness and trust in organizations?
- Third: How can the mindful dialogue be realized within communication processes in organizations?
- And finally: Where are the limits to mindful dialogue within restructuring processes in organizations?

1. The relevance of the dialogue for mindful organizational change

Dialogue is a core concept within the “action research”. In this context the term “dialogue” requires the following standards:

First, the “action research” uses the dialogue as a core concept within research and development projects to characterise the mutual learning regarding research and practise. Using this concept the action research differs from the mainstream social research. The mainstream social research aims to create distance from the practise in order to ensure the analytical approach. The mainstream social research gives advice on the basis of these analytical results without considering the knowledge of the organizational groups.

On the other hand, the action research aims to experience the analytical processes and the set up processes in organizations and considers the employees as equal partners. On this basis relevant knowledge will be exchanged and developed in cooperation.

Second, the dialogue is an approach to set up exchange relations in organizations. Here, the dialogue is used as a method in groups to mutually explain their expectations, to analyse and solve problems in cooperation and to create the social processes.

The concept of a “mindful” dialogue within the concept of “Organizational mindfulness” should ensure that the different perspectives and their beneficial effects will be considered for the organizational change. The dialogue is the central focus of a mindful process of organization development. It leads to a self-reflection process of the organization and to ongoing communication processes. This in turn means that the organization is continuously informed about its possibilities and obstacles to development, considering the consequences and the effects on the different groups in the organization.

The expectations of actors and actor groups in organizations (involving employees, management, employees representatives) regarding organizational change processes differ widely. The involved groups also experience the processes in a different way. This is related to the following factors:

- previous experiences with change processes,
- the extend to which the person or group was involved in theses processes,
- the position and
- how the person or group was affected by these change processes.

A single view on change processes is unlikely, as involved groups can

- consider themselves either as loser or winner and
- being involved in the process or feeling helpless.

With the mindful dialogue this perspective diversity in change processes should be visualized. Furthermore, the change processes could benefit from the different views. This is where the concept of mindful organizational change is focusing on.

Moreover, exchanging views means knowledge gain in the field of opportunities and risks regarding changes. This might lead to realize an idea or a need for change that has never been considered before, as the decision-makers did not have the relevant information. Espe-

cially with respect to specialised activities, personal services or activities in larger organizations proper decisions involving the specialised employees are required. Here, we often find knowledge and experiences which have grown over years and which are still under utilised in the innovation projects of organizations. To realize and use the perspectives and the know-how of all involved groups we need an exchange. In our opinion the mindful dialogue “at eye-level” should be the basis. It is important to discuss on an equal footing to initiate processes of both, individual and collective learning in organizations.

In summary: The dialogue fosters trust, as those who are not continuously involved in the decision processes know, that they keep being informed and that their views will be considered. This will impact the readiness to change in organizations positively in such a way that it can contribute to

- supporting self-analysis and self-reflection of organizations
- realizing unintended consequences of (planned) changes – such as loss of confidence – early enough,
- ensuring confidence and
- make unutilised opportunities for development visible.

The core concept “Organizational mindfulness” will therefore contribute to an increase of innovation potentials of organizations.

2. Conditions and requirements for the mindful dialogue in organizations

However, realizing the mindful dialogue in organization is not that simple. It requires certain basic attitudes of all participating organizational groups. The management for example has to enable the direct and indirect participation of employees. That means, that the managers are no longer making decisions on their own - but rather engaging the employees and the middle management in the decision making process (involving negotiation processes, interdisciplinary communication processes, participation procedures and new decentralised forms of decision making). This, of course, implies, that the management realizes how important it is to involve all employees in these processes. The participatory procedures must become an integral part within organizational change processes.

A further requirement for the (success of the) mindful dialogue is to start the dialogue when changes are planned. It is crucial not to initiate a discussion on changes when the decision making process is already complete.

This in turn means, that the information about the organizational development and management decisions is available to all participating organizational groups. Such a transparency in decision-making is quite demanding for both, management and employees as planning changes can already cause uncertainty and fear. Our empirical findings show, that it is helpful to set up reliability in the process before the decision-making process is completed. Rules and procedures regarding change processes should be established and communicated to the participating groups in order to provide certainty.

On the other hand, the management has to avoid actions, which cause negative impacts on the participation of employees. Such actions are:

- To withhold information about change plans, because this may result in emerging rumours which in turn cause further uncertainty and fear, or
- to start the dialogue too late or
- to break off the dialogue or
- to initiate the dialogue without taking the results seriously.

What is required on part of the employees, the employees representatives and the middle management? First it is important that they are prepared for participation. Often, negative past experiences need to be overcome. Therefore, a certain readiness to engage in a dialogue and a great deal of trust are needed in advance. Furthermore, the involved groups are responsible to gather the necessary information. Being informed is not only a right, but also an obligation.

We have analysed the situation in organizations and we often found that there is a lack in gathering information, although it is available for all employees. There are many reasons (involving negative past experiences) which are difficult to realize at first. Often, even the participants themselves are not aware of the reasons. Here, it is important to find out what the problem is. Otherwise it is not possible to foster the readiness to participation.

Another significant factor when realizing the mindful dialogue is to engage the employees representatives and the middle management. First, they can act as a mediator within the dialogue and serve as a role model where they are engaged. Second, they can insist on following the rules and they can ensure the engagement of all involved groups. This requires that the employees representatives and the middle management agree to new decision-making structures without having a prominent position in the organization for the benefit of a direct participation of the employees. This is very important - as these organizational groups are naturally more involved in decision-making structures and are therefore often held responsible for failures by the employees.

3. Realizing the Mindful Dialogue in organizations

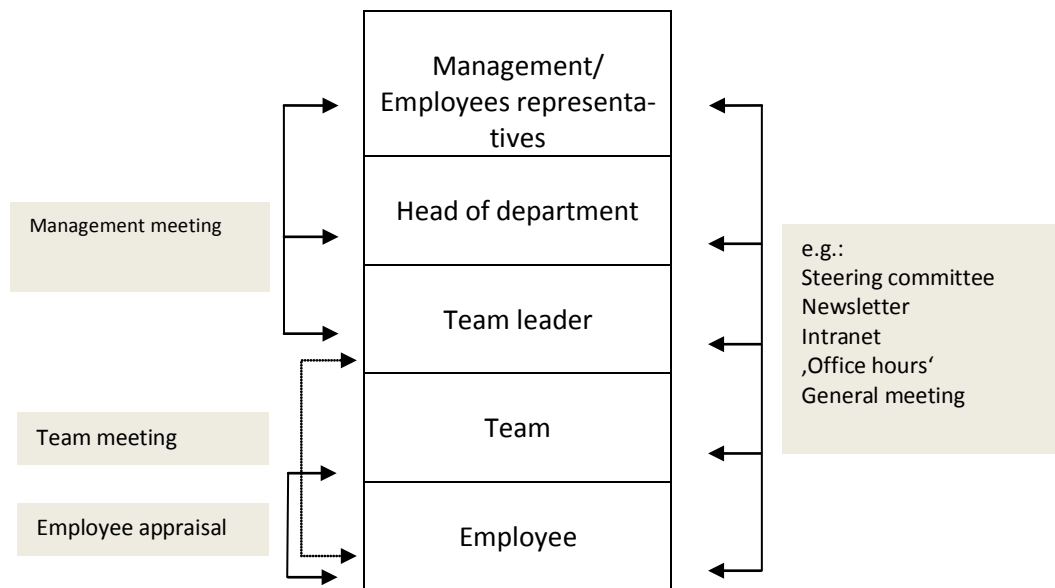
The planning, implementation and monitoring of the mindful dialogue should be realized by a steering committee in which all organizational groups are involved. Such a steering committee is a basic requirement and an essential tool for designing the mindful dialogue. Ideally, this committee consists of managers at all levels, representatives of all groups and (if existing) employees representatives. In addition all experts in the field of organizational management should be involved occasionally.

All members of the steering committee consider issues on an equal footing. The steering committee must be authorized to take decisions. The steering committee itself is a central tool for mindful dialogue that is visible to the public. The issues will be discussed on a meta-level. In this context it is very important, that the discussions and results are made visible to all employees in the form of the minutes.

A basic requirement to the dialogue is that the dialogue is firmly established in the communication systems of organizations. There are different communication tools that mutually influence each other, build on one another, or have positive effects only in combination. A systematic analysis of the (mindful) dialogue means to coordinate the different tools in a system

of a multi-level communication. Thus, it can be avoided to present conflicting information and hence to increase uncertainty and fear in processes of change.

Multi-level communication in organizations (example)



The co-ordination of different communication tools is useful where different kinds of information are presented: there is for example the organization newsletter for all general information or on the other hand the team meeting for more confidential information. Moreover, different tools are useful for different occasions, different levels and different participants within communication process. For example, it might be a good choice to use the employee appraisals to set up an exchange (across hierarchies) between the management and the employees. The team meeting is suitable for non-hierarchical exchanges. Basically, it is important to evaluate which is the most reasonable tool to use when informing the employees. Also, the exchanges should be synchronised – otherwise the discussions can result in conflicting organizational communication and therefore cause a loss of confidence.

Key condition for increasing trust in organizations is to establish reliable communication structures. This means to determine

- a specific date where information is provided (at regular intervals; in addition on important occasions)
- who gives the information („sender“)
- who receives the information („recipient“) and
- that all involved groups are engaged.

Communication loops should be set up in such a way that the “sender” and the “recipient” regularly change their position. For example, in office hours and intranet panels employees could give feedback to the management. Decentralised discussions even offer the possibility to give the information to the management anonymized – either by minutes or through the representatives of the departments which are members of the steering committee.

Such feedback loops illustrate the effects of the presented information. Moreover, it is possible to define the need for change in the communication processes and the need for modification of tools. The management gets information about obstacles relating to change processes. On the other hand, feedback loops ensure that the concerns of the employees will be considered.

4. Limits to mindful dialogue

The conclusion is that the mindful dialogue can contribute to supporting the mindful organizational change. This will be done by accepting and using the different perspectives of all engaged groups and developing a culture of trust in organizations with the readiness to change processes. In our opinion there is no alternative to the mindful dialogue where change processes have to be realized regularly or where profound change processes are planned.

With the dialogue it is possible to co-ordinate the different perspectives in organizations. To start with it is important to realize the perspective diversity, expectations and interests and to recognize this diversity (- on both, the intellectual and the emotional level). These exchange relations "at eye level" involving partly conflicting expectations is a process of individual and collective learning.

Within our experiences with the implementation of the mindful dialogue we also realized the limits. Establishing the dialogue in organizations where change processes are initiated regularly can be a great challenge. Hidden obstacles partly affect the establishment and positive effects of the dialogue. Particularly in the beginning patience is needed. At first, the dialogue is a method to reveal problems. This analysis of the past can lead to the emergence of hidden and unsolved conflicts and might even result in refusal. It can be a slow process to use the analysis of the present situation for finding solutions. The dialog cannot be the band-aid solution in cases where building trust is exacerbated by past negative experiences. Dealing with these problems is a "long-distance run" and requires patience and sustained efforts.

The Need of Trust and Time for Permanent Reorganisation

Theoretical and empirical considerations for a socially sustainable perspective and the role of intermediates in change processes in organisations

Dr. Sylke Meyerhuber

For the international conference about “Mindful Change in Times of Permanent Reorganisation” in October 2012 some findings adapted from a larger article (see Springer publication in 2013) have been extracted under the perspective of how trust and change are interwoven, how under a socially sustainable perspective trust should and could be supported – like through mindfully shaped processes, for instance by means of participation and dialogue – and what the conclusions have in store for executives in organisations in particular. Through this, it will become evident why the aspect of time has to be considered for mindful change.

The following pages include these considerations, supported by main ideas from their theoretical background. A fragment of empiric qualitative interview material and its interpretation with respect to trust and change for the perspective of middle managers is introduced as well.

A short summary of the following pages: Part I – A psychological perspective on change processes in organisations is outlined. Based on health considerations, social respect and dialogue are discussed as means of mindful change. Then, aspects of Niklas Luhmann’s trust approach are introduced, including his differentiation between personal trust and system trust. The next steps reflect on aspects of time for trust related issues, referring to the distinction of assets and events, and how trust is delimited from means of control. The last point discusses the timeliness of Luhmann’s findings and indicates in agreement with Rosa that trust must be seen as a ‘selective social erosion inhibitor’ especially in the modernity. Conclusions about mindfulness in times of change as a way to support social sustainability as well as conclusions for middle managers are outlined. Part II – A fragment of empirical material from an intermediates perspective in a change process is presented and interpreted with respect to its conclusions for trust, time, mindfulness and change.

Part I: Theoretical reflections –the necessity and function of trust in times of change A psychological perspective and change as a stress factor for the psyche

The *structure people work in* has a strong impact on how they think, feel, and process their experiences. *Objective conditions and subjective experiences are always closely interwoven* (cf. Meyerhuber 2009). Furthermore, I as a psychologist understand human beings not only as rational beings; since unconscious reactions and personal specifics of the psyche always constitute parts of what people bring into their interactions in everyday life at work, as well.

People identify themselves with their work at best. Changing attributions, routines and cooperation structures will *therefore* always trigger *side-effects of unintended impacts on the psyche*. In addition to different personalities – some might cope with changes more easily than others. As a psychological rule one can state: *Change can cause stress due to adaptation necessities*, even if not consciously perceived.

Also, the way how modern work itself is organised creates a specific dynamism of reification and objectification, which does not remain external to people. Individualisation and delimited working conditions put specific demands on psychological self management. These conditions also cause contradictions within the individuals – antagonistic parts of the socialisation process become part of the human psyche. The results can lead to tensions in the psyche, as well as between the individuals and their working environment. Organisational changes are bound to heighten the amount of antagonistic elements inside the employee's psyche.

'Mindful reorganisation' can be consequently accentuated from a psychological point of view as the question of how organisational changes can take social and psychological needs into account, in order to achieve a (better) balance of economic and social needs. This question becomes particularly crucial in the light of work-related health records in recent years.

Social respect and dialogue as means of mindful change

The rising figures of health problems in organisations can be understood as a sign of growing pressure. Increasing vulnerability to diseases as well as growth of psychological issues are not just an economic problem but mirror severe social problems.

The WHO-Ottawa-Charta 1986 (cf. Ulrich 2008) as well as the International Labour-Organisation (ILO) in its 'Decent Work Agenda' 1999 (cf. Senghaas-Knobloch 2010) both express human well-being at the workplace as imperative. These programs address the political of states with regard to the legislative regulation of labour. But I think, their imperatives can be applied on the meso- and micro-level of an organisation as well: They *can be read as well as guidelines* concerning a person's overall sense of physical, emotional and social well-being at the workplace (WHO) and as an outlining of organisation's responsibilities, regarding human rights, social protection and social dialogue (ILO) as integral parts.

A 'dwindling of respect' towards employees and their human rights as part of an accelerating dynamism in organisations can be observed. Social dialogue, social protection and acknowledgement *are increasingly in danger of being forgotten under the delimited and primarily economic focus in organisational life.* 'Mindful' change therefore not only addresses change on a structural level but includes considerations of *psycho-social impacts and effects in social interactions.*

What does this mean? According to recent studies (cf. Badura, Ducki, Schröder, Klose & Macco 2011; Klemens, Wieland & Krajewski 2004) *middle management holds the most important key to the well-being of subordinates*, acting at best as a 'failsafe' guarantee and as an important *protective factor*, if committed to respectful social dialogue and social protection. On the other hand, an incriminating social climate and a non-supportive behaviour on the part of superiors multiplies the risk of exhaustive depression and similar health relevant issues (cf. Klemens, et al. 2004).

Action research demonstrates that good communication is the key to real development of the working environment (Gustavsen 1996, 19). Social support can be identified as a *confirmation of communication, experienced as satisfying and helpful*, carried out through an interested and a cooperative attitude. Superiors have to be perceived and accepted as trustworthy. Otherwise, their behaviour leads to the 'drop that tips the scale' or 'breaks the camels back'. That becomes particularly important when one has to deal carefully with boundaries instead of achievements, like when health is queried.

Through these considerations social respect and dialogue can be understood as means of mindful change on the personnel level as well as on the structural level in order to support the goal of a socially sustainable working environment.

Niklas Luhmann's approach of trust

If trustworthy relationships, built by supportive communication in dependent (hierarchical) relationships, are understood as a very important cornerstone for the health of most people as well as for the success of the organisation, then trust (its mechanisms and values) becomes an important issue and has to be looked at more closely.

Different theories on trust in organisations have been developed. In my analysis I am mainly concerned with an understanding of trust as developed by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. Set in 1968, it provides the most elaborated theory of trust I know, and it usefully incorporates sociological as well as psychological considerations.

According to Luhmann (1989, 23), trust “reduces the problem of complexity by risking confidence in another”. *It is always a risky preparatory effort and can therefore be disappointed as well.* Trust is (ibid., 5) a connecting principle of the psyche and the social; it provides a combining quality in interaction and in processing. Trust as a way of *reducing social complexity in order to remain capable of acting* is a necessary answer of human beings to an otherwise too complex environment.

Trust is not something blindly given without proof, for instance in comparison with hope. Luhmann says: “Trust reflects contingency, hope eliminates contingency (ibid., 25). Although trust can be given inconsiderately, carelessly or routinely (ibid.), normally specific rules regulate a hedging of trust. Usually it is not unreasonably given and it is also tested.

Luhmann adds to the discussion furthermore a quite useful differentiation between trust in persons and trust in systems. *Personal trust* needs a direct partner (ibid., 40ff). It develops by face-to-face communication, relies on the principle of small steps and is based on the human need for orientation through persons as well as ‘socially relevant roles’. At the workplace, it is necessary to feel trust in the people one works with, and especially towards immediate superiors: Personal trust is what gives employees a secure social footing.

According to Luhmann trust builds on experiences and on communication, gained and confirmed in small steps. This includes a *need for deceleration* by social processes – by personal trust routines and a thereby derived system trust – which is developed up over time and cannot be rushed.

Luhmann (ibid., 50ff) distinguishes between personal trust and trust in systems, as an organisation as a whole: *System trust* is related to the institution, to routines and generalised perception of an outlasting stability. It is developed as a much more generalised kind of trust than personal trust, secured by symbolic selection codes and through media of communication. Small steps of information and control are relinquished. Instead there are system immanent expectation structures at work which enable an assumed genuine truth as well as communication in case of an emergency to take place.

Authorities function, to Luhmann, as representatives of the system; they can be understood as an intermediary between personal- and system trust. So, to Luhmann there is a most *distinct difference* between trust in people and trust in systems. Also, both of them are closely

interlinked: system trust builds on personal trust and is, if in question, rooted back and questioned on the personal level in the hierarchy.

Therefore, when system trust becomes doubtful, organisational members in leadership positions become a target of these doubts. Even if not all the answers are provided, a respectful and understanding acknowledgement of such questions will prove valuable for the protection and the growth of trust (on both levels).

Through this I conclude that from a social perspective ‘mindful reorganisation’ needs to include ways to support a trustworthy climate, which must be nurtured on the level of personal trust in order to stabilise system trust by its representatives. Therefore I would like to argue that it *matters above all due to the fact that both top management as well as middle management are aware of such effects, and that they accept and embrace their specific responsibilities* in this field of organisational practices.

The imperative of time for trust – assets and events¹

Part of the ongoing reorganisation processes is an accelerating moment; one of the aspects of modernity is an increasingly fast and repetitively change-dynamism. Outcomes often cannot be predicted; and undesired side-effects of a measure already taken cannot always be foreseen: For employees this mixture often turns out to be stressful. Therefore, unintended counter-effects could result – be it structural, interactional, or personal.

One may suggest that under the perspective of time this modern dynamism moves against everything trust needs, according to Luhmann’s findings. Accelerated processes might seem practical and rational in the light of economic reasoning or for technical concerns, but must be balanced mindfully with respect to social dimensions. *Social acceleration* does support, allow me to theorise, neither mindful change nor trust.

Luhmann thinks about time related aspects with *concern to the preservation of assets of action systems*: He understands assets in terms of relations between system and environment, defined through the conditions of their substitutability (ibid., 2). An organisation may be seen as such a system. Substitutable conditions are, for instance, to replace trust by means of control.

The author (ibid., 4) argues that *trust is generally concerned with a social relationship, based on a specific legitimacy*. He describes its regularities as follows: “Those who give trust anticipate the future. With that a problematic relationship to time becomes evident. They *act as if they were sure* of the future.” There is a durational aspect of time involved, fundamental with respect to trust:

“Either something can be identified as an *event/operation*, which happens in a specific moment. Or something can be identified as an *asset/stock*, which continues to be, independent of the change of time. Assets can be identified as presently. Both perspectives are negating each other, and thereby illuminate each other complementary” (ibid., 10).

In short: *Trust is an asset. It can only be constituted and secured in the present* (ibid.). Trust is not an overcoming of time – instead *it is based on the creation of a present as an ongoing*

¹ Luhmann 1968 names this differentiation in German „Bestände und Ereignisse“.

continuum. Therefore, while events change, the continuum of assets in which events can happen evades the pressure of insecure futures by strengthening the ongoing present.

These thoughts have severe implications for the goal of socially sustainable interactions, supported by mindful measures in a re-organisation process: *If trust is only strengthened and secured on the ongoing continuum of the present, trust building interactions, communication, examples of proof, etc. become crucial*. Any conception that trust already has been built and can therefore be neglected later must be put aside. Instead, a careful reflection of involved executives on *nurturing trust related issues* should be in its place.

This insight is valuable for ‘mindful change processes’ since not only system environment tends to be accelerated by globalised dynamics, but people as well. *Social acceleration seems to increase within the dynamic of the system environment*. Through this, people give less consideration to the effects of social interactions and act less mindfully as a result. The more a person has to do, the less time to work on good communication and regular relations is left to invest. Therefore, *awareness of the fact that social processes need time* – which cannot be shorted or accelerated by choice, as far as social psychology can predict – *may justify more mindful interactions*.

The complementary function of trust and control in complex systems

To Luhmann (1989, 13), all *planning needs to be anchored in the present*. We need to feel, as far as knowledge and procedures go, that planning does make sense – content-wise and partner-wise. Particular a growing complexity makes it necessary, as Luhmann sees it (ibid.), to *postpone decisions and gratifications in order to gain space and time*, to stay flexible and to let time unfold itself, and let developments [that means: futures] become clearer before actually acting. In case of increasing complexity a need of confirmation, based on the present, becomes more important. Trust building encounters provide a carrying link, bridging the uncertainty until events unfold themselves.

Trust has a *function to strengthen the present in its potential to contain complexity by supporting assets against events*. But this should not be confused with an instrumental control of results, quoting Luhmann (ibid., 16): “Where control is sure, trust is null and void. Trust is *only needed* with respect to a future of more or less undetermined remaining complexity.”

Luhmann also implies that ‘*control of events*’ and ‘*trust*’ are not only functional equivalents. In a complex environment *he advises to strengthen and use both mechanisms complementarily*. He predicted (ibid., 17) that *with a growing technical complexity* in organisations especially trust and solidarity within smaller groups – such as a team, project group or direct relevant others – would have to increase in accordance to growing and more complicated environments. Thus, *executives may be well advised on investing time and attendance in favour of a well balanced mixture of both these ways of leadership*.

Interesting as it is, one might wonder if Luhmann’s approach is still timely. This will be discussed in the last theoretical consideration, supported by findings of the modern Sociologist Hartmut Rosa.

Time, assets and events – trust as a “selective social erosion inhibitor”

Rosa (2005) links the trust-and-time-debate with actual challenges of the modernity and supports the following thesis: *The strengthening of the asset of trust enables and supports the event of change in modernity.*

Rosa analyses modern *phenomena and functions of acceleration and inertia*. He concludes: “... stability and guarantee of assets [like trust, SM] functioning as *fixed points* and as a *pre-requisite for change* within a culture [like organisational culture, SM].” Permanence and validity are to him important assets in the very support of change processes. Rosa describes this as a *complementary quality*, as two sides of the same coin (ibid., 153): “*Selective social deceleration* in order to *prevent erosion of asset-securing institutions* [like trust, SM] could become cultural as well as structural a functional necessity of modern acceleration society” (ibid., 152).

Trust and its *decelerating motions* can furthermore be understood as an important *institution* within the culture of modern organisations. Provided functioning, they act as a “*selective social erosion inhibitor*” and are a structural necessity, according to Rosa (ibid.). Trust-related effects secure necessary *social fix points*.

To Rosa, such values have to be systematically “excluded from change” and can only thereby “provide reassurance of expectations, predictability, and stability of planning” (ibid., 150) in the modernity. He points out that *only* the modern history of “acceleration became a success story based on and modelled by institutional standstill and guarantee of assets as means of a containing framework” (ibid.). Therefore, particularly the *containing function* of trust as a social asset should not be underestimated.

In addition Rosa explains on the behalf of individuals: “Where time patterns are not in agreement, severe *ramifications for the individuals* become inevitable” (ibid., 66). He argues that especially with regard to social processes one has to acknowledge *natural borders of acceleration* (ibid. 139), like physical and psychological verges. For a mindful and socially sustainable organisation respectful observations of such limits are crucial.

Therefore, Rosa argues in favour of *institutionally intended staging and protected areas* that provide *slower experiences of time* (ibid., 148) for organisational members. For the protection of employees as well as their own health executives are strongly advised to stage such institutional communication, which allow them to slow down processes through their intrinsic logic and timeframes, and support the building and securing of trust.

Conclusion of theoretical reflections

Social deceleration through the motions of trust and a trustworthy social climate are imperative not only for people in organisations, but also for the *ongoing* and the *development* of an organisation. Through understanding trust related motions of communication and trustworthy interactions not as time consuming disturbances but as a necessary basis for changes within organisations – strengthening assets in order to insure events – *a prudent balance of social and economic questions* can be considered by managers on all levels. Trust has been highlighted as a most important “selective social erosion inhibitor” in times of change.

Executives who understand this collaboration and who act accordingly will have a better chance of maintaining their function as representatives of the system as well as being a good partner to their employees on the interpersonal level. Through a mindful consideration of trust related issues they may gain a better footing for themselves and secure social orienta-

tion for others, in order to be able to contain and enable processes of organisational change in a socially sustainable manner.

Part II: Subjective experiences of change – how can trust be secured in practice?

While theory provides ideal typical orientation, the personal and micro political everyday life of an organisation is much more multi-layered. The second part of my presentation leaves some impressions of how organisational middle managers may actually feel in an ongoing change process and how they act in their role.

Interviews in qualitative research are helpful to encourage research partners in organisations to talk about their experiences, to express thoughts and feelings of being a subject as well as an object of organisational change. Examples and metaphors from a subjective perspective provide fruitful insights into everyday life practice of organisations.

Fragment and interpretation of an empirical example

As part of the 8-inno project, three middle managers had a workshop together with the research team in order to reflect on their roles and feelings within the change process their organisation is undergoing. They were asked by the research team to describe their roles and feelings in these times of change with the help of a metaphor, a picture. There is a transcription of this interview available, which allows a closer look. The documented *subjective symbolisation and visualisation of their own experiences* are the focal point of the following analysis, with respect to trust related considerations. For this paper, I selected – under the perspective of trust and change – one small exemplary part from a lengthy passage of metaphorical reflections.

The organisation the interviewed intermediates work for is a non-profit organisation involved in the social service sector, organised in different divisions, according to specific clientele. The organisation has a new managing director who is trying to make the organisation economically more efficient, which involves reforms in different areas, like personnel, structure, and setting of priorities regarding contents of work.

Of the three middle managers present at the table one of them is the head of a department² and superior of the two others. The other two, a woman and a man, are division managers³ (responsible for houses in which clients live and are cared for). Recently these intermediates started to manage not only one but more houses each, so that the complexity of their tasks, and how long they can actually be with their teams, has changed already. Additionally, they got tasks in the reorganisation process as well as merging previously single work units.

The following metaphor was described by the female middle manager.

The metaphor: “Hercules with five arms”

The metaphor comes from the youngest intermediate, a vigorous and dedicated middle manager. She describes how she sees herself in the change process:

² In German his role / function is named „Bereichsleitung“.

³ In German their role / function is called „Einrichtungsleitung“.

“I have a picture of myself now like Hercules with five arms or so. Somehow he also has such a protective shield in all directions, but also holes in it, in order to carry people in there“

She explains this picture of being a Hercules who has to cope with the challenges like relocating different teams into one building. This she describes as moving into a construction site (bathroom not ready, etc.), before she continues:

“Actually, it's going forward now, therefore I quickly pick someone up onto my arms, so that he also comes along. And then there are some services [in the duty roster] missing, well, one can do them, too. This is the feeling I have, how I felt in the change process.”

The Hercules arms she then describes more closely as a bulwark “downward”, “in order to ward off” things from the people under her protection. She also says that the broad spectrum of professional duties, for herself as well as within her teams, would need protection and five arms at least to be handled properly. In addition, she describes how she conducts in her role as a middle manager with respect to her employees in the change process:

“In any case, I feel to have a pioneering role, and also an aura of optimism ... Somehow we can do it together, always trying to cope as a team, together. Always saying, ‘we are one and have to accomplish that together’, putting everybody on an equal footing. That has been valuable in the change process ... The accelerating change process led to a lot of insecurity within the body of employees because of causality of house moving, new rota, all of this ... created a lot of pressure, the colleagues had a considerable need for dialogue ... to clarify again and again ‘what is now’ and ‘how will it be’ and ‘tell once again’ and ‘how will it be in one year from now’ ... To realise and address such fears over and over.”

Interpretation with respect to trust and change

The manager in this example pictures herself as a Hercules: A **mythical hero** from old Greek who was given twelve superhuman tasks by his king in order to prove his worthiness to Godhood. In analogy, one can *imagine what her big managing tasks may be* – organising her different teams into one unit in a new building, moving in while it is still a construction site, “picking people up” and taking them along and acknowledging their insecurities by answering questions over and over again, as well as filling in for a shift in a team by herself, and overall protecting her employees as part of her leadership role.

As Hercules, she pictures herself with five arms: She obviously needs many arms to perform all the things she describes to be doing: to carry, to protect, to ward off, and to do shifts, all at the same time. With that she is suggesting a heavy workload. But, **why five arms?** This middle manager’s *five foci of attention and initiative* might be: The top management resp. the new CEO, the department manager as her superior, and her three teams (from three former houses) which only recently moved together in one new building. She works for all of them, simultaneously and without letting one down. The picture of “five arms” may indicate that each of these five partners or action fields have to be acknowledged or ploughed. Coordinating five parallel arms – understood as branches of her role – can be imagined as sometimes not so easy. Nevertheless, the question which one is paramount in times will not occur with five arms – each seems equally important and gets a hand.

Doing her job as a middle manager in a change process with all her might, with everything in her power, bringing herself in as a feeling, listening, riveting, acknowledging and intuitive person, that might be as well how she sees herself. Therefore, being involved with *all five senses* of a human could be symbolised as well.

As a general first impression, the picture the middle manager draws of herself shows a very reliable and diligent person who can be trusted in doing everything in her power to get things done, at the same time being a good superior to her subordinates: She seems to be *acting as an agent of the change process as well as an agent of the employees, balancing between these two aspects of her occupation.*

The next consideration goes back to **who all her tasks come from**: While the mythical Hercules had a king to report to, this middle manager is accountable to her CEO, her department leader, her teams and clientele, and her own ambitions. Even if not expressed particularly, it seems that she not only receives tasks from above, maybe also warding some of them off, but expresses an own tendency of putting more on her plate than her expected share, like occasionally performing additional duties in a team. This aspect is to be examined further.

First, it may be of interest that the non-profit organisation she is working for is a diaconical institution. The commandment of love, the caring for others, could be related to a specific professional identity and attitude in this field of work. Being *respected for the burdens you take* could be part of the social expectations. What does this female middle manager feel she has to give?

Second, under the perspective of trust-building her *strong personal dedication* could also be understood as a way to give an impression of closeness to her teams and their tasks, needs, concerns, and burdens. Through this, the middle manager might be experienced by her employees as 'one of them' as well as a superior. Closing the hierarchical gap by sharing chores may favour employee's perception of her supportiveness and trustworthiness. On this basis, she might reach her subordinates more easily when doubts or fears occur. Informal interactions and shared duties can also be a source of information atmospherically as well as with respect to concrete issues. So, *from a managerial point of view*, besides a helpful attitude *these duties provide probably valuable insights and social contact* with her teams and might not be dismissed as just a lack of ability to delegate.

Besides, under the assumption that the new CEO of the organisation might steer insecurities as a bringer of 'accelerating changes' she mentions it might become even more important to let employees feel that their direct superior is close, understanding, and caring towards them. Three teams which before were working in separate houses and are now in one new building might not be spontaneously comfortable with the new situation and in dire need of reassurance. To say it with Luhmann: If system trust wavers personal trust should be strengthened by representatives of the system, particularly by the direct superior. In this light, the middle manager's strategy makes a specific kind of sense.

In one of Hercules's hands the middle manager describes to **carry a shield**. She explains to use it for *warding off things*, especially from above, in favour of her employees. What exactly she wards off remains vague in this passage. Like mentioned before, it could be regarding unfamiliar ideas, expectations or attitudes of the new CEO which might steer insecurities.

The Hercules's **shield has holes** because – she explains – through them subordinates can enter safety: she describes to "carry people in there" behind her shield. Shielding others, the weaker people, is an integral part if not the very reason of a hero's job. But, normally a hero's shield does not have holes. These holes make our hero vulnerable, she could get hurt

through them – I feel that she is not so much protecting herself but is thinking more about others and her tasks. This impression is supported by her symbolisation of “how she feels in the change process” – like using five arms instead of two on a regular basis, by doing shifts in the duty roster, and by describing herself as a pioneer in the change process who acts very patient and provides explanations “again and again”. In addition, one may muse on why she holds a shield but *no sword*. Does she feel to be a strictly defensive hero? While Hercules father was a God – Zeus – *one may wonder for this humane middle manager who is but just human* and thereby physically and emotionally not without limitations.

Besides a heroic and never ending involvement as a middle manager in the change process of the non-profit organisation struggling for survival, in this metaphor a *demanding as well as carrying and nurturing notion* toward her subordinates is expressed: She describes herself in **“a pioneering role” and surrounded by an “aura of optimism”**.

To be a **pioneer** indicates to be at the frontier; it is a zone of the unknown and of danger. In it some kind of fascination can be found. One does not become a pioneer by staying back; it is about daring to go and face the unknown, the unexpected, and to deal with it. A pioneer, I feel, is *a person who likes the challenge*. This might include a tendency to get bored if things are just the same for too long. Therefore, innovation and pioneering spirit go hand in hand. A pioneer may even allow for a sacrifice in order to extend a frontier but will also try to protect the ones under his or her might. The middle manager in our example seems to like her many different challenges. She does not complain and describes instead in her metaphor a constitution (five arms and an aura of optimism) which allows for meeting all the tasks involved.

In addition, the middle manager speaks of her **aura of optimism** in which everybody can feel safe: It seems to be something warm, a halo of inclusion. By “putting everybody on an equal footing” she levels off hierarchical differences, as proposed above. As well, in the name of “we will cope together, as a team” she seems to *strengthen solidarity* and the feeling that nobody is left alone. Through this, she creates a slogan, an exhortation to hold out. It also may bind her employees to follow the ongoing process; she describes “picking someone up onto her arms, so that he also comes along”. Those who do not walk will be walked, it seems. Overall the middle manager expresses her intention to lead her employees in the right direction [in terms of the change process], by protecting them as well as pushing them. She summarises the efficiency of her strategy: “That has been valuable in the change process”.

The value she indicates could be substantiated as a seemingly successful combination of trust-building measures and change-supporting measures. The *task of an intermediate of finding a balance between interpersonal and structure-related parts of her role* becomes here more evident.

Furthermore, the middle manager says: **“The accelerating change process led to a lot of insecurity within the body of employees ... it created a lot of pressure ... and fears.”** In *answering and acknowledging expressed insecurities, pressures and fears* she explains how she addresses and acknowledges these emotions by dialogue. In recurring communication she describes to “realise and address” insecurities of her staff. This seems to be quite a repetitive task. “Again and again” telling the employees “what is now and how will it be and tell once again and how will it be in one year from now” requires a great deal of attentiveness, understanding and patience. It seems that *particularly by this attentive and caring attitude* our middle manager proves her trustworthiness to her subordinates – she lends her ear to them without impatience “over and over”. This passage illustrates both the *repetitive motions of personal trust* as well as it *emphasises on the decelerating aspect* this kind of trust demands.

“Again and again ...” gives even by reading this passage a distinct impression of slowing down, of being in a loop, or in slow motion. For the middle manager, *social dialogue seems to be her main answer to the fears triggered particularly by an acceleration of the change process*, as she puts it.

Reflecting on this passage about her leadership with respect to trust it can be highlighted: *Social reassurance* – which can due to theory neither be dismissed nor accelerated – is provided repeatedly by the middle manager in our example. Employee’s reoccurring insecurities and fears in the “accelerating change process”, as she says, demand explicitly for *an answer which lets them trust in her* – as a *person* who understands them, as the representative of their part of the organisation *into* the hierarchy, as a representative of the system *toward* them, and thereby in the system *through* her. These four aspects are, it seems to me, to be balanced by the middle manager in this reorganisation process.

I also come to think that the female middle manager in our example is *sympathetic to the fears* of her employees. That would explain why she can be that patient and understanding in the first place. And it would explain the necessity for “downward protection” a little better. From what we know so far, there definitely are insecurities on the operative level, expressed as well as to be expected: The organisation is newly led by a CEO who might not yet be judgeable and is therefore not fully trusted to really know how to save the organisation. The financial situation is tight and might not to be expected to change, due to political decisions and attitudes in the social service sector. Through this, there is a rational need for *questioning to* and *reassurance from* well-informed representatives of the system, because fears are rooted in existential questions from employee’s perspective. This also explains the need for an “aura of optimism” from the middle manager – as a bulwark against a fear which, if spreading on a broader scale, could as well paralyse and endanger the whole endeavour.

Understanding the example on the background of trust theory, it can be concluded that her Herculean, perpetual, constant, attentive, patient and understanding qualities as a mindful superior seem to *gain her the trust of her employees*. In further parts of the interview, where the other two middle managers (her superior and her colleague) give feedback, this impression is confirmed, and it is indicated that her attentive strategy is perceived as quite effective. So, by *honouring the need for deceleration and by securing the asset of trust* she mindfully seems to enable her teams to accept and abide by the ongoing steps of the change process.

Conclusion of empirical reflections and outlook

It can be *summarised* from the metaphor that this persistent as well as understanding strategy of the female middle manager seems to *support the change process* as well as her employees’ *acceptance for the changes*. The *trust she gains on the personal level* may as well enhance trust on the system level.

Besides, it can be asked if the strategy her metaphor indicates comes at a certain *price for her self*; she seems to spend a lot of attendance and energy over and above, probably over a longer period of time. From a *socially sustainable* point of view a critical re-evaluation of *the actual work load of a middle manager under changing conditions* may be prudent, in order to secure long-term health as well as working efficiency: On the one hand, the example illustrates most profoundly that in perpetual re-organisation processes particularly a middle manager is in a *most important position as a change agent* by being close enough to employees, addressing their needs, and enabling them to come to terms with the process. As well, own ambitions to be a pioneer might be of help for this role. On the other hand, mindfulness to

the change process and to employees can correspond with an overuse of own resources. Therefore, *balancing these sides of the middle management role wisely may be imperative* under a long-term perspective of own role management.

The middle manager in the quoted and construed metaphor illustrates exemplarily what 'mindfulness in times of change' could mean in practice: Sensitivity in dealing with personnel's anxieties as well as providing for orientation makes changes possible on the social level. Such leadership builds on trust and cooperation, participation and social dialogue. I presume, such attitude supports as well a socially sustainable working environment, as theoretically outlined in part 1 of the text.

Further research of the psychological side of change processes should be interesting with respect to trust and its decelerating motions: As far as I see it, *intermediates will play an increasingly important mediating role in modern organisations*, socially as well as structurally.

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When the concept of mindfulness ‘travels’ to the realm of politics: A new look on the global care crisis as challenge for socially sustainable development

Eva Senghaas-Knobloch

Introduction

In the last twenty to thirty years individuals and organisations as well have been acting in a political-economic context shaped by broader policies, rules and power structures which are loosely covered by the term globalisation. At the same time, the issues of sustainable development in a world of limited resources have become part of the global agenda too. The question arises whether the concept of mindfulness is also enlightening and useful with regard to the *realm of politics* in the perspective of sustainable development in times of globalization.

In 1987 the UN-World Commission on Environment and Development, summarized its concept of sustainable development with the following words: “In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both, current and future, potential to meet human needs and aspirations.” (Brundlandt-Report, paragraph 15)⁴

Thus, the concept of sustainable development is based on human needs and aspirations. Evidently, the goal of sustainable development necessarily encompasses not only an ecological and economic dimension, but also a *social* dimension. Nevertheless the term *social* sustainability itself can be used in a normative and in an analytical way. The normative use refers to human dignity and human rights. The analytical use refers to the investigation of the relationship between nature and society and the totality of customs, institutions and power relations. To characterize any historic-specific relationship between nature and society, the social organisation of work is of utmost importance. The social organisation of work impacts on the way in which a society is held together, power and voice are distributed, production and reproduction are organised and needs are fulfilled. Therefore, *work* is a key concept to understand the challenges and tasks of sustainable development. Of particular interest is the gender aspect of work and correspondingly the gendered division of labour

My contribution intends to unfold the thesis that the goal of sustainable development requires ‘political mindfulness’ of its social pre-requisites in the field of vital care activities:

In the first part I outline the ongoing epochal changes in the social organisation of work and social policy in the context of globalisation. The second part is on the impact of those changes as an expression of *political mindlessness* about the societal function of care for human well-being and social cohesion. The third part discusses two political responses to overcome the neglect of the vital care activities on the basis of a new *political mindfulness* for sustainable social development: The new ILO-Convention 189 on *Decent Work for Domestic Workers* and the Recommendations of the EU-Social Platform for a *Caring Society* in Europe. I con-

⁴ Brundlandt-Report (= UN World Commission on Environment and Development A/42427): Our common future, Geneva 1987.

clude with some remarks about mindfulness in the political and organisational realm in connection with social sustainability.

I Political deregulation and global changes in the world of work

The currently dominant policies of economic globalization make reckless use of human labour. These policies rely on the ideology of the competitiveness of states and on the assumption of a global standard path of development. This is paralleled with a *de*-standardisation of employment and working conditions and with a global retrenchment of welfare institutions:

The policy of "*Financialisation*" (that is the deregulation of international capital transfers) has promoted short term speculative gains on capital return and respective investments and disinvestments in affected countries. Even after the crash of 2008 the international money transactions in 2011 amounted again to more than 80fold of the value for goods and services in the real economy transactions.

In the aftermath of a massive indebtedness crisis, the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have conditionalised their credits on a pre-scribed policy of:

- Privatisation of state-owned enterprises
- The introduction of market principles in the public sector
- Labour market liberalisation
- A deflationary monetary and fiscal policy
- A generalised free trade policy and the promotion of exports.

Similar policies are recently applied in the EU to remedy the bank crisis. These policies dramatically impact on income distribution, participation in formal employment, conditions of work and social protection in the countries concerned as well as on the gender relations in the world of work.

Contrary to the promises of trade liberalisation and deregulation of capital transfer the income gap between the richest and the poorest countries increased significantly according to the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation in 2004. Inequality has widened between and among countries during the last 40 years. And one observes a global growth of unprotected informal employment: Informal employment is defined as employment in unregistered enterprises and unregistered employment in formal enterprises.

Interestingly, the labour force participation of women *increased* during the recent period of globalization. Between 1980 and 2008 women's participation in the labour force increased from more than 50 percent to almost 52 per cent at the global level and the participation of men *decreased* from 82 per cent to almost 77.7 per cent. The *increase* of women employment is particularly high in Latin America and in Europe. In the global North it seems that the emancipative aspirations of women, who have been struggling for equality and equity, were incorporated by the new state policies of neo-liberal recommodification of labour and the obsession with international competition.

The new target set by the European Commission for 2020 is 75 percent participation of women in employment. This political target goes together with changed aims for work and gender policies: The traditional male bread winner model is replaced by an 'adult worker model' (Lewis, Fraser). To be more precise: In practice, this new model means a 'two-earner-model', in which many more women than men, are working part time and in other atypical forms of employment, thereby trying to balance their perceived care obligations with obligations linked to employment.

Certainly care has never been confined to the family, but might also be provided by relatives and neighbours and volunteers, or – in a monetized form by domestic workers, by public and charitable providers or even by organisations for profit. It is only in Scandinavian countries inside and outside of the European Union, where in different ways care needs are comparatively well supported by the provision of social services, which themselves offer good employment opportunities in the shrinking public sector. Globalization exerts pressure on all forms of these activities. And the prevailing gender hierarchy tends to devalue the care activities in all its forms and to make them nearly invisible. It is only when care activities are completely neglected, or abuse becomes known, that the public gets startled.

II Global care crisis as political mindlessness

In 2011, Polylog, a journal for intercultural philosophy, which is published in Vienna, dealt with an ongoing political debate in China. "Pay often a visit at home" is the Chinese slogan to revitalize, what there is called "xiao", the virtue of filial piety towards the increasing number of old aged parents.⁵ A supplement to the Chinese law of 2005, on the protection of old people, regulates that members of the family have to care for their parents in a material as well as in an immaterial sense. There exist orders in some communes, according to which only those public servants have a chance to be promoted, who are able to produce a certificate of good conduct in this respect, either by their parents or by the "public".

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this individualizing political attempt to cope with the grave social problems in ageing societies, in any case it indicates the irrefutability of care in any society, particularly in times of hyper-dynamic socio-economic change, which breaks traditional hierarchies and obligations. Care relations are founded in the existential dependence of human beings on each other. They are necessary in all phases of the life course and are deeply relational. Care activities and care attitudes respond to the requirements of the human condition. Because the very essence of care is the mere assisting and enabling of self-willed life processes, the *care-rationality* (Waerness) conflicts with an efficiency-driven time economy.

The politics of generalised employment obligation without the generalisation of care obligations ignores the vital necessity and particularity of care. The post-Fordist work requirements of flexibility in time and location are not compatible with the flexibility requirements of domestic care activities. The unquestioned hierarchy between these two spheres of activities demonstrates that the requirements of the economic sphere of employment have to be served first. From the perspective of business – as Joan Acker argues – the "ideal worker" is characterized by most possible availability and a non-diverted attention to the assigned tasks in the firm.

⁵ Weber, Ralph: Konfuzianische Selbstkultivierung als Philosophie und Politikum, in: Polylog, issue 26, 2011, pp. 19-42.

Under these conditions of *political mindlessness*, the marginalised domestic care responsibilities in advanced capitalist countries are partly shifted to female migrants, who seek such opportunities, because of the increased social inequality on world level and misery or missing chances in their home countries. Very often, these migrants, in turn, have problems to cope with their own care responsibilities in their home contexts. If at all, they can rely either on relatives or pay other people for their care services. This practice of *transnational care chains* is parallel to *global production chains*, which also draw mainly on cheap labour in the East and the South. Side by side with the *new international division of production* we observe a '*new international division of re-productive labour*'. (Parrenas)

According to statistics published 2011 by the Social Platform, in the EU 21,4 million people were employed in social and health services in 2009; 89 percent of these persons worked in only 15 Western countries of the EU and the rest of merely 11 percent worked in the 12 other member states of the EU. So there is a considerable amount of migration; the corresponding care drain from the Eastern member states is highly problematic for the care situation in these countries. At the same time, the informal working conditions for caring migrants also impact on and erode the legal conditions for work and social protection in the Western countries in general.

To meet the challenges and tasks of shaping adequate conditions for care activities, a new *political mindfulness* requires the acknowledgement of the central function of care for the cohesion of societies, as well as its human needs and its human rights character. These three ways of looking at care are complementary; they cannot substitute each other.

III Two political initiatives to strengthen mindfulness of care necessities

In the sphere of politics, we can recently observe a new awareness for care necessities on the international level. Two political initiatives are here of special interest: The adoption of the new Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers by the International Labour Organization in June 2011 and the Recommendations on Care of the Social Platform in the EU from June 2011. Both initiatives represent public concern about needs for care and about rights in relation to care.

The International Labour Organization (ILO), founded already in the aftermath of World War I, as an international organisation in which each member state in a unique way is represented by delegates from government, workers and employers, promotes its 'Agenda for Decent Work' in order to overcome the defects of the dominant globalization. This agenda is dealing with the promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue. The whole programme might be interpreted as a programme to promote socio-political mindfulness in businesses and societies with the aim to serve social sustainability.

Domestic workers are extremely often without legal entitlements which are enjoyed by other wage workers. Particularly as live-ins they risk abuse and violence. Forced child labour is very often tied to domestic work. The ILO estimates that 15, 5 million children are affected. The adoption of the epochal ILO-Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers now fills this gap of missing international labour law.

The purpose of the Convention 189 is the protection of all domestic workers, covering all persons, who are "engaged in or for a household" within an "employment relationship" (article 1a and b) on a basis of equal treatment with wage earners in general. Domestic work en-

compasses material (cleaning, cooking etc) and immaterial (nurturing) care activities for children, frail and the elderly (except professional nursing for which different legal protection is provided for).⁶ Member states shall take measures to “protect, promote and realize” the basic rights at work also for domestic workers: namely *freedom of association* and effective recognition of the *right to collective bargaining*, the *elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour* and the effective *abolition of child labour* and the *elimination of discrimination* with respect to employment and occupation and the protection against any kind of abuse as well (articles 3 and 5).

The celebrated success of this Convention is based on the recognition that domestic work has to be regarded as any other employment relationship with respect to the rights of workers. This recognition is a big step forward in terms of declared political mindfulness for the necessity of domestic care activities and the necessity of their decency in order to promote sustainable development. Yet, there are also some flaws:

There are no reliable statistics for the number of domestic workers, even in Europe. According to figures from Norbert Cyrus at a conference of *Justitia et Pax* in 2011, estimations calculate that on average only 1.6 per cent in Europe and 0.6 percent in Germany, of those persons, who are actually employed as child minders, cleaning personal or care givers for frail and elderly persons are registered. Other estimations are less pessimistic. Yet, the hidden figures are apparently huge.

Furthermore, in the developing countries and the newly admitted EU-States in Central and Eastern Europe, the ongoing migration of health workers must be alarming. It signifies an unbearable brain drain of care workers, which uncovers all development aid as paradox. The social inequality drives women from the South to earn money in the Northern countries and some rich Southern countries like Saudi Arabia and Arabic Emirates. At the same time the Northern countries are unprepared and unwilling to cope with the consequences of lacking care on the basis of their own sources. Therefore, a redistribution of care work is necessary not only between men and women, but “also along race, class and geographical lines” as the feminists of the WIDE-network in 2009 put it.⁷

The *second* initiative of the Social Platform is aware of these problems and develops a much broader approach in its *Recommendations* for the EU-decision makers and member states in 2011. It takes into account necessary unpaid care activities too. The Social Platform “is the alliance of representative European federations and networks of non-governmental organisations active in the social sector” and committed to “the advancement of the principles of quality, solidarity, non discrimination and the promotion and respect of fundamental rights for all within Europe and particularly the European Union” but supporting “the development of these values at the global level” too.⁸

Specific recommendations are outlined for:

1. Policies that respect the fundamental right of care users,
2. Informal care givers,

⁶ Webpage of the International Labour Organization http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189 (visited 1 Novembre 2012).

⁷ WIDE, Women in Development Europe (WIDE Europe): Report of the WIDE Annual Conference 2009, University of Basel, Switzerland, p. 3.

⁸ Social Platform: Statement of values and objectives, adopted by the General Assembly, 23 April 2004.

3. Quality care services and
4. Decent working conditions and quality employment in care.

The *Recommendations* of the Social Platform are based on the declared values of the EU as enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty provisions, in which the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is included. At the outset, the Recommendations underscore the human rights character of care: The “right to care and to be cared for is a fundamental part of our lives as everyone is a care giver or care receiver at some point and potentially at multiple stages throughout life.”⁹ Hence, it is evident, that the Recommendations encompass both, formal and informal, care. In both instances the aim is to improve and maintain a good quality of care by investing in “accessibility, affordability and availability of care services for all across Europe” (ibid.) and promote decent working conditions. The Platform’s mission is not only about making the care sector attractive as employment opportunity for the workforce but also about taking into account the users’ or care receivers’ view.

IV Social Sustainability and political Mindfulness

What do these two different initiatives on the international and regional level tell us about political mindfulness with regard to social sustainability?

The Recommendations of the Social Platform crystallize in a new guiding principle of a ‘*caring society*’ as a model for socially sustainable societies. A ‘*caring society*’ is a notion for political mindfulness of vitally necessary care activities. Implications for institutional reforms and organisational devices in that respect exist particularly in the policy fields of regulation on working time and public provision

Similar issues have been taken up by the feminists’ network WIDE. This network widens the scope of issues to more material issues of care. Issues of food availability resp. of food sovereignty are included. As also the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, convincingly argued, the human right to food is presently violated on a world wide scale. The lens of mindfulness and care can help sharpen firstly our view on the impact of the dominant globalization with its disastrous implications and secondly our concern about new perspectives of sustainable development.

Finally: What do these deliberations and findings on care as a core issue of social sustainability amount to?

They demonstrate that organisations pursue their goals and act in a political and socio-economic context with implicit priorities, which need to be made explicit, in order to overcome developments which are harmful for human beings and the societies they live in. Thus, mindfulness can be used as a concept to politically sensitize towards the consequences of unquestioned structures and power relations, which cannot be legitimized by overt public consent. It can be used to broaden the spatial horizon and to mind those impacts on distant communities, which are not congruent with declared values. Used in such a way, mindfulness is not any more a concept mainly addressing cognitions and cognitive schemes, but is also fostering the *human sense for appropriate or for just behaviour*. Hence, political mindful-

⁹ European Platform: Recommendations for care that respects the rights of individuals, guarantees access to services and promotes inclusion, Brussels 2011, p.1.

ness promotes cognitive *and moral* awareness; it relies on a *sense for human dignity and for discontents with counteracting practices*.

Political mindfulness is needed in political communities of different scale. In times of globalisation, inter- and transnational organisations can help promote or prevent political mindfulness. For example: When powerful institutions like the World Bank are setting criteria as conditions for grants, which oppose binding Conventions of the International Labour Organisation, it is necessary to permanently watch what paths governments are following and engage in a public dialogue to live up to one's declared norms.

What then is the relationship between political and organisational mindfulness or between mindfulness in the political and in the organisational context? Both, political mindfulness and organisational mindfulness aim at the lived virtue of looking for unintended or not recognized or unexpected consequences of decisions, institutions and hidden practices, which are not in harmony with the declared values of the entity. But, whereas organisations and enterprises have to act in the confines of given regulations, political mindfulness is of vital concern for a political community, which has to be able to set the norms and rules for the economy for the sake of social sustainability.