Organizational, Institutional and Sustainability Perspectives on 'Mindful Organizational Change' in Turbulent Times: An Introduction

Guido Becke

Abstract The concept of 'Organizational Mindfulness' is viewed as a fruitful concept opening up new avenues of research in Labor and Organization Studies, and Sustainability Studies. One of these avenues refers to organizational change being highlighted in this volume. This book seeks to explore the interplay between organizational mindfulness and organizational change. It is argued that mindful change can promote social sustainability at organizational level. However, a closer analysis of this interplay requires taking account of the specific institutional contexts economic organizations are embedded in. It is assumed that institutions play a crucial role in facilitating or restricting mindful change at organizational level. In this introduction, core conceptual trajectories of (organizational) mindfulness are sketched. Against this background, the contributions to this volume are introduced referring to the organizational and/or institutional and sustainability perspectives on mindful change. Finally, further research avenues are presented.

Keywords Organizational mindfulness • Mindful change • Social sustainability • Institutions • Dialogue • Trust • The societal perspective of mindfulness • Political mindfulness

1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, 'Mindfulness' has become a popular catchword with a seemingly overall presence in mass media, internet, magazines and bookstores. Moreover, mindfulness raised scientific interest in a variety of disciplines reflected in numerous articles of scientific journals. Despite this plethora, this book also deals with mindfulness. However, it undertakes a new endeavor in linking formerly

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disconnected scientific debates on 'Organizational Mindfulness' in risk and safety research with debates in Labor and Organization Studies, and in Sustainability Studies. The common ground of this linkage is the topic of intended organizational change, and its unanticipated consequences on organizational effectiveness, social integration at organizational level, and managers' and employees' quality of work. 'Organizational Mindfulness' (OM) refers to the quality of organizational awareness and attention to dynamic and unpredictable environments. It is characterized by "a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capacity for action" (Weick Karl et al. 1999, p. 88). OM encompasses "both a sustained high level of sensitivity to errors, unexpected events, and, more generally, to subtle cues suggested by the organization's environment or its own processes; and the capacity to engage in a flexible range of behaviors in order to respond effectively to this potentially diverse and changing set of stimuli" (Levinthal and Rerup 2006, p. 503).

In this edited volume, it is assumed that the concept of organizational mindfulness, originally developed by Karl Weick and Kathleen Sutcliffe (2007), can be gainfully extended to a variety of organizational types and empirical fields of research in Organization Studies, Labor Studies and even in Sustainability Studies. Specifically, this concept is applied to economic organizations that face permanent change in volatile and unpredictable environments. This book intends to reflect and discuss whether 'organizational mindfulness' or 'mindful change' can be utilized as core concepts in research and practice, i.e. for analyzing and designing organizational change in times of dynamic environmental flux. It is argued that the concept of organizational mindfulness contributes to understanding and facilitating organizational sustainability in permanent organizational change. Organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing are conceived as facilitators of organizational sustainability. Thus, it is assumed that organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing can promote a socially sustainable organizational change. Such a 'mindful change' is characterized by a heightened organizational awareness and attentiveness to unintended effects and unnoticed innovation potentials of permanent reorganization in respect to organizational performance, social integration at organizational level, and employees' and managers' quality of work. In this perspective, the importance of key factors for 'mindful change', specifically social trust and dialogue, is analyzed.

In our view, the concept of organizational mindfulness serves as a sensitizing concept linking Organization and Labor Studies with Sustainability Studies in the field of (permanent) organizational change, thereby opening up new avenues of research: First, the conceptual use of organizational mindfulness in respect to organizational change contributes to integrate this concept more deeply in Organization Studies. Second, by focusing on the unintended effects of planned organizational change in respect to social integration at organizational level and organizational members' quality of work, the concept of organizational mindfulness is related to issues that are dealt with in Organization Studies and Labor Studies. Both of them conceive of economic organizations as socially embedded entities, thereby referring to the interplay of economic organizations and their institutional contexts (Scott 2008; Edwards 2007). Institutions can be defined as

"distinct configurations of interests and social relations" (Swedberg 2003, p. xii). In Labor Studies, institutions of labor regulation or systems of industrial relations, and workplace institutions, as works councils, are key issues of research.

In this book, the lens of analysis is broadened by taking account of specific institutional contexts economic organizations are embedded in. It is argued that the institutional settings organizations operate in have been widely neglected empirically and conceptually in organizational-mindfulness research. In some contributions to this volume (cf. Becke, Hofmaier, Schimank, Senghaas-Knobloch), the importance of institutional contexts for organizational or political mindfulness is emphasized. Institutions may influence, i.e. hinder or foster organizational mindfulness in respect to organizational change. For instance, institutions (e.g. in German labor law) can promote or facilitate organizational mindfulness regarding the quality of work in organizational change by entitling works councils as the elected body of employees' representatives at the establishment level to information and participation rights.

This edited volume is inspired by two key sources: First, it is a product of the research-and-development project '8iNNO – Organizational Mindfulness as a Basis of Organizations' Innovation Capacity' that was conducted between 2009 and 2013 by the artec | Research Centre for Sustainability Studies at the University of Bremen. This project intended to analyze unintended effects of permanent reorganization in economic organizations affiliated to different sectors (Public Transport, ICT-Services, and Social Services). Against this background, it sought to explore and develop research-based concepts for mindful organizational change that enable firms to balance contradictory demands of flexibility and stability in permanent change. This project was funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Funds. The second source of this edited volume is the project-related interdisciplinary and international workshop 'Mindful Change in Times of Permanent Reorganization' that took place on October 22nd and 23rd 2012 in Bremen.

This introduction consists of four sections. First, it starts with permanent change and its unintended effects as a challenge to organizational sustainability. It is argued that organizational mindfulness can facilitate a socially sustainable organizational change in dynamic and unpredictable environments. Second, conceptual core trajectories are sketched that inform about the conceptual development of (organizational) mindfulness. Third, an introduction to the five parts of this volume and its related articles is provided. Finally, avenues of further research are discussed.

2   Permanent Change as a Challenge to Social Sustainability at Organizational Level

Since the 1980s, more and more economic organizations of different industrial and service sectors have been confronted with volatile and unforeseen socio-economic environments that – above all – can be attributed to economic globalization.

Economic organizations often respond to these unpredictable and dynamic environments by organizational change approaches that focus on permanent or radical change. The latter approach assumes that organizational adaptability and "marketplace agility" (Dyer and Ericksen 2007, 264 pp.) to volatile environments can be enhanced by an infrequent and intended episodic change that deliberatively disrupts existing structures and strategies, and established organizational cultures (Weick and Quinn 1999). Radical change intends to overcome and to replace an existent organizational framework by introducing and consolidating new strategies, structures and business processes and by re-directing organizational culture that are expected to enhance the overall organizational performance and competitiveness (Hartley 2002; Brown and Eisenhardt 1997). The former approach deviates from this underlying punctuated equilibrium model of change in that it focuses on intended and continuous organizational change. The approach of permanent change assumes that organizational change rather is the rule than an exception. Hence, intended permanent change is to enable an ongoing organizational adaptability to unpredictable and volatile environments. In this perspective, emphasis is placed on organizational fluidity viewing economic organizations as "constantly redesigning and reinventing themselves" (Schreyögg and Sydow 2010, p. 1252).

Intended permanent change is associated with promoting organizational flexibility that contains two dimensions: workplace flexibility and structural flexibility. The latter intends to transform hierarchical and bureaucratic structures into 'networked organizations' (Colling 2005) with decentralized semi-autonomous business units (e.g. cost or profit centers) taking economic responsibility for achieving economic goals (Becke 2010; Alvesson and Thompson 2005). Workplace flexibility refers to the use and deployment of employees (Reilly 1998), e.g. in respect to time and place, job-related tasks, wages or employment contracts. Workplace flexibility encompasses extensive or numerical and intensive or functional flexibility. Whereas the former is "associated with the ability of the organization to alter the number of staff employed" (ibid., 9), the latter refers to variations in the use of employed labor. In this regard, workplace flexibility includes the introduction of project work or team work with enhanced employee involvement, job enlargement and job enrichment at individual and group level (Marchington and Cox 2007; Busck et al. 2010). The combination of enhanced autonomy at work with 'management of objectives' intends to capitalize on employees' subjectivity (Flecker and Hofbauer 1998), i.e. to fully mobilize employees' competence, motivation and resources for economic goal attainment and for flexibly coping with external and work-related sources of uncertainty. Management seeks to mobilize employees' internalized commitment and self-discipline to pursue economic goals (Thompson 2003), even in adverse circumstances, specifically in the case of 'deconfined work' (Hatchuel 2002) in which work-related contents, processes, outcomes and work environments cannot be determined or regulated precisely by managers.

Intended permanent change is promoted by dynamic economic goals that are defined and set by top management and transposed by cascades of 'management by objectives' to decentralized business units or even to team and individual levels.

These overall dynamic economic goals constantly bear pressure upon business units to optimize their economic performance in respect to costs, profitability and quality. Dynamic economic goal attainment is associated with the introduction of 'quasi-market structures', i.e. confronting decentralized business units with internal and even external competitors. Benchmarking systems incessantly prove decentralized business units' worth in economic regard. Decentralized business units constantly operate under competitive pressure being threatened with outsourcing of complete services or tasks or dissolving units in case of 'economic failure', i.e. not having achieved economic goals. Therefore, structural flexibility also refers to re-defining organizational boundaries by different variants of externalization, e.g. encompassing the introduction of franchise systems, outsourcing or blurring boundaries between employed labor and self-employment (cf. Frade and Darmon 2005; Marchington et al. 2005). Moreover, re-designing organizational boundaries intends to foster collaborative networking across organizations in order to develop and exploit innovation potentials (Colling 2005).

At first glance, permanent change implies positive potentials at various levels: At organizational level, permanent change enhances organizational adaptability in volatile and unforeseen socio-economic environments, thereby promoting organizations' long-term viability. Moreover, intended continuous change may create an organizational climate that promotes innovation and high-performance work systems. At workplace and individual level, the de-layering of organizational hierarchies, the decentralization of decision-making structures and collaborative networking across organizational boundaries offer employees self-regulation in the workplace, enhanced self-efficacy, options for individual growth and development, and new career opportunities. However, more recent studies indicate downsides of intended permanent change that may endanger organizational sustainability in dynamic and unpredictable environments.

At organizational level, e.g. sustained organizational functioning and reliability are threatened by tighter controls over cost, productivity and profitability related to dynamic economic goal-setting. The latter entails a strict reduction of seemingly superfluous 'organizational slack', specifically time resources for trust building internal collective inquiry and learning, organizational routines or staff (Sorge and van Witteloostuijn 2004; Lawson 2001; Meyerhuber 2013a). Moreover, employees' and middle managers' organizational commitment often decreases in radical or permanent change (Meyer and Allen 1997). For instance, strategies of organizational 'downsizing' associated with dismissals and the promotion of temporary employment induce feelings of enhanced job instability even within the remaining workforce (Sverke et al. 2002) and employees' withdrawal of innovative capacities (Weiss and Udris 2001). Finally, strategies of 'downsizing' are often perceived by employees as a severe violation of 'psychological contracts' (Rousseau 1995; Conway and Briner 2005) that may induce an erosion of employees' trust in top managers and in the entire organization (Atkinson 2007; Mishra et al. 2009).

At the workplace level, intensive work systems are often produced in permanent change by dynamic and often short-term economic goals, strict control over costs,

productivity and profitability or enhanced job-related demands to reduce time to market and time from order to delivery (Beumer 2013; Docherty et al. 2002). Intensive work systems entail the "consumption of human resources – physical, cognitive, social emotional – in work organizations" (ibid., 3). Work intensity can be either attributed to a reduction of job control or to a loss of work governability with contents of work that – to a larger extent – evade work-related specification or structuring, e.g. invisible aspects of care work or in developing novel software products with customers (Hatchuel 2002, p. 41). For instance, increased responsibility for economic goal attainment at individual or team level entails enhanced work intensity, especially if employees lack required time resources or autonomy to deal with unanticipated events, e.g. work-related interference by clients (Docherty et al. 2002; Gerlmaier 2006). Moreover, work intensity is promoted by dynamic and challenging goals fostering employees' self-induced psycho-physical overcharge that is often associated with extra-long working hours and individuals' strong internal motivation to meet work-related goals (ibid., Siegrist 1996). Both factors contribute significantly to burnout as psycho-physical exhaustion (Maslach and Leiter 1997). Employees' health can also be impaired in permanent change by an imbalance of high-effort and low-reward conditions in the workplace (Siegrist 1996), e.g. de-layering reduces options for intra-organizational career advancement.

Hence, unintended effects of intended permanent or radical change expose economic organizations to increased vulnerability in dynamic and unpredictable environments, may erode organizations' social-resource base, and endanger employees' health resources. Against this background, it has to be examined how a socially sustainable organizational change can be achieved. Sustainable development denotes "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, p. 3). In a resource-centered perspective of sustainability (Ehnert and Harry 2012; Müller-Christ 2001), the development and regeneration of finite ecological, economic, social, and individual resources is focused on. At organizational level, social sustainability refers to the development and regeneration of organizations' social-resource base that is generated in social interactions within the workforce and between management and employees (Becke 2013a, in this volume). This social-resource base is comprised of diverse social resources, as interpersonal and organizational trust, organizational loyalty, organizational justice and the reciprocity of give and take between management and employees. Interaction-based social resources require time to unfold. In permanent or radical change, however, social resources are exposed to enhanced vulnerability.

According to Littig and Grießler (2005) work is a core concept of social sustainability. Hence, in economic organizations social sustainability also refers to the promotion of sustainable work systems that denote systems "where human and social resources are . . .regenerated through the process of work while still maintaining productivity and a competitive edge" (Docherty et al. 2002, p. 214).

Sustainable work systems promote the regeneration of employees' and managers' health resources in changing workplaces and organizations (Becke 2013b).

In this edited volume, it is argued that the concept of organizational mindfulness makes a difference to explain why some economic organizations are capable of shaping permanent change in a socially sustainable way by balancing flexibility and stability demands, whereas others fail to regenerate their social-resource base and individuals' resources prioritizing organizational fluidity. However, a closer investigation of organizational mindfulness and its conceptual trajectories is required in order to apply this concept to the field of organizational change.

3 Conceptual Trajectories of Organizational Mindfulness

In this section, an overview on conceptual trajectories of mindfulness is provided that embraces two distinct perspectives: an individual and an organizational perspective of mindfulness. Whereas the former perspective focuses on presence-centered individual cognition processes related to human beings' inner and outer world of experience, the latter emphasizes the organizational capability to achieve specific organizational ends, as organizational functioning, high reliability or high performance.

3.1 The Individual Perspective

In the individual perspective, mindfulness is an inherently state of human consciousness that can be defined as an "enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality" (Brown and Ryan 2003, p. 822). Awareness serves as a "background "radar" of consciousness continuously monitoring the inner and outer environment" (ibid.). For instance, persons can be aware of specific sensory and perceptual stimuli or of their thoughts and emotions, without being a focal point of attention. Attention differs from awareness in that it focuses awareness, "providing heightened sensitivity to a limited range of experience" (ibid.). Thus, awareness and attention are closely interrelated in mindfulness. The individual perspective of mindfulness encompasses two conceptual trajectories (Yeganeh and Kolb 2009): meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness.

3.1.1 Meditative Mindfulness

Meditative mindfulness is rooted in diverse contemplative traditions across different cultures. For instance, it can be traced in the Roman-Greek philosophy of stoicism, in Sufism, Christian Mysticism (Assländer and Grün 2010; Stutz 2008), and in Buddhism (Hanh 2009). Most spiritual or philosophical traditions related to

meditative mindfulness underline that life means continuous change (Assländer and Grün 2010; Hanh 2009). Mindfulness lies at the heart of Buddhist meditation. This practice aims at the complete liberalization of human beings and is to promote healing being pursued by meditative techniques, specifically of breathing and walking techniques (ibid.). In this Eastern tradition, mindfulness is reflected in a presence-centered consciousness that is intentionally aware and attentive, focused on current and direct experience, accepts the actual state "as part of a constant flow of changing experiences" (Yeganeh and Kolb 2009, p. 14), and avoids judgment of inner experience or of sensory and perceived stimuli (Germer 2004). Mindfulness involves that individuals intentionally direct attention to a specific current object, thereby avoiding distraction, e.g. by the "monkey mind" of wandering thoughts (Weick and Putnam 2006; Hopper 2010). Meditative mindfulness is characterized by a receptive awareness and attention that is "reflected in a more regular or sustained consciousness of ongoing events and experiences" (Brown and Ryan 2003, 822 p.).

Meditative mindfulness has been integrated in psychotherapy, psychology and medicine as a platform for intervention strategies to promote psychological well-being, to reduce psycho-social stress and to cope with mental disorders, e.g. depression. Mindfulness-based intervention strategies have often been successfully validated empirically (Brown and Ryan 2003; Shapiro et al. 2006; Kohls et al. 2009), as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) program (Kabatt-Zinn 1990).

3.1.2   Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness

The trajectory of socio-cognitive mindfulness can primarily be attributed to social psychologist Ellen Langer (1989). In this view, mindfulness denotes "the process of drawing novel distinctions" (Langer and Moldoveanu 2000a, p. 1). Contrary to meditative mindfulness which places emphasis on receptive awareness and attention (Brown and Ryan 2003, p. 822), Langer conceives of mindfulness as an active process based on reflexive consciousness operating on diverse contents of consciousness, e.g. emotions and thoughts. The socio-cognitive approach of mindfulness draws a sharp distinction between mindful and mindless behavior. The latter occurs in situations where individual behavior is more or less governed by rules and routines without taking account of actual circumstances. Drawing novel distinctions entails mindful behavior that is characterized by persons' greater contextual sensitivity in respect to their environments, active information processing based on openness to new information, the creation of novel categories and distinctions for structuring perception, and the exploration of and enhanced awareness to multiple perspectives regarding problem-solving processes (Langer and Moldoveanu 2000a, p. 2; Albert 1990, p. 154). Sensitivity to the novel or the unexpected is regarded as a key feature of mindfulness (Langer and Moldoveanu 2000a, p. 4). It is argued that mindfulness enables to broaden individuals' stock of cognitive categories, thereby avoiding or reducing mindless and dysfunctional behavior. Against this conceptual background,

interventions can be deduced that intend to increase mindfulness by an enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives, and simultaneously aim at eliminating or unlearning cognitive categories and distinctions or related patterns of behavior that support mindlessness (Langer and Moldoveanu 2000a, 129 p.). For instance, such interventions were conducted and empirically tested in respect to prejudice against disabled persons, stereotypes of aging or alcoholism and drug addiction (Langer 1989). According to Langer and Moldoveanu (2000b) mindfulness-based intervention strategies can contribute to problem solving at organizational and even at societal level.

3.2   The Organizational Perspective

In the organizational perspective, the concept of organizational mindfulness – developed by Kathleen Sutcliffe and Karl Weick – can be regarded as a pace-setting milestone of research and practice. This concept is predominantly situated in the field of risk and safety research; specifically, it is related to 'High Reliability Theory' (HRT) highlighting so-called 'High Reliability Organizations' (HROs) that operate in dynamic, unforeseen and risky environments endangering organizations' viability (Weick et al. 1999). Examples of HROs are nuclear-power plants, airplane carrier, space missions or fire-fighting teams (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007; Barton and Sutcliffe 2008). Whereas earlier conceptualizations of organizational reliability focused on the repeatability of stable patterns of activity or routines as the source of specific reliable outcomes in respect to quantity or quality (Hannan and Freeman 1984), HRT assumes that high reliability is generated by interrelated variations in activity patterns and the stability of cognitive processes HROs draw on in turbulent and unforeseen environments (Weick et al. 1999; Weick and Sutcliffe 2006): In unpredictable environments, a constant mindful awareness of environmental variations is required that is grounded in stable cognitive processes directed to the detection of novel or unexpected events. In such environments, patterns of activity are to be continuously re-adjusted in order to enable adaptive activity and to avoid inertia or the normalization of unexpected events. Thus, variable patterns of activity can be viewed as a capacity for action that promotes organizational adaptation to unpredictable environments.

In regard to HROs that focus on emerging threats to their viability and error detection, mindfulness is defined as the "joint capability to induce a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capacity for action" (Weick et al. 1999, p. 88). This understanding of mindfulness is inspired by Langer's definition of individual mindfulness. However, it focuses on the group or organizational level of mindfulness. In this regard, organizational mindfulness "refers to the extent to which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to swiftly act in response to these details" (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2012, p. 723). HROs that successfully and mindfully manage unexpected events are characterized by a combination of stable cognitive processes and variable action

patterns (Weick et al. 1999). Mindfulness is characterized by a specific quality of sustained collective attention to environmental signals and weak cues. It is based on inquiry and interpretation of novel and seemingly familiar events that may imply unknown characteristics; thus, mindfulness permanently questions or revises established assumptions (ibid).

A state of organizational mindfulness is achieved by five interrelated processes of mindful organizing (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007; Weick et al. 1999):

- 'Preoccupation with failure' refers to the detection of potential threats to organizational reliability and the detection of errors and near misses that are conceived as sources of organizational learning.
- 'Reluctance to simplify interpretations' intends to develop a more nuanced and contextualized picture of unforeseen events by questioning established assumptions, involving different perspectives, and taking account of reliable alternatives.
- 'Sensitivity to operations' involves attentiveness to front-line work with employees' situational awareness and tacit knowledge that enable continuous local adjustments, thereby preventing an enlargement and accumulation of errors.
- 'Commitment to resilience' refers to "the ability to bounce back from errors and handle surprises in the moment" (Vogus and Welbourne 2003, p. 881). It focuses on the containment of errors and improvisation to sustain organizational functioning. This process of mindful organizing involves analyzing, coping with and learning from failures and setbacks.
- 'Deference to expertise' refers to fluid forms of decision-making by turning decision structures upside down during states of emergency or severe crisis, thereby drawing on front-line workers' local and specific expertise to cope with unexpected events.

Whereas the first three processes refer to "an HRO's capacity to anticipate "unexpected" problems" (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007, p. 9), the latter two focus on the organizational containment of harmful unexpected events.

The concept of organizational mindfulness inspired further empirically- and theoretically-based research in respect to HROs (e.g. Levinthal and Rerup 2006). Moreover, the research focus of organizational mindfulness was extended to other types of organizations than HROs and related organizational fields (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2012). I would just like to mention two exemplary conceptual extensions of organizational mindfulness: First, the concept of organizational mindfulness has been utilized as a sensitizing concept in research related to organizational 'high performance systems' (Pawlowsky et al. 2008). In this perspective, research in HROs is regarded as an important perspective to analyze facilitating factors for organizational high performance within and across diverse organizational fields and types (ibid), as sports teams, orchestras or firms of knowledge-intensive ICT-services. Second, the concept of organizational mindfulness was recently transposed to the field of health promotion in the workplace (Badura and Steinke 2011), specifically in respect to knowledge-intensive, project-based and

innovation-driven organizations (Becke 2013b; Thomczik et al. 2009). In this regard, organizational mindfulness is conceived as a research and practice-based approach to transform intensive work systems into more sustainable work systems that foster the regeneration of employees' health resources. In the following section, another important conceptual extension is highlighted: organizational mindfulness in respect to permanent organizational change.

4 Introduction to Chapters and Articles of this Edited Volume

This edited volume is comprised of five parts. The *first one* is the *introductory part*. Besides this introduction, it contains an initial contribution by *Claudius H. Riegler*, program manager at Project Management Agency/German Aerospace Center (Work Design and Services), titled 'Organizational Mindfulness and Dynamic Stability – The Role of Public Research Funding'. The author argues that organizational mindfulness is an open concept that may inspire further research in respect to the dynamic balance between flexibility and stability in working life paying attention to uncertain socio-economic environments and enhanced competition due to economic globalization. He informs readers about the research strand "Balance of flexibility and stability in a changing working life", funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Funds, that intends to foster innovative strategies for creating such a balance in the face of permanent reorganization. This balance between flexibility and stability necessitates taking account of managers' and employees' specific expectations. Public Research funding can facilitate the development of research-based innovation strategies that balance flexibility and stability in a changing working life.

The *second part* deals with *'Organizational Mindfulness – A Concept for Mindful Organizational Change'*. It seeks to explore whether the concept of organizational mindfulness which is originally based in risk and safety research can be fruitfully applied and extended to organizational change and learning. In this respect, it also indicates that the concept of organizational mindfulness can be transferred to other organizational types than 'high reliability organizations', thereby opening up new avenues of research. This part encompasses three contributions with different perspectives on this issue.

It starts with a contribution by *Claus Rerup* (Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario, Canada) and *Daniel A. Levinthal* (The Wharton School, Department of Management, University of Pennsylvania, USA) that is titled 'Situating the Concept of Organizational Mindfulness: The Multiple Dimensions of Organizational Learning'. Both scholars have provided impressive theoretical and empirical contributions to the debate on organizational mindfulness in organization and management studies. In this article, they argue from the perspective of Management Studies that research on organizational change and

learning in respect to organizational mindfulness has to take account of both mindful and less mindful approaches that hint at the importance of organizational routines for organizational mindfulness. They argue that further dialogue between these different approaches of organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing is required. Against this background, they develop a three-dimensional conceptual model that intends to promote a dialogue between these approaches. This model shows differences of mindful and less mindful approaches in respect to these dimensions. The first dimension refers to the periodicity of organizational change and learning distinguishing rare and frequent change. The second dimension, i.e. extensiveness of the object of organizational learning contrasts local with global change. The degree of cognitive intensity in the learning process is introduced as the third dimension referring to inert and reflective change. The authors show that this conceptual model allows to integrate mindful and less mindful approaches to organizational learning and to consider mindful and less mindful processes as co-constitutive activities. Taking account of the interaction of mindful and less mindful processes may facilitate the organizational understanding of dynamic contexts organizations are embedded in.

In the contribution 'Mindful Change – A Concept for Social Sustainability at Organizational Level' written by *Guido Becke* (artec | Centre for Sustainability Studies, University of Bremen), it is argued that permanent organizational change has become the rule rather than an exception due to economic globalization and the introduction of semi-markets at organizational level. In the perspective of organizational sustainability, risks attributed to permanent change are highlighted, specifically to its social resources, as trust and reciprocity. Moreover, permanent change entails enhanced levels of psycho-social stress at work that foster the depletion of employees' and middle-managers' health resources. Against this background, the author posits from a Labor Studies perspective that the concept of organizational mindfulness can be transposed from risk and safety research on 'high reliability organizations' to economic organizations in permanent change. Organizational mindfulness is on the one hand regarded as an analytical concept that allows examining the extent to which organizations are capable of responding in a socially sustainable way to permanent change. On the other hand, this concept can be utilized as a practical concept for mindfully designing permanent change, thereby balancing flexibility and stability demands (Becke et al. 2013). However, such a transposition to permanent change requires a re-conceptualization of organizational mindfulness that is subsequently pointed out. The author indicates that institutional contexts matter in respect to organizational mindfulness: The 8iNNO-research project showed that the institution of works councils proved to be an essential change agent in facilitating mindful change regarding the regeneration of organizations' social resource base.

The third contribution to this part deals with 'Authenticity and Individual Mindfulness within Organizations – Problems and Perspectives'. *Wolfgang Hien* (Research Bureau of Work and Health, Bremen) highlights the interrelation between individual and organizational mindfulness in organizational change from a phenomenological perspective. The author posits that processes and

organizational routines of organizational mindfulness regarding organizational change may fail, if they do not take account of individual mindfulness. The author's starting point is the depletion of employees' health resources in reorganization processes. In his view, an attitude towards work is to be developed that questions role functioning and behavior based on extra-organizational role commitment. First, it is based on authenticity as being true to oneself. It accepts persons' own inadequacy and is related to a person's lived-bodily consciousness. Second, this attitude requires individual mindfulness that encompasses listening to one's inner voice and drawing boundaries between authentic work-related interest and health depleting overwork. Moreover, individual mindfulness exceeds the individual level by being mindful to one's co-workers. Wolfgang Hien hints at the negative health-related and economic outcomes of intensive work-systems that might be overcome by solidarity and by halting acceleration in (working) life, thereby addressing the importance of mindfulness at societal level.

In the following two parts, concepts are highlighted that are essential to our understanding of organizational mindfulness in permanent change, i.e. dialogue and social trust. *Dialogue* is at the heart of the *third part* exploring the extent to which dialogue can be understood as a concept for mindfully designing organizational change. In our view, dialogue is about the exchange of perspectives and arguments between different people, thereby facilitating learning and innovation in specific contextual settings. In dialogue, learning is promoted by a mutual inquiry of (work-related) problems and the development of agreed on solutions. The research project 8iNNO indicated that dialogue across organizational hierarchies and intra-organizational units promotes organizational mindfulness in permanent change (cf. Bleses and Behrens 2013, in this volume). We argue that persons' and groups' perspectives in economic organizations also reflect their specific (work-related) interests. Hence, dialogue as the participatory exchange of perspectives and arguments may also involve conflict and negotiations as a source of mutual learning, thereby altering the social construction of reality and facilitating adaptive trust cultures at organizational level.

This part encompasses two chapters that refer to dialogue from different angles. *Bernd Hofmaier* (University of Halmstad, Sweden) focuses on dialogue from an institutional and political perspective based on Swedish and Norwegian experience with the so-called 'democratic dialogue'. His contribution is titled 'Institutional and Organizational Perspectives on Dialogue – Lessons Learned from Scandinavian Experience'. Specifically, the author examines the socio-economic and political trajectories of dialogue-related public programs that intended to promote the development of working life in both countries. For instance, Bernd Hofmaier points out that a collective agreement from 1938 provided the political frame condition for further dialogue-initiatives by labor market parties. In post-second-world-war times of increasing industrial productivity and the development of a modern welfare state, a sequence of publicly funded workplace programs were initiated and carried out that sought to develop alternatives to Taylorist production regimes in industry. These programs fostered dialogue at organizational, local and regional levels building inter-company

networks. A core tool of these programs were dialogue- or search conferences that reflected criteria of democratic dialogue, as work experience as the basis for participation, the legitimisation of all arguments under discussion or dialogue as a process of exchange on ideas and arguments. Whereas the dialogue-related workplace development programs in Sweden came to an end in the mid 1990s due to a political swift to centre-right parties and, especially, due to economic crises and a diminishing influence of trade unions, these programs have been continued in Norway.

Miriam Behrens and *Peter Bleses* (both from artec | Research Centre for Sustainability Studies, University of Bremen) refer to dialogue at the organizational level. Their contribution from a Labor Studies perspective is programmatically titled 'Mindful Dialogue is the Key!' This title is related to their action-research based experience and results with the 8iNNO-project encompassing four partner companies of different sectors. The authors show that mindful dialogue is based on mutual recognition by all the parties and persons involved. Mindful dialogue is based on employees' direct and representative participation that allows to take account of their specific expectations and interests related to organizational change. It involves top-management, middle managers, employees and their representatives. Mindful dialogue seeks to anticipate unintended and problematic effects of organizational change as well as to uncover until then unnoticed innovation potentials. The authors posit that mindful change exceeds specific 'change projects' by integrating it into daily work-related or organizational routines. Moreover, it is pointed out that intra-organizational communication has to be thoroughly organized in change processes involving different but supplementing tools and procedures of communication. However, mindful dialogue remains fragile because middle managers' and employees' negative experience with previous organizational change initiatives may prove as a lingering and long-standing shadow that might constrain building and regenerating trust by mindful dialogue. Therefore, this shadow has to be constructively dealt with. In their article, Miriam Behrens and Peter Bleses provide a sound basis for the following part.

The *forth part* deals with *'Trust as a Challenge to Organizational Change'*. In the research-project 8iNNO, it was empirically indicated in case-study research that adaptive trust cultures can be sustained in volatile socio-economic environments, if economic organizations succeed in balancing demands of flexibility and stability. It was shown that organizational mindfulness can foster adaptive trust cultures at organizational level in that it facilitates the development and regeneration of interpersonal and systemic trust in permanent change processes (Becke 2013c). This part encompasses three contributions.

Kirsimarja Blomqvist (School of Business and Technology Business Research Center, Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland) focuses in her article on 'Building Sustainable Organizational Trust in Radical Change – The Interplay of Organizational Trust and Mindfulness'. The author deals with an under-developed issue in the scientific literature on organizational mindfulness, i.e. the interplay between trust and organizational mindfulness. The analysis of this interplay can

also contribute to broaden the focus of research on organizational mindfulness by taking account of the relationship of organizational mindfulness and innovativeness. In her view, trust is a key concept for a better understanding of this relationship in that trust can be regarded as a critical element in innovativeness and creativity at organizational level. Regarding innovation the author argues that mindfulness can be utilized for identifying signals of new opportunities and organizational trust may reduce transaction costs and facilitate value creation. The interplay of trust and mindfulness in specified as follows: It is proposed that trust can support mindful processes – as pointed out by Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) – in radical change that contribute to facilitate innovation. For instance, persons' willingness to engage in risky actions necessitates interpersonal and organizational trust. Mindful processes can facilitate building sustainable trust in radical change. For example, the mindful process of promoting underspecified structures can build identification, an important source of organizational trust, in a diverse workforce based on a shared vision and future.

The second article of this part examines one of the issues raised by Kirsimarja Blomqvist, i.e. how trust can facilitate mindful change as a socially sustainable change, especially in respect to employees' and (middle) managers' health resources. *Sylke Meyerhuber* (artec | Research Centre for Sustainability Studies, University of Bremen) argues – from a psychological perspective – that trust can be viewed as a 'selective social erosion inhibitor' in perpetual organizational changes. In her article 'Trust and Time in Reorganizations and the Role of Middle Managers', the author starts with depicting the unintended negative health effects of permanent change and of disentangled workplaces. Against this background, she seeks to explore how organizational change can take account of organizational members' social and psychological needs. Specifically, middle managers as change agents are capable of balancing economic and social needs in dynamic and delimited workplaces, unless they are not overburdened in their 'sandwich-position' between top-management and employees in perpetual changes. In permanent change, middle managers' supportive behavior and appreciative interactions encouraging employee-participation can foster interpersonal trust, even if systemic trust is called into question. Trust building at the interactional level proves to be a health resource vital to employees in times of perpetual changes. In line with Niklas Luhmann, the author argues that interpersonal trust provides a safe social footing for employees. However, building and maintaining trust requires time, e.g. for respectful interactions and organizing participatory dialogue. In this perspective, mindful change reflects the deceleration of change paces. In respect to mindful change, trust can function as a social-psychological container crucial for organizational members to be secured on the social level whereas jobs and work structures are frequently changing. From a psychological perspective, the concept of mindful change requires to be based on a framework that integrates three interrelated levels: structures, interactions and persons. Mindful infrastructures require corresponding managers' and employees' attitudes to interact mindfully, specifically in times of enhanced psycho-social stress.

This part concludes with a chapter from an economic perspective titled 'Trust and its Impact on Organizational Change and Innovation in Social Services'. Janina Evers and Joachim Hafkesbrink (both from the Rhine-Ruhr Institute for Applied System-Innovation, Duisburg) analyze the importance of trust for an innovation-friendly mindful change in respect to a specific institutional context, i.e. social services. First, this institutional setting can be roughly characterized by services on persons that require emotional labor and empathy to interact with clients who are at least partially co-producers of social services. Second, it consists of a complex triangular relationship of public payers (e.g. social insurance, state agencies), social service providers (public, non-profit, private), and beneficiaries. Finally, social services have been operating under enhanced economic pressure to increase efficiency and service quality. The authors refer to a case-study of a social-service provider. Their work is based on two surveys involving employees and managers during and after a specific intended change process with which trust mechanisms and their effects on the service provider's innovativeness were measured. In this case-study research, a multi-dimensional construct of trust was developed that included trust based on identification, institutions, competence, interaction processes and calculus-mechanisms. The authors show that trust is ambivalent in respect to (mindful) organizational change. Whereas some trust-dimensions support an innovation-friendly mindful change, others constrain innovation. Against the background of their case-study results, the authors opt for further research and draw the conclusion that organizational change should be continuously evaluated regarding the effects of institutional instruments and measures of mindful change on trust culture indicators and firms' innovation capability.

The *final part* 'Mindfulness in Social Change – A Societal Perspective' broadens the scope of organizational mindfulness and mindful change by focusing on the political and societal perspective of mindfulness. The social-psychologist Ellen Langer (1989) is a pioneer in addressing the societal level regarding 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, as overcoming social prejudice. Nevertheless, research in this perspective is under-developed, particularly in respect to specific societal sub-systems. Moreover, the interplay of organizational mindfulness and political mindfulness needs further conceptualization and empirical analysis. This part embraces three contributions from different perspectives.

Eva Senghaas-Knobloch (artec | Research Centre for Sustainability Studies) refers to the global level by introducing the concept of political mindfulness and addressing the relationship between organizational mindfulness and political mindfulness. In her article 'Mindfulness – a Politically Sensitizing Concept. Care and Social Sustainability as Issues', the author develops her concept of political mindfulness from the perspectives of Gender and Labor Studies in respect to the concept of sustainable development. She argues that the organization of work is of key importance for the relationship between nature and society. In this perspective, the current economic globalization is viewed as consuming social resources, particularly care-relations and care-activities as a basis for social development. This

disregard of human needs and rights reflects political mindlessness in respect to the importance of care for social cohesion and human well-being. Hence, social sustainability is endangered when care activities or responsibilities are devalued or disregarded. The author posits that the goal of (a socially) sustainable development can be achieved by political mindfulness. The author highlights two political initiatives from 2011 that seek to overcome this disregard of care reflecting political mindfulness: 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. Eva Senghaas-Knobloch concludes that the "caring society" can be viewed as a model for a socially sustainable society that reconciles the spheres of work and social responsibilities in respect to care on the basis of legal regulations. In her view, political mindfulness is essential for politically designing frame conditions (mindful) economic organizations operate in.

In his article 'Reforming the German University System – Mindful Change by Double Talk', *Uwe Schimank* (Institute for Sociology, University of Bremen) refers to change in a specific societal sub-system or institutional context: the university system. The author argues that the concept of mindfulness is of analytical usefulness to understand change processes even in organizations and institutional contexts that largely differ from 'High Reliability Organizations' and from economic organizations alike. The author points out that German university reforms are characterized by functional antagonisms (e.g. scientific curiosity versus political or social relevance) between core actor groups of professors and ministries for higher education and research policy. Uwe Schimank argues that – in the new governance regime at universities – the university leadership is a core intermediary for re-balancing these functional antagonism and for dissolving the blockade between these countervailing actors. The conflict between both interdependent actors is often grounded in mutual distrust and contempt. The author posits that this conflict can be overcome by re-education, i.e. successively altering the relational orientation of professors and ministries, thereby facilitating 'compromise-oriented negotiation' and mutual understanding. He argues that university leaders can promote re-balancing of functional antagonisms between professors and ministries in that these intermediaries practise mindfulness as 'balanced caring' by sincere 'double talk'. Mindful double talk embraces the communicative moves of acceptance, transposition and admonition. It facilitates a communicative bridging between opponents.

This book concludes with the article 'Personal, Systemic and Transsystemic Trust – Individual and Collective Resources for Coping with Societal Challenges' written by *Martin K.W. Schweer* and *Karin Siebertz-Reckzeh* (both from the University of Vechta, Centre for Trust Studies) from a social-psychologist perspective. The authors show that trust plays a decisive regulating role at individual and collective level under complex social conditions or societal processes, as globalization or demographic change, specifically in reducing complexity. Against the background of these complex conditions, an extended conceptual understanding of trust is required that differentiates personal, systemic, and transsystemic trust to be viewed from either an individual or a collective perspective. The latter component

of trust is of vital relevance for uncontrollable social processes that do not allow experience-based trust building. Trust can facilitate social integration at societal level. For instance, horizontal trust among citizens can promote a communal consciousness that buffers political radicalization. At societal level, mindfulness being closely connected with sustainability and social responsibility can facilitate the reflexive development of trust.

5 Avenues of Further Research

In this final section, I would like to indicate avenues of further research, specifically regarding organizational mindfulness in respect to permanent change. Efforts in conceptualizing organizational mindfulness can be enhanced. Specifically, the issue of power and conflict in respect to organizational mindfulness is a widely disregarded field of research. Research in organizational mindfulness hardly conceives of economic organizations as negotiated orders (Strauss 1993) with unevenly distributed power resources that may shift over time in ongoing social relations. Power denotes "a capacity to pursue one's own interests, and it can be activated through individual or collective means" (Edwards 2007, p. 13). Taking account of economic organizations as negotiated orders, intra-organizational social relations can also be analyzed as socially embedded power relations. In this perspective, organizational mindfulness may depend on more or less stable power coalitions that may hinder or facilitate and even enable the establishment of organizational mindfulness or mindful organizing. For instance, front-line employees can draw on primary power resources that rest on their tacit or implicit local knowledge. In economic organizations, employees may deliberately withhold or withdraw their tacit knowledge, if they feel a lack of social recognition by managers.

Organizational mindfulness is comprised of a mindful infrastructure, especially based on organizational routines, and key principles that facilitate mindful organizing (Becke et al. 2013). However, the interplay of different levels important to mindful organizing, i.e. structures, interaction processes, and persons with their mindful or less mindful attitudes, has to be analyzed and conceptualized more thoroughly (cf. Meyerhuber 2013b, in this volume). In other words, organizational mindfulness is produced by the interplay of individuals, especially employees and managers, teams or intra-organizational business units and the organizational infrastructure for mindful organizing. The interrelation of individual level, team level and organizational level necessitates further research in respect to different types of organizations. For instance, mindfulness at organizational level requires mindful behavior at team and individual levels because organizational routines as facilitators of organizational mindfulness highly depend on human agency. This is not only a matter of individual or team-related capabilities directed to mindful organizing or to mindful self-reflection in changing workplaces. Rather, this interplay is influenced by the overarching organizational culture and specific work cultures individuals and teams are affiliated

to. Moreover, contradictions between these interrelated three levels have to be analyzed in respect to mindful change. For example, mindful change can be primarily directed to enhance organizational performance or reliability. This may induce negative side-effects at team- or individual levels, e.g. enhanced stress at work. Thus, research in organizational mindfulness needs to take account of such emerging contradictions related to mindful organizing. Therefore, the analysis of contradictions related to mindful organizing and how intra-organizational actors seek to balance or neglect these contradictions is an important field of further research. Addressing this research issue may also contribute to deepen our understanding of the interplay of organizational mindfulness and organizational sustainability.

Regarding organizational sustainability, there is hardly any empirical research that explores how mindful organizing can contribute to the regeneration of economic organizations' social- resource base, especially to specific social resources, as social trust, reciprocity, organizational loyalty or organizational justice. This line of research has to take account of organizational cultures and existing workplace institutions as potential facilitators or barriers to this regeneration. However, organizational culture is not only an important antecedent to explain mindful or mindless organizing. Rather, the introduction of organizational mindfulness can alter cognitive and behavioral patterns or reciprocal expectations and question basic assumptions of organizational cultures. Therefore, the interplay between organizational culture and organizational mindfulness requires further research.

Although the relevance of social institutions for organizational mindfulness is highlighted in some contributions to this volume, further research is necessitated to improve the context sensitivity of research in organizational mindfulness. First, there is hardly any empirical study on organizational mindfulness that addresses the influence social institutions exert on organizational mindfulness, specifically in respect to mindful ways of organizing. Especially, empirical research is required that investigates how social institutions hinder or facilitate organizational mindfulness. Second, this research questions may open up an internationally comparative research perspective that focuses on the societal prerequisites of mindful change at organizational level. Finally, there is no empirical research that explores the relevance of institutions at the supranational, international or global level in respect to more mindful ways of organizing in transnational corporations.

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