Making sense of organizational change

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Illustration on front page (by Author):
A representation of the combination of the two perspectives of sensemaking during organizational change. A higher-level perspective aiming to gradually increase understanding the direction and purpose of the change and the plans ahead (arrow) and a detailed perspective, making sense of the day-to-day experiences, events, and interactions around the change (blocks).

Wie heel veel wil
Staat weinig stil
Bij het waarom

Herman van Veen (1981)

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1 Introduction

Organizational change[1] is important for organizations as it enables them to adjust to the changing world they operate in, yet it is not easy to succeed (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Public organizations, like the one researched in this thesis, have particular challenges, because they are driven by legislation rather than market demands, are part of a political context and are closely observed by the media. That means that they have got a varying and diverse stakeholder base, making it hard to satisfy everyone (Rusaw, 2007). Scholars in the management and organizational sciences have been discussing change extensively (e.g., Choi, 2011; Errida & Lotfi, 2021), and typically assume that change can be managed in a staged process (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Lewin, 1947), or that it is a process of continuous improvement, in which change happens with small steps at a time (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Although these scholars do not often make the link to sensemaking, scholars in the sensemaking domain have studied organizational change extensively, because they see change as something that disturbs the normal flow of work, that people have to relate to, i.e., make sense of (Weick, 1995).

Weick (1995) defines sensemaking as a process that aims to "structure the unknown", triggered by a situation in which what is happening is no longer in line with the expectations (a cue). In the context of work, this can happen as part of the work as well as detached from the work (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). The detachment from the work makes the sensemaking more deliberate, hence cognitive. For example, leaders invite their middle managers to a workshop to give shape to strategic changes (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). The more the sensemaking becomes part of the work the more embodied it becomes, as the continuation of the work doesn't allow for contemplation about what might be the best way forward (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). For example, someone is rowing the Amazon and notices that progress is slower than expected. The continued rowing helps to sense what might be going on (De Rond et al., 2019).

To make organizational change happen, people have to take coordinated action based upon a common and detailed idea of what the change entails. Such a "rich account" can only arise if both leaders and employees actively engage in sensegiving, because that ensures that everyone's views are included (Maitlis, 2005). Sensegiving is defined as "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organization reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sensegiving behaviors include providing explanations, challenging proposals and writing reports (Maitlis,

[1] To not complicate matters, I will use the word(s) '(organizational) change' to refer to the process in which organizations "solve problems" (Rusaw, 2007) and adapt themselves to changing requirements throughout this thesis. In scholarly literature, terms like reform, transformation, transition, or improvement are used for the same or similar processes.

2005). Scholars propose that sensegiving happens within a sensegiving-sensemaking cycle, in which the leader influences the sensemaking of employees and vice versa (Cristofaro, 2022).

Using a sensemaking lens on organizational change I identified three main themes within the scholarly debate that I think are worth exploring further. First, sensemaking scholars do typically not discern the different types of sensemaking (detached from and as part of the work) (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). Consequently, the debate on the lack of attention paid to embodied aspects of sensemaking processes (e.g., De Rond et al., 2019) does not seem to consider that those embodied aspects are more prominent in cases of sensemaking as part of the work than in sensemaking detached from the work. The other way around, studies of sensemaking that are focusing on cognitive aspects of sensemaking (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) do generally not seem to recognize the importance of making sense as part of the everyday work, hence do not recognize the embodied aspects of the sensemaking process. However, for changes the distinction between the two types of sensemaking seems relevant, as the change plays out at organizational level, gradually growing the common understanding of what the change entails, and at the everyday level, making sense of the way the change impacts the details of the work, are both needed to generate a commonly shared and detailed view onto the change (Maitlis, 2005). For that reason, a good understanding of the sensemaking at both levels is necessary to understand how changes in organizations can be successful.

Second, the study of how leaders influence the sensemaking of employees got far more attention (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Kraft et al., 2015) than the study of how employees influence the sensemaking of leaders, examples of which are concerning the higher hierarchical layers of organizations (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). Employees typically have a much better view of the details of the day-to-day work. Therefore, their input is crucial to make the change successful. A better understanding of the mechanics of the sensemaking-sensegiving cycle, particularly the sensegiving of employees directed towards leaders (bottom-up sensegiving), therefore contributes to a better understanding of making organizational change work.

Finally, although sensemaking is recognized to be both cognitive and embodied (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012), sensegiving is described as a verbal and cognitive process (e.g., Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau, 2005). That seems odd, because sensegiving is an interaction between people which is usually both verbal and non-verbal. Hence, I reckon that it is interesting to study sensegiving more closely to see how it works in both cognitive and embodied ways.

The sensemaking perspective, although widely debated in scholarly literature, is not often applied by people working on changes within organizations. They typically apply insights from management and organizational sciences that are the basis of numerous books on the topic of organizational change (e.g., De Witte & Jonker, 2022). Still, organizational change is felt to be difficult and often not successful (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). My work is an attempt to provide insight in how the sensemaking lens can help to understand how people make organizational change work, or not, as such helping people in organizations to find new ways to make sense of organizational change.

To add knowledge to the three themes, I set out to study sensemaking in relation to organizational change within a public organization. An overarching idea on organizational change is that it can be organized (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Therefore, my main research question is: Can organizational change really be such an organized process (staged or continuous, Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Weick & Quinn, 1999) driven by a cyclic sensemaking process (sensegiving-sensemaking cycle, Cristofaro, 2022)? To answer that question, I put focus on the interactions between people, because these are vital to create a commonly shared view (Maitlis, 2005). Sub questions include: How do people interact while making sense of organizational changes? What do people need to be able to take action to implement changes? How do people make sense of changes– as part of the work and detached thereof? Specifically, I will look into sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), because of its importance for generating a common view onto the change (Maitlis, 2005). How do leaders influence the sensemaking of employees? How do employees engage in sensegiving towards their leaders? How does sensegiving work? How does embodiment play a role in there?

The thesis is structured as follows. I will first provide an overview on the scholarly literature on organizational change in relation to sensemaking in chapter 2. I will discuss organizational change from an organizational management perspective and from a sensemaking perspective. In chapter 3 I will reflect on the way I used an ethnographic approach to better understand how people interact while making sense of organizational changes. Then, in chapter 4, I will summarize my findings in three main themes: how clarity of change plays a major role, how leaders engage in sensegiving towards employees, and how employees influence the sensemaking of their leaders. In chapter 5, I will set up a dialogue between the scholarly literature and my findings. I will discuss why clarity of changes is that important, how everyday sensemaking focusses on finding a way forward, and in what ways employee sensegiving bridges the everyday sensemaking and the longer-term sensemaking at organizational level, to arrive at a conclusion on the neatness of the sensemaking process around organizational change.

2 Theoretical background | Sensemaking in relation to organizational change

In this chapter I will give an overview of scholarly literature on organizational change in relation to sensemaking. First, I will show that the organizational and management sciences are interested in how to get individuals to change within organizational settings. Then, in the second section, I will introduce the sensemaking perspective. I will connect that perspective to organizational change and discuss the ways in which people influence the sensemaking of others in section 2.3. I will end with conclusions in the final section, connecting these to the topics that will be addressed in this thesis.

2.1 Luring individuals into change

In her literature review on change in public organizations, Rusaw (2007) defines organizational change as "a comprehensive, collaborative, and planned process of solving problems through altering foundational assumptions and beliefs of individuals in order to improve work content, structures and relationships in organizations" (p. 349). I find this definition useful, because it acknowledges the tension between the purpose of change ("solving problems"), the process that it requires ("altering foundational assumptions and beliefs") and the wide understanding of the aspects of work that need changing ("content, structures and relationships").

Within organizational and management sciences, there are various theories about how to establish change in organizations. They can be processual, suggesting a stepwise model to change organizations, or descriptive, providing a list of aspects considered important for successful organizational change (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). The processual models are variants of the model that was originally proposed by Lewin (1947) as a behavioral change model (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Lewin's model consists of three stages. First, unfreeze, where people are invited to let go of their current beliefs that sometimes requires "to bring about an emotional stir-up" (Lewin, 1947 p. 229). Second, move, shift from the current to the desired situation and, third, refreeze, anchoring the new situation. Within such model, change can take an "episodic" shape, where the organization is stable, implements a change, and returns to stability in a planned fashion, or a "continuous" shape, where the organization is continuously changing its work processes in a more reactive modus (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Interestingly, episodic change is believed to start from a stable situation, that first needs "unfreezing" to enable change, whereas continuous change is proposed to start from a variable situation, requiring "freezing" first in order to be analyzed and changed (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 379). Typically, authors assume these change types are the far ends of a continuum (Beer & Nohria, 2000; De Witte & Jonker, 2022, p. 163). Changes can combine aspects of both, which in my view can only be understood if organizational change is seen as a multi-layered process that combines understanding of the change purpose and high-level plans (i.e., episodic and planned) and appreciation of the details impacted in the day-to-day work (i.e. continuous and reactive).

In their literature review and case study, Errida and Lotfi (2021) identified twelve elements found necessary to establish successful change, of which four are identified as most relevant (p. 10). First, leadership of the change manager, defined as the extent to which the change manager can align everyone around the change. Second, effective communication: the level of ongoing and clear communication about the change. Third, motivation: whether people are actively participating in the change, and finally stakeholder engagement, assessing the level of involvement, commitment, and support of those involved.

A pattern within these change theories is that there is a change agent wanting a change and an individual who must absorb the change– the change recipient. In such a thinking frame, the key challenge of organizational change is to get individuals to change their thinking, their behaviors, or the way they do their work. Hence, scholars have worked to understand the situational factors and personality traits that influence the individual's ability to change. Situation factors include participation, availability of information, and perceived competence (Choi, 2011). Personality traits include things like emotional stability, readiness for change, commitment, openness and cynicism for the change (Oreg et al., 2011). According to these theories, individuals respond to changes based on their assumptions, expectations and impressions (Choi, 2011).

This notion that organizational change is related to individual's responses to events would connect the topic of organizational change to the concept of sensemaking, because sensemaking is the process in which individuals (or organizations as a whole) relate themselves to situations that are new or unexpected (Weick, 1995). Interestingly, that link is not often made within the organizational and change management literature. Perhaps their focus on the perspective of the change agent, and his effort to convince change recipients to get onboard, steers them away from a genuine interest in how people cope with changing organizational circumstances. On the contrary, scholars in the area of sensemaking have been studying organizational change from the start, because they consider organizational change as a so-called "cue" for sensemaking (Weick, 1995). From their perspective, organizational change stirs up the usual ways of working, interactions, and experiences so that it invites people to reflect and to create new ways of understanding, i.e., to make sense. In the next sections, I will first discuss the ways in which organizational sensemaking is understood and then connect that to the topic of organizational change.

2.2 Perspectives on organizational sensemaking

A widely referred work on organizational sensemaking is that of Karl Weick (1995). He defines sensemaking as a process that aims to "structure the unknown" (p. 4), triggered by a situation in which what is happening is no longer in line with the expectations (a cue). When using the sensemaking thinking frame, one is interested in "how they construct what they construct, why, and with what effects" (p. 4). This means that sensemaking is an active process that does not only include interpretation. Instead, the sensemaking process shapes the situation that is made sense of (p. 8).

According to Weick (1995, p. 50) sensemaking is an ongoing process, that is "focused on and by extracted cues". In the flow of events in organizational life (and life, as a matter of fact), people tend to give attention to aspects that are familiar to them as a starting point to understand what might be going on. Such aspects are referred to as a "cues." The understanding that is created (i.e., the sense made) is dependent on context, in that the context determines both whether or not the cue is selected and how it is interpreted (Weick, 1995, p. 51). The selection of cues is referred to as "bracketing" (Weick, 1995, p. 35). In the context of organizations, bracketing can be influenced by, for example, organizing meetings and workshops. Even if that meeting doesn't seem notable, it can offer participants a cue that triggers sensemaking (Weick, 1995, p. 45).

Because people do not only respond to the cue, but with that also create their organizational context, they are impacting the organization and its culture through organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995, Ch. 3). Within organizations, there are four levels of sensemaking, that align with the four levels of social interaction suggested by Wiley (1988). These are individual (self), intersubjective (interaction), generic subjective (social) and extrasubjective (cultural). Weick argues that for sensemaking within organizations it is important to understand what happens at the two middle levels (intersubjective and generic subjective), because this is where the "organizing" happens- the processes to "effectively coordinate action" (Weick, 1995, p. 72). At the intersubjective level, the individual self connects with other individuals to make joint sense of situations they are exposed to (Wiley, 1988). In organizations, the sense made is captured at the generic subjective level in an understanding of roles, rules that have to be followed, and modes of interaction that belong to role and context (Wiley, 1988). This is also referred to as organizational schemas (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Kraft et al., 2015) or (shared) accounts (Maitlis, 2005).

In their overview article on organizational sensemaking, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) observe differences in the ways scholars have been defining the concept of sensemaking. Scholars seem to agree that sensemaking is a process that is triggered by a cue, a "violation of expectations" (p. 70). Such a violation can be small ("something is not quite right", p. 70) or large, with a "cosmology episode occurring when people suddenly and deeply feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system" (Weick, 1993) at the far end. The sensemaking process that follows is understood to be either more individual and cognitive, aiming to develop "frameworks, schemata, or mental models" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 62) or more social, where people together "construct accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively" (p. 62).

A second scholarly debate on sensemaking is whether the cognitive understanding of both cues and the accounts that emerge from sensemaking is not ignoring the embodied aspects of sensemaking. Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) argue that sensemaking should be understood less abstract and much closer to the "lived experience of everyday" (p. 64). In such lived experience, the embodied interpretations play a key role. With that, both cues and accounts can be combinations of cognition and "bodily sensations, felt experiences, emotions and sensory knowing." De Rond e.a. (2019) illustrate that with examples from a journey in which they rowed the Amazon river. They noticed a discrepancy between the boat's actual speed and the felt effort they put in using embodied signals, such as observing floating debris and feeling the lactate acid building in their muscles, respectively. Making sense of that, also using more cognitive inputs such as online searches, they discovered how the tide affected the upstream river much more heavily than they anticipated.

Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) developed a typology of sensemaking that is helpful to understand how the individual, the cognitive, the social, and the embodied sensemaking might work simultaneously or sequentially. They recognize four types of sensemaking: immanent, involved-deliberate, detached-deliberate, and representational sensemaking that are painted in four characteristics: the sense-action nexus, temporality, embodiment, and language. This is summarized in Table 1.

	Immanent	Involved-deliberate	Detached-deliberate	Representational
Sense-action nexus	Unified	Partly unified, partly separate	Temporarily separate	Completely separate
Temporality	Immediate (practical)	Both immediate and retrospective-prospective (pragmatic)	Retrospective-prospective (pragmatic)	Retrospective-prospective (analytic)
Embodiment	Mostly bodily	Partly bodily, partly cognitive	Mostly cognitive	Fully cognitive
Language	Performative	Mostly performative	Mainly representational	Representational

Table 1. *Overview of the sensemaking typology proposed by Sandberg and Tsoukas* (2020, p. 9).

The "sense-action nexus" refers to the extent to which there is a separation between the subject and the object that is made sense of. When working, people are often part of their context. They know what to do because that context provides meaning. An example of that is a pilot for whom the cockpit is a logical combination of instruments that cue action. The pilot does not need to contemplate about an instrument reading first, but responds intuitively (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 5). When that no longer works, the pilot is triggered to look at the situation from a distance to make sense of the situation and decide on appropriate action, i.e., the subject and object separate. Temporality explains whether there is elapsed time between the cue and the sensemaking. When the time between cue and sensemaking is longer, the sensemaking becomes more retrospective in nature, aiming to decide on future action (i.e., prospective). Embodiment refers to the extent to which the body is used to receive and process cues within the sensemaking process. Sandberg and Tsoukas emphasize that meaning can be captured as well in bodily movements (p. 6). Language is the type of language that is used. It can be performative, with the aim to accomplish a task, or representational, to describe the situation, its features, or the problems with it.

Immanent sensemaking and involved-deliberate sensemaking are both done while continuing the work. In both cases, there is an interruption that triggers the sensemaking that needs a response. In immanent sensemaking that response follows intuitively, in involved-deliberate sensemaking it requires a deliberate effort (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). In their study in an elderly home, Yakhlef and Essén (2013) have observed immanent sensemaking. They observed that the nurses developed habits that allow them to intuitively carry out their tasks while responding to situations in the moment. They for example describe how nurses systematically check if everything is okay (such as smells, the hand temperature, the tidiness of a room) upon entering a room and respond without really thinking about it (p. 891-892). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) illustrate involved-deliberate sensemaking with the pilots that landed a plane on the Hudson River in 2009 because of motor failure (p. 11-12). The pilots used their embodied experience to notice something strange was ongoing and to continue flying. At the same time, they considered options for landing the plane safely by giving meaning to their situation – their location, the flight path, the applicable safety procedures.

While engaging in detached-deliberate sensemaking and representational sensemaking people are outside of the situation. The essential difference between the two types is that representational sensemaking is done by external people, such as researchers or advisors and detached-deliberate sensemaking is done by the workers themselves. The sensemaking becomes more similar to interpretation, because people are not engaged in the activity but are talking about it, making it a merely cognitive process (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). An example of this type of sensemaking is provided by Kihlberg and Lindberg who studied the Swedish police reform, showing how leaders jointly make sense of the new situation (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). An example of representational sensemaking are the inquiries that are organized after disasters, with the aim to figure out what happened, why did that happen and how can we prevent it from happening in the future (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 15).

According to Maitlis and Christianson (2014), there are three organizational circumstances that trigger sensemaking episodes– crises, threats to (organizational) identity, and planned change (pp. 71-78). A crisis warrants involved-deliberate sensemaking. In the Mann Gulch disaster, a wildfire that developed in an unexpected manner and killed 13 out of 16 "smoke jumpers" that were tasked with fighting the fire (Weick, 1993). In such crises there is no time for detached-deliberate sensemaking, because it does not make any sense to stop activities to figure out what might be the best course of action when you fight a fire. It is more about reducing the confusion and the "frightening feeling that their old labels were no longer working" (p. 636). It seems that the results of involved-detached sensemaking (using an escape fire (p. 629) and finding an escape route through a narrow crack in a ridge (p. 638)) helped the survivors to survive, because the intuitive ways to address the crisis did no longer work. However, the team was not successful in sensemaking at an organizational level, because the existing organizing structures "unraveled" (p. 628). Examples of sensemaking triggered by threats to identity (e.g., Ran & Golden, 2011) and planned change (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Stensaker et al., 2008) show that these sensemaking processes happen at a longer time scale. Therefore, there is more time to rebuild organizing structures when they fail. I suggest seeing such failure as a cue to make sense, i.e., to structure the new situation. People can resort to detached-deliberate sensemaking to do that, or even ask outsiders to help making sense (representational sensemaking), pulling the sensemaking in a more cognitive modus. Weick's example of Hawick's high-quality cashmere sweater manufacturers, who needed to develop a common idea on how to differentiate from cheaper competitors, is an example of sensemaking detached from the work (Weick, 1995, Chapter 3).

I think it is important to realize that the typology of Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) concerns the sensemaking process, but not the cues that trigger them. So, when they argue that detached-deliberate sensemaking is more cognitive in nature, they talk about the response to the cue, rather than about the cue itself. In his literature review, Cristofaro (2022) observes that sensemaking is generally believed to start from embodied feelings, that induce an affective state. So, although a sensemaking process might be cognitive in nature, it can be triggered by an embodied cue, which in my view is an interesting topic for further study.

Now we have explored both organizational change (section 2.1) and sensemaking (section 2.2) I will link the two together below. How can the sensemaking lens help to study organizational change? How do leaders influence the sensemaking of employees? Do employees also influence the sensemaking of their leaders?

2.3 A sensemaking lens on organizational change

Comparing sensemaking to the change theories presented in section 2.1, I think that the sensemaking perspective offers a more intricate notion of organizational change. Rather than assuming that people one-directionally want (change agents) or respond to (change recipients) change, sensemaking looks at how people *interact* with change. It acknowledges that people are not only responding to change or the need thereof but are also creating the context of the change and the change itself.

When trying to implement changes, organizations seek to change the organizational schemas. The rules and interactions that used to work do not work any longer. Those malfunctions are cues for sensemaking– uncertainty, ambiguity, and confusion (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), that need to be addressed so that a suitable way forward is found (Weick, 1995). People need sensemaking to get that done, because the sensemaking process helps them to grasp what is going on and create a new understanding of the situation that supports ongoing action. For example, in their study on a strategic change on a university, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found that people were assessing what the leader was doing and saying in an attempt to gain understanding of the new direction (p. 439). The case study of Balogun and Johnson (2005), discussing a restructuring process of a company, showed how tensions are building up between the newly formed divisions, because people failed to understand who was supposed to do what, resulting in an attempt to continue “business as usual” (p. 11). I think it is important to notice that in the latter example, the sensemaking does not contribute to getting the change done. This illustrates that people seek a ‘plausible story’ (Weick, 1995, p. 55) to enable the continuation of their work, not necessarily a way to implement the change.

Another characteristic of sensemaking is that it is also a process in which the day-to-day events, interactions and experiences are shaped and interpreted in relation to the momentary understanding of what the change might mean. That would imply that sensemaking in the context of organizational change is, as I argued in section 2.1, indeed a combination of the episodic and planned understanding emerging from high-level plans and the continuous and reactive nature that follows from an appreciation of the details impacted in the day-to-day work. This is I think an interesting contrast with the scholarly literature on change management, which in majority seems to focus on the common understanding of the high-level direction and planning of the change (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020, pp. 21–22) suggest that all four different sensemaking types are present in organizational changes. Representational sensemaking, for example leading to a report from an external body, a new political reality, or a new societal demand, may indicate that the organization needs to adapt. The situation is a cue for the management team to engage in detached-deliberate sensemaking (what is going on? What does it mean for us? What are courses of action?) with the aim to design a plan forward. The resulting plan is a cue for middle managers and team members to start involved-deliberate sensemaking. They have to continue their tasks while they are making sense of the new demands and the proposed change (what does it exactly mean for our work? What new skills are to be acquired?) Finally, the new ways of working need to stabilize at an immanent level, people then carry out the new tasks intuitively and know how to respond to small disturbances.

Scholars who have studied organizational change using a sensemaking perspective have found that people seek to influence each other’s sensemaking, because they want the change to move in a desired direction (e.g., Maitlis, 2005). In their study on the impact of state budget cuts on the identity of a university Ran and Golden (2011) coined the term “sense-exchanging”, referring to the way people influence the sensemaking of each other and create a common construction of the identity of the organization. More generally, this is referred to as sensegiving: “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organization reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), implying that it concerns the attempt to influence the outcome of the sensemaking rather than the sensemaking process itself. Typically, authors propose that this sensegiving happens both from leader to employee and vice versa, so that it takes place in a so-called sensegiving-sensemaking cycle (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021; Kraft et al., 2015; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This cycle is depicted in figure 1.

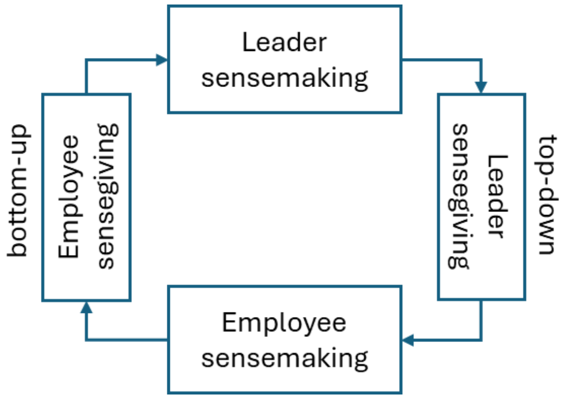

Figure 1. *Schematic illustration of the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle.*

The cycle is thought to proceed as follows. First, the leader makes sense of the change, she[2] might for example establish an understanding of the impact of the change and what is needed to implement it (Kraft et al., 2015). Then, she engages in sensegiving, explaining the change to her team and inspire them to participate (Rouleau, 2005). Then, employees start to make sense of the change. They may seek to connect to peers to do so (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) and they may "adopt, alter, resist or reject" the change (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Once employees have made sense, they may engage in sensegiving towards their leaders, perhaps resulting in renewed sensemaking by the leader. The bottom-up part of the cycle is not described or studied as much as the top-down part. Kihlberg and Lindberg (2021) coin the term "reflexive sensegiving" that they define as "a multivocal process aiming to influence how the sensemaking [...] evolves" (p. 483) and describe how the leaders deliberately kept things open, inviting their teams "to participate to create the new management philosophy" (p. 481). Reflexive sensegiving could be understood as a joint sensegiving process, which combines leader sensegiving and employee sensegiving. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) explain how employees were proposed "scenarios" to respond to and refine so that the richness of the scenario and the understanding thereof grew simultaneously (p. 441). On the other hand, Cristofaro (2022) in his extensive literature review limits his explanation of employee sensegiving to "[employees are] influencing the hierarchy [author refers to the leadership], then, the hierarchy may, or may not adapt" (p. 401), while emphasizing the role of power in the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle. Also Kraft (2015) draws an arrow back to the leader, but he argues that "leaders are privileged for sensegiving due to their hierarchical position" (p. 311). Further, Kraft confirms that current literature "focuses on the direction from leader to employee" (p. 310).

However, because employees have more detailed knowledge and experiences of their work, it seems important that their sensemaking triggers new leader sensemaking. In her ethnographic study on change in a healthcare setting Pedersen (2019) observed how leaders and employees "make sense of what is going on by voicing narratives" (p. 128). The leader

[2] Throughout this thesis I will use the pronouns she, he, him, and her in a mixed fashion. Where the female form is used the male form can be read and vice versa, except when I refer to informants or authors.

uses an “epic narrative” (p. 130) to inspire his team to adopt the change. When the new way of working was implemented, however, the team discovered it did not always work as expected. There were unseen consequences, ambiguities and tensions that were expressed in “ante-narratives” (p. 130) and “tragic narratives” (p. 130) that inspired the leaders and employees to address them to be able to end up with a shared understanding of the way of working and how that makes sense. Although Pedersen does not explicitly refer to a sensegiving-sensemaking cycle, it seems that what she describes is a cycle that is fueled by narratives. I would argue that the ante-narratives and tragic narratives, emerging from action, feeling, and thinking of employees, are examples of employee sensegiving.

An interesting pattern in the work on sensegiving in either direction is the emphasis on cognitive or verbal acts of influencing the sensemaking of others. When talking about sensegiving, most authors use terms that are associated with influencing, narrating and interpreting (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kraft et al., 2015; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Rouleau, 2005; Vlaar et al., 2008), rather than more embodied constructs (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). Although Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) and Kraft (2015) mention the use of rituals, symbols or symbolic action, and Cristofaro (2022) argues that “the emotional and cognitive are strongly connected” (p. 402) in the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle, the role of embodied experiences within sensegiving in my view deserves more attention.

A functioning sensegiving-sensemaking cycle is associated with organizational sensemaking, i.e., the ability of the organization to create a shared understanding of the change, because the feedback of employees, the insights obtained while attempting to apply the changed thinking in the everyday work, then alters the thinking of leaders about the change. In her extensive ethnographic study at three British symphony orchestras, Maitlis (2005) has analyzed the social dynamics between leaders and employees while resolving 27 issues[3] that occurred over a longer period of time. The outcome of her work is a conceptualization of the four forms of organizational sensemaking that occur depending on the energy put into sensegiving by either leaders or employees. Her concept is illustrated in Figure 2. The four forms are guided, fragmented, restricted, and minimal organizational sensegiving.

[3] Although an issue is not the same as a change, I reckon the study applicable to organizational change as well, in line with Rusaw’s (2007) definition of organizational change, that uses the term “problems”.

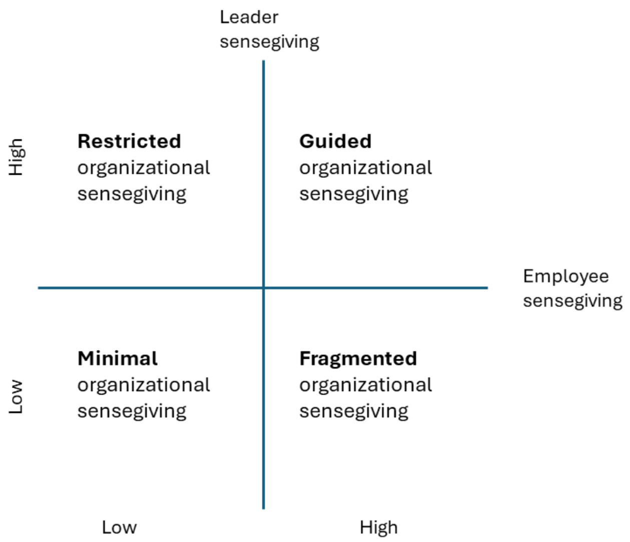

Figure 2. *Conceptualization of different forms of organizational sensemaking based on the extent at which leaders and employees engage in sensegiving* (Maitlis, 2005, p. 32).

Guided organizational sensemaking happens when both leaders and employees engage in sensegiving. This leads to an intense flow of information that is systematically shared. The result of that is that there is a commonly shared and rich idea of what the change entails. When employees are actively engaged in sensegiving, but leaders are not, this results in fragmented organizational sensemaking. Because leaders are not combining employees' views into one perspective,[4] this leads to a myriad of views on the change, that are less detailed and clear than the shared views developed in guided organizational sensemaking. When leaders are actively giving sense, but employees do not attempt to alter the views provided, the organizational sense becomes restricted: there is a common view, yet it is not very detailed. Finally, when neither leaders nor employees engage in sensegiving, everyone seems to wait for everyone to start making sense of the issue ahead, that leads to minimal organizational sensemaking. No shared view onto the change is developed (Maitlis, 2005).

The form of organizational sensemaking is associated with the ways in which actions are taken to implement the change. Because of the commonly shared, clear direction, guided organizational sensemaking leads to an "emergent series of consistent action" (p. 32). Fragmented sensemaking tends to lead to confusion, because multiple views are present about what the change entails and what needs to be done. This leads to inconsistent action. Restricted and minimal sensemaking fail to create a clear and shared view onto the change and the next steps, and therefore at most lead to a one-time actions. (Maitlis, 2005). In sum, when leaders are not engaging in sensegiving that has adverse effects the ability to implement the change, because it at most leads to inconsistent action (fragmented sensemaking). However, when employees do not engage in sensegiving, there is at most a

[4] Maitlis suggests that leader sensegiving has two objectives, to influence the sensemaking process and its outcome by emphasizing the important aspects of the change, and to be a catalyst to align perspectives on the change.

high-level view of the change ahead (restricted sensemaking), that fails to include their detailed knowledge of the work.

2.4 Conclusion | Three emerging themes

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of scholarly literature on organizational change in relation to sensemaking. Based on that I extracted three themes that I think are worth exploring further.

The first theme is the two different perspectives for which sensemaking in relation to organizational change can be considered. One perspective concerns the sensemaking detached from the work that occurs over a longer period, and gradually grows the understanding of the direction and purpose of the change and plans ahead. The other perspective concerns making sense as part of the everyday work– the experiences, events and interactions around the change (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). The scholarly literature on sensemaking usually does not explicitly make a distinction between these perspectives (e.g., Cristofaro, 2022; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Weick, 1995). An exception seems to be the more longitudinal studies (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Stensaker et al., 2008), which in a way emphasize the need of sensemaking triggered by everyday experiences.

The second theme that emerges is the lack of study on the sensegiving by employees. The sensegiving directed from leaders to employees (e.g., Kraft et al., 2015; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) got more scholarly attention than the sensegiving directed from employees to leaders, although there are few studies that describe it (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). For a successful change, the bottom-up part of the cycle, the employee influencing the sensemaking of the leader is crucial as detailed consequences of the change are only uncovered in the details of the day-to-day work (Pedersen, 2019) and a lack of their sensegiving leads to at most a high-level view of the change ahead (Maitlis, 2005).

The third theme is the way in which embodied experiences play a role in sensegiving. Most scholars describe sensegiving as a verbal and cognitive process (e.g., Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau, 2005). In recent years, the absence of attention for embodied aspects of sensemaking has been debated (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; De Rond et al., 2019), and sensemaking is now believed to start from embodied feelings, that induce an affective state that influences the cognitive sensemaking (Cristofaro, 2022). Therefore, it seems likely that also sensegiving can take an embodied shape, but that is not well described yet.

In my thesis research, I will try to add knowledge to these themes and observe the ways in which people within organizations make sense of changes. I will take an ethnographic approach to study sensemaking in relation to changes in a public organization, so that I am immersed in the organization for a longer time, allowing me to see both the details and the broader picture. To start with, I will discuss my research method in the next chapter.

3 Research Method

As shown in the previous chapter, many scholars from the domain of organization and management sciences have studied organizational change (e.g. Errida & Lotfi, 2021), but do typically not use the sensemaking perspective to do so. On the other hand, scholars with an interest for sensemaking do often use organizational change as their subject of study (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). Most of them use an ethnographic approach. Quantitative approaches I deemed not suitable to answer my research question, because I was interested in the detailed ways people interact with each other to make sense of changes. Qualitative options available were case study (like e.g., Vlaar et al., 2008), interviews with people from different organizations or locations (like e.g., Van der Meulen, 2020), interviews supported by diaries (like e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005) or ethnography, combining observations, interviews and document analysis to study everyday work (Ybema et al., 2009).

To be able to observe how people make sense of changes, I decided to use an ethnographic approach, because that would provide the closeness that is required to understand how sensemaking happens in the midst of the everyday work life, for which I thought observations are key, which are not a consistent part of case and interview studies. Scholars emphasize the need to study the "humdrum, everyday experiences of people working in organizations" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 1), because that helps to understand what people within organizations really do. This is important, because people may find it difficult to explain what they are doing out of context, such as in questionnaires or hindsight interviews (Barley & Kunda, 2001, p. 81). Smith (2001), reflecting on ethnographies of work, confirms that, but emphasizes the need to also understand why people are doing what they do.

I started at Kappa[5] as senior advisor for improvement and change at the start of the second year of my master study (July 2023). Therefore, an opportunity arose to do this ethnographic thesis research at my employer. Being new to the organization I was in a good position to "appreciate the extraordinary-in-the-ordinary" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 2) that is helpful to really understand the interactions between people around changes. To maintain my fresh eyes, while arranging consent for the study I kept a diary and jotted down my experiences, my views and amazement about the things that happened in my first months in the job.

The consent for my study was obtained in early November 2023. I explained my research and my dual position (researcher and senior advisor) verbally and in email to the management team, all operational managers within the division and the team I work with most closely. The data collection was conducted in four months, from November 2023 up until February 2024, during which I worked 36 hours per week. About two thirds of that time is spent in meetings and workshops. Because my professional role concerned improvement and change, most of these meetings and workshops are on, or relate to, organizational change. The total

[5] Pseudonym

observation and (informal) interview time I therefore estimate at approximately four hundred hours. The organization provided me with full freedom to execute the research in the way I deemed useful.[6] As I worked as an advisor for change and improvement and was part of the management team of one of the divisions, I had a logical access to various teams in various organizational layers. I used three study methods that I will elaborate on below.

First, I observed colleagues in their day-to-day work. People within Kappa typically carry a notebook (pen and paper), so I could jot down observations easily during meetings and workshops. Sometimes, when I was in a situation that was interesting and suitable, I asked questions to clarify what was happening. At the end of each working day, I elaborated on these jottings into more in depth field notes in a diary, following the suggestions of Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001).

Second, I interviewed informants. Because I wanted to allow unexpected findings to emerge, I chose to first do three explorative interviews.[7] After a first analysis round, I continued with six semi-structured ones. The nine informants covered three hierarchical layers (heads, managers, and employees), four departments, were evenly spread in gender, and relatively well spread in terms of tenure and age[8]. I added an overview of the informants in Appendix A. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized manually. In transcriptions I did not make references to explicit situations or persons, but I did not take out specific verbatim.[9] Interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes, except one that took 35 minutes.

Finally, I included organizational documents in my data where relevant. I did not gather documentation in a structural way, but when I came across texts (for example, policies, emails, memos) that provided insights onto organizational change, I copied them in my field notes.

Observations, interviews, and document extracts were coded using Atlas.ti. After two months (end of December 2023) I coded the field notes and (three) interviews. I did use the set of basic questions that Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) proposed[10] to integrate my understanding of the research context. I coded using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965). I combined initial codes into potential overarching themes, departing from grounded theory and taking a thematic analysis approach instead (Braun & Clarke, 2006), because I felt that the answer of the research question would not be a 'grounded theory', but a collection of insights. The emerging themes from the intermediate analysis shaped further observations

[6] Kappa's strategy and policy department reviewed the end product and allowed publication in the outside world.
[7] Interview question: "If we were to make a documentary about change within Kappa, what would need to be in there?"
[8] I am not providing age categories and tenures to protect anonymity of my informants.
[9] In using the quotations in my thesis or memo's, the translation to English includes taking out verbatim that may identify the informant.
[10] These are questions like "What is going on?" "How are members stratified?" What do actors pay attention to? What is important, preoccupying, critical?" and "What names do they attach to objects, events, …?" (p. 163)

and semi-structured interviews (see appendix B). At the end of the data collection, I started from the codes and themes I used mid-way and expanded that with new ones, again doing constant comparison (Glaser, 1965) in combination with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Before, during and after the data collection I did literature review and gradually connected insights to my own findings. After integrating the literature review into key concepts, I did a second-order coding of all materials, following the example of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991).

A key challenge worth reflecting upon is my distance to the field. To be able to "make the familiar strange" it was important that I did not immerse too much in my research environment. If I did, I would lose the ability to be surprised by what everyone sees as normal (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). This is especially true for observations, that are filtered by the prior experiences and opinions of the researcher (Emerson et al., 2001). Being an employee of Kappa and an experienced manager of change and transformation, I do have a normative lens on organizational change and an ambition to do well in my new role, hence, to influence what is happening around me 'to make it right.' At the same time, I needed to be an objective researcher too, seeking to avoid normativity and stay curious to gain understanding of what is happening and why they happen the way they do. This duality is not only present in myself, but also for my interlocutors, most of them working with me both in my role as employee and as researcher.

Starting with my interlocutors, in the day-to-day work I do not think they were acting differently because I was doing research. I informed them about my research role prior to the observation period and mentioned now and then how I got on or what I found. I did so to see whether my findings were recognized, or to deepen my understanding, but it may have had the effect that I reminded people that I was doing the research too. From an ethical perspective, I think that helped me and my interlocutors to stay aware of the duality in my role. On the other hand, observation moments and the small talk about my progress were usually not coinciding. The observation moments were closely tied to my function as senior advisor and therefore people did expect me to think along and advise, rather than being reminded that I was also observing them as a researcher. During the interviews people were of course very much aware they were meeting me in a research role. I noticed that most of them were using the moment to reflect on change within Kappa and compared that to their ideas about what ideal changes entail. Because my questions forced further reflection, that probably lead them to be less nuanced than they would have been when talking to, for example, their manager. Therefore, I think I got a somewhat less polished version of their thinking about change, which is valuable for the research, but also urged me to continue to pay attention to safeguarding their anonymity.

For myself, I needed to find ways to explicitly keep distance between me and the field in the role of researcher. The fact that I just started in the organization did help on this matter. However, in trying to do a good job in my new role, of course I wanted to show I was committed and involved. It was sometimes hard not to forget I was a researcher too, to stay interested in what was really going on, especially when I tried to achieve something important in my job and I needed to influence what was happening to meet my objectives. To do an as good as possible job as a researcher too, I applied rigor in my reflection routines. Every single evening when I travelled home, I wrote field notes for about half an hour, writing down details of conversations and reflecting on what happened. This is reflected in my diary. It shows for example a description of some event, then the word "etic," a colon, and some idea of what the observation might mean. During my analysis, I paid attention to the number of times a similar finding came up and did second-order analysis, checking my outcomes with all materials (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), ensuring as much as possible they were real and based on multiple sources.

Furthermore, the dialogue I set up with scholarly literature helped me to develop my thinking on organizational change and sensemaking and to be aware of prior assumptions, so that I could avoid them to influence my findings. This connection with literature helped me, as Van Maanen (1988) puts it, "to stand on the shoulders of giants" (p. 52) to interpret my data in a sensible way. For example, in my work I am a structured person who is convinced solid results can only emerge from structured work. So, my prior assumption about change was that it requires structure. I noticed that I was sensitive to situations where structure was lacking. I became aware of this possible bias and took care to justify this type of findings by seeking more evidence, checking with peers in casual conversations and making the connection to literature, e.g., the idea that sensemaking that leads to a "plausible story" is sufficient for people (Weick, 1995, p. 55).

Finally, I took a reflexive attitude while writing, ensuring that I understand what I write, why I write it, and why I write it in this way, similar to the reflexiveness that is illustrated by Watson (1995), who within his amusing article on the role of rhetoric in organizations makes his internal dialogue visible about what to write and how. This reflexive writing mode forced me to double check the outcomes and write them down in a way that recognizes the possibility that other interpretations may be present (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 51). In addition, six people read along with me in various stages of the writing process, so that I could take out unclarities, errors and inconsistencies continually.

4 Findings | Organizational change at Kappa

4.1 The research setting

I approach the building of Kappa[11] *just in time for my second-round job interview. I park my bike in front of the glass 4-story building. The entrance is elevated from the ground, stairs lead up to the large revolving door. I get into the reception area, there is a white reception desk with two security officers. I tell them who I am, and I have to show my ID after which they make a call. I sit down in a small waiting area, with a light fluffy carpet and two small seats. The recruitment officer appears, and I follow him. We enter a large atrium through glass doors, which open with his badge. The main color is, just like in the reception area, white. It has a modern vibe to it. It appears to be a central square, where people sit around the few round tables. The center is a long rectangular space that is about a meter lower than the rest of the floor. The sides of this pit form couches, the floor of it is covered with taupe colored carpet. Looking up, I can see the glass roof. I see a large yellow artwork that fills the open space. I will learn later it is made specifically for Kappa and symbolizes all the different buildings the organization occupied in its 35-year history. All around, I can see people working on desks through the glass walls of the upper floors. I get tea from a little pantry and the recruitment officer takes me to one of the meeting rooms at the side. Unlike all other meeting rooms I have seen in my life, this one does not have a table with chairs, but couches and armchairs. I meet the head I will report to if I make it through this interview and the online assessment that will follow. We start our conversation.*

Kappa, where I started working as a senior advisor for change and improvement in July 2023, is a well-known public organization[12] in the North of the Netherlands. The study is mostly situated in a division that has the task of collecting money citizens owe to public organizations in one way or another and provides the services that are related to that, such as offering payment schemes. Being a public organization, Kappa reports to a ministry and the influence of the government is palpable. For example, when a resolution ['motie'] of a member of the House of Representatives ['Tweede Kamer'] that relates to debts and hence to the work of Kappa, is accepted it appears almost immediately in the group app of the management team, where vivid discussions start on what it might mean for the organization.

The people within this section of Kappa mostly do administrative work. The general flow of the work is automated. Tasks that the IT system cannot handle, for example payments that cannot be processed, persons having questions or in need of help, or the change of an address, are executed by employees. Within the organization, there is a distinction between these employees, referred to as "operational", being part of "operational teams" and others, like me, who are not directly involved in the primary processes, but support it by providing help, solving problems, maintaining IT systems or preparing changes in those systems. All

[11] Pseudonym

[12] Uitvoerende Rijksoverheidsorganisatie

employees are in teams of 20-35 employees supervised by a manager. All managers report to a head. Heads, then, report to a director. The upper management team consists of three of those directors, a general director and director of strategy and policy. My observations and interviews are concentrating, but are not fully limited to, one division headed by one of the directors[13].

Symbolized by the main building presented in the opening vignette, it feels to me as if Kappa is combining both formal, hard (the white materials and rational artwork) and the informal, soft (the fluffy carpets and armchairs) in the work life. For example, the performance of employees, such as the number of tasks completed and duration thereof is monitored and acted upon and at the same time, almost every floor has a football table and people jointly do jigsaw puzzles during breaks.

In this study, next to a couple of smaller changes, the focus of my data collection is around two organizational changes Kappa is working on. Both are longer-term strategic changes that are implemented stepwise, while "we keep the store ['de toko'] running" (Remco, head) [14].

The first change concerns the automation and robotization[15] of Kappa's processes. The digitalization of society and the growth of the organization lead Kappa to increasingly automate its processes, although "We robotize and automate ever since we exist" (Marjan, director). According to some employees, like Fien (operational employee), automation takes away work and makes the remaining bit simpler. A manager told me that his team members called robots "job snatchers" ['werkafpakkers'], expressing a similar kind of indignancy. For other operational employees, like Erik, automation and robotization have a more positive connotation: "We are doing it now like this and we will do it like that, and then it gets nicer." Remco (head) agrees with that: "Often it [the work we robotize] is deadly boring work, which employees otherwise had to do." At the same time, he emphasizes that automation is not restricted to the simple tasks: "one could build an algorithm that to some extent has got intelligence or can make decisions."

The second change is generally referred to as "the movement ['de beweging'] from product-oriented[16] to person-oriented working." Astrid (manager) explains to me that this change is in line with the societal movement of "socially responsible collection […] to avoid problematic debts." This requires Kappa to consider the situation of the individual as a whole, the willingness and ability to pay in combination with the person's outstanding payments, and choose a response based on that. Mark, another manager, explains that the person-oriented

[13] The word "division" is not used. The organization talks about "directie," within there, there are "afdelingen" (departments). The director heads the "directie" and the heads ["hoofden"] head the "afdelingen."
[14] All quotes in this thesis are translated from Dutch. All names in the quotes are pseudonyms, except my own.
[15] Where automation concerns a process that is entirely ran within a computer system, robotization mimics the tasks of an employee.
[16] A product is one specific payment type that Kappa is handling.

approach aims to help people to get out of their debts. "That in itself, I find a very noble endeavor," he says, indicating that he likes the direction Kappa is going in.

In this chapter, I will describe the way people within Kappa experience, talk about, and cope with these and other changes, either resulting from strategic goals or the need to improve. In doing so, I will focus on how people, leaders and employees, influence and interact with each other to gain understanding of the change or its consequences (i.e., the functioning of the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle). I will suggest that the perceived clarity of the change is central to this influencing process. In the next section, I will first discuss how people within Kappa judge the clarity of changes and how that impacts their experiences and ability to act. Then, in the two sections after that, I will discuss how leaders and employees interact and influence each other, looked at in two directions, top-down (from leader to employee) and bottom-up (from employee to leader). [17]

4.2 A large, rainy cloud | About the clarity of changes

In this section I will illustrate how people are looking for clarity of organizational changes, and how that is associated with their tendency to take action. Which elements shape their perception of change clarity? In what ways does the perceived absence of clarity impact how people experience the change? How does that fit in Kappa's culture?

I am tasked with creating an overview of all the improvement initiatives in one of the management teams. The idea is that such an overview helps to gain a common understanding of what improvements are being worked on and that the team can prioritize and align. I sent the managers an email, asking them to list the improvement initiatives initiated in their scope. I added a table to fill out, which demands insight into what problem each initiative tries to address, what is the cause of that problem and what are the actions taken. One of the managers responds quickly. She talked to Rutger, the head. "The both of you [Rutger and author] do not have a common understanding of the how," she writes. I respond that we did indeed not align on the how, as it is part of my expertise to propose such. The manager responds again swiftly. "We will now ['ff'] not do anything until Rutger's assignment is clear."

In this situation, the manager, who is in the employee position here, argues that there is no clarity about the assignment, because she noticed a lack of alignment between me and Rutger (in the leader position). The use of the pronoun 'we' suggests that she has been talking to her colleagues before deciding to not complete the task requested. At the same time, the argument is not about what is asked or the purpose of that, but about the way it would be executed and the endorsement of Rutger. Apparently, even if the contents and

[17] To clarify, in this chapter I use the word 'leader' when I mean the person that is implementing the change, and the word 'employee' when I mean the person that is receiving the change. In some situations, the employee can turn into a leader, such as when a manager is first receiving the change (in employee position) from the head (in leader position) and then the manager takes the leader position to interact with his team members (in the employee position). At the same time, a support employee can be in a leader position, if she is coordinating a change, but also be in an employee position, for example if she is asked to implement a change.

purpose are clear, a lack of clarity in method and leader endorsement gives the employee a reason to decline the request. Her assumption seems to be that the clarity could have been easily provided, and therefore she rightfully can say she will wait to act until that is done, especially because her peers apparently support her viewpoint. This indicates that for the manager a lack of clarity is seen as a reason not to act.

Various other interlocutors I met within Kappa indicate that they find it important that changes and improvements are clear, because clarity enables them to act confidently. The quest for clarity around a change is illustrated by Kim, Astrid and Maartje.

> I enjoy completing tasks. I like results. If we would together conclude that we are not fully clear where we want to go, what the direction is, but we decide to already take this or that step, then it is okay for me. […] But if we say we have a very clear dot [on the horizon], but that dot is actually not clear, and we are just pretending it is, that I find complicated. […] Then it is too vague for me… the management seems to be convinced that that is the dot on the horizon, but I do only see a very large, rainy cloud… – Kim.

According to Kim (manager, in the employee position here), the change is clear for the management, but she perceives it as vague. For her, that seems to lead to a reluctance to take steps, because she prefers a situation in which everyone agrees on the extent to which the change is clear. Kim seems to express uneasiness, using words like "complicated" and "too vague." With a similar kind of uneasiness, Astrid (manager) and Maartje (operational employee) use the words "bits and pieces" ['flarden'] and "noise" ['ruis'] in relation to changes that are not clear in full. Astrid explains how her picture of the change is scattered: "You hear bits and pieces here and there, but I do not really have [a clear view]." This suggests that Astrid has a fragmented view, and that those fragments do not yet fit together in a coherent picture. Maartje uses the word "noise" when she means to describe apprehension that resulted from absence of clarity: "There is unclarity, because a lot of it is still very uncertain, and that gives space to noise." For Maartje, the noise fills the gaps that are left open because clarity is not yet provided, and hence, the noise signals to her that unclarity exists.

Kappa employees use a variety of perspectives to judge whether a change is clear. Most observed perspectives are the contents of the change, its purpose and the mandate leaders have. Mark (manager) emphasizes the need to be clear about the contents of the change: "You need to express that expectation, this and this is what I expect from you." In Mark's experience, his team members require clarity to enable them to reflect on their ability to change along. "You need to agree together, as in, yes, I see you doing that." Hence, Mark seems to find it logical that a leader clarifies the change.

Second, the need for a clear purpose, to understand why a certain change is required, was illustrated when I was coaching a manager trying to solve a problem. She wanted to reduce the queue of a specific task to a maximum of five days. A team member (in employee position) of her did have doubts about that goal. She asked how the manager got to it. The manager had to admit she didn't know, and she appeared uncomfortable with that insight.

She looked at me and sighed. She had to figure out why the requirement is five days to create a foundation for the change to happen. In this example, the leader needs clarity in the purpose of the change to convince the employee of the necessity thereof.

To understand the purpose of a change, people seem to rely on a mixture of knowing and assuming. On automation and robotization, for example, operational employee Erik appears to relate his experiences within Kappa to his knowledge about the tight job market in The Netherlands. “With the aging population, they can get fewer and fewer people,” concluding that automation “is just needed, because otherwise there is too much work I think.” Maartje, another operational employee who was invited to think along on robotizing her own work and therefore gained some more in-depth insight, suggests the purpose is “to save cost and to lower the probability of mistakes.” Maartje has learned about robotization and knows that it leads to fewer mistakes and lower cost. Erik knows about the tight job market and seems to assume that therefore robotization has got advantages for Kappa. Fien (operational employee) agrees to that, although for her it seems to be more of an assumption than knowing. She uses words like “imagine,” “perhaps” and “maybe” when assessing the purpose of robotizing:

> I can imagine it is cheaper. We will need less people perhaps. Maybe [long silence] it is also less prone to errors but may be that isn’t fully true. Robots make errors too. Everyone makes errors. – Fien.

For Fien, the vagueness of the purpose of the change, seems to reflect hope. Maybe the automation will not have such an impact (as ‘robots make errors too’), and her job will stay as it is: “It has been going well for years already,” she says, “most of the time I avoid thinking about it and I am happily doing my job”. To me, it seems that the unclarity of the change offers a loophole for Fien to ignore it for a while. She has found a way to cope with the uncertainty that enables her to continue her everyday work. This is slightly different from Erik and Maartje, who seem to reflect on Kappa’s need to automate from a position that is outside of their own work.

The third perspective people use to assess the clarity of a change is the endorsement of a person higher up in the hierarchy. The situation sketched in beginning of this section illustrates this type of clarity. The manager sees that her head did not endorse the method I chose, and therefore contends she does not have to act. Nathalie (support employee) confirms the importance of mandate based on her experience. In a change she was coordinating, only once the manager expressed clear expectations towards the team the change process could proceed. “What did she say, what we didn’t get done? It was her role… as a manager you can give an assignment. That we couldn’t do. We could only kindly ask,” she says. Nathalie and her colleagues did not say different things content-wise, yet they did not have the leader endorsement up to that point in time. Employees saw the lack of clarity on this aspect and they “didn’t move,” as Nathalie puts it.

In the presented examples, the experiences of people around the clarity of changes range from a logical argument, an understanding that this is how things work to feelings of uneasiness, discomfort, or hope. The logical argument and the feelings of hope can be understood from an individual standpoint, as the logical argument helps to convince oneself that there is a good reason to not act, and the hope helps to stick to the as-is situation.

However, the uneasiness and discomfort seem to also relate to the expectations one has of oneself within the organizational context. Does it reflect a tension, in that the person feels an urge to act, but is not able to as it isn't clear enough where to go? Kappa is a maturing organization; it was founded about 35 years ago. It started out small, with a very clear purpose, and has grown since then, both in number of employees and in the variety of tasks. Kim (manager) explains to me how that created a focus on action and to deliver good results:

> We are very much of the type, and I like that in a way, when a task is ahead of us, we start thinking, how are we going to tackle that? We are just going to do it, you know, roll up our sleeves and go. So, we are very much go, go go, focused on action. [...] I think for a long time we have had people who try to avoid mistakes at all costs, to solve issues, so that no one would notice.- Kim.

The tendency to focus on action is present throughout the organization. For example, at some point, I was facilitating a workshop at a remote location. Someone proposed to work with a specific IT system. Within minutes, one product coordinator started side conversations with other workshop participants, the other product coordinator started to make calls still during the workshop to get it arranged. Remco (head) connects the focus on action to an ever-present awareness of "making a connection to what society asks from us," illustrating how being a public organization influences how Kappa works. He explains how decisions are made to pull things forward so that important societal asks are addressed sooner. Remco, Kim, and the product coordinators in the workshop have been with Kappa for a long time already. Kim suggests that the action focus is related to that: "[New people] are all very committed to their work, I am sure, but that tie with Kappa, really feeling part of Kappa [Kappa'er], I think that gets less and less." Kim seems to suggest that it is the sense of belonging that leads people to focus on action. It used to be a cultural element of Kappa, that she feels is getting less prominent, because new people have arrived that do not have this same dedication. The discomfort and uneasiness associated to a lack of clarity and hence a lack of ability to act might have been reinforced by this cultural element of Kappa, because courage is required to "allow yourself to stop sometimes" (Kim) in a context that demands action.

Summarizing, it appears that a lack of clarity leads to a reluctance to act, based on a more or less logical argument, a feeling of uneasiness or discomfort, or out of hope it will not work out as bad as it looks. The assessment of clarity of changes can be based on both assumptions and knowing, confirming an apparent combination of informal and formal in the work life (see also section 4.1). There are various perspectives to judge the clarity of changes, such as the contents, the purpose, and the level of leader endorsement. The feelings of uneasiness and discomfort seem to be reinforced by the organizational culture, in which there is a focus on action to make things work in a flawless manner.

4.3 Happy about this | How leaders influence employees

In this section, I will discuss the ways leaders influence the understanding of the change of employees. What do leaders do to help employees to understand and feel positive about the change? Do they provide the clarity that employees long for? What are the advantages of keeping changes unclear?

Organizational change is just one of the activities people within Kappa engage in. One of the ways to influence the employee understanding that leaders use is when they seize an opportunity to influence within the day-to-day tasks. The following situation is an example of that:

There is a town hall meeting with all employees of the department in the auditorium. Someone presented a new, firmer approach to collect monies due from a specific target group that is actively hiding their assets. The director stands up and says: "I feel happy about this. We think that person-oriented work is about thinking along to avoid problematic debts, but it does also include these type of things" (paraphrased).

The director uses her intervention to influence the thinking about person-oriented work, emphasizing that an assessment on person level may lead to softer approaches, like providing support to avoid problematic debts, and to firmer approaches, like the example presented. With that, she clarifies that person-orientation is not necessarily about the chosen action, but about the assessment of what is required in that specific moment for that specific person.

Along the same lines, Astrid (manager) responds to irritations arising between other teams and hers. She told me how team members put her on cc. in emails to people of other teams in which they express their indignancy with the course of action the other team proposed.

> Well, that can literally be in an email. They write: Why do you do [that]?? Is that what you call person-oriented work?? Then I get myself involved for a while. I will mediate between the two, trying to discuss the topic [with my peer managers] […] We can learn from this case together, to agree what to do in such cases. When should we approach it strictly and when softly? – Astrid.

Astrid's intervention supposedly aims at ironing out the irritation. At the same time, she uses the situation to influence her peer group, the manager of the other team, emphasizing the need to learn from the particular situation as an organization. To be able to influence in this manner, the leader needs to understand the change and needs to grasp the opportunity to influence. That influence can be used to clarify contents, but also to clarify priority or leader endorsement.

An example of clarifying priority is provided by Bram, a support employee:

> We were in a workshop to talk about [a new type of process]. Several participants say, we really need to pull this off. Then, [the head] said something of which I thought, well, he is right. He said we haven't been doing this for years, and still, everything functions fine [laughs]. We must not pretend as if everything depends on this. – Bram.

It seems that the head in this example is relieving the time pressure some of the participants apparently feel. Perhaps it is more important for him that the new process is well thought through, more than that it needs to arrive quickly, or maybe the new type of process is associated with something else that will not arrive soon either. Nathalie (support employee) notices that influencing the thinking about leader endorsement is required, although she does not particularly like that. “I know that sometimes, with certain groups, you need mention names, then they are in cooperation mode [‘meewerkstand’], […] I find that odd.” According to Nathalie people in Kappa need confirmation that someone higher up in the hierarchy agrees with the proposed course of action.

Leaders can, when they are clear on the required change, influence while reacting to a situation that appears, like in the examples above, but they can also do it more pro-actively by taking the lead. For example, I was working with a manager (in employee position) to design the intervention for her team. She seemed to wait for me to plot the lines, putting me in the leader position. I could influence the manager’s thinking by sketching a possible direction. Once I did that, the manager came up with her own ideas that complemented the intervention design. It seems to me that in this situation, the manager expected me to provide clarity. She apparently assumed that I could do that.

Many employees seem to assume that leaders can provide clarity, yet it is not or no longer done. They miss sessions they attended in the past “in the auditorium, to see the process in its entirety” (Maartje, operational employee), so that “it gets clearer. With those pictures next to it […] you see, […] now you do no longer know how it all is being solved.” (Erik, operational employee). Astrid, manager, also recognizes that need in her team, “the general picture, where do we want to go, and that is then Kappa’s vision, which is good to share,” she says. Astrid, Erik and Maartje seem to point to clarifying the high-level purpose and direction of the change. Bram (support employee) supposes that the problem is rooted in communication too: “I would say that if the heads and directors would have communicated more clearly, then you do not need to figure out so many things. It is a chaos that arises because there is a lot of freedom at many points.”

However, Bram’s argument could also point at something else: he supposes that clarity is needed about the details of day-to-day work (“figure out so many things” as Bram says), and to obtain such clarity is very much a complex task that requires input and action from those that do that work. This would suggest that there is a tension: the clarity employees require to be able to act can only be created by them acting, because they are in the best position to assess the impact of the change on their work.

Being involved seems to be an important piece of the puzzle to ease that tension. Astrid likes to be involved: I really enjoy to think along, know along [‘mee te weten’]…” She suggests to “address [the change too person-oriented working] much more broadly. So, you must involve the teams that will be impacted.” Also Kim (manager) seems to point in that direction: “First go and see what the gap is or ask your managers to do that.” At the same time, she also thinks that “there is too little explicit guidance on what needs to happen,” perhaps suggesting that there are two levels of clarity to be provided, a high-level clarity on purpose and direction and a detailed clarity that, according to Kim, can be provided by those closer to the work.

At first sight, providing explicit guidance on changes does not seem to be a difficult task. At the same time, observations signal that it isn’t sufficiently done, as employees perceive changes as unclear and do not feel involved nor informed sufficiently. This presents a paradox. Why is it difficult to clarify changes within Kappa? The complex internal and external structures do not seem to help as is the vast number of initiatives.

Already in my first month at Kappa I had an introduction meeting with a manager, who entered Kappa more than a year ago after a career elsewhere. She shares that she sometimes still was astonished by the complexity of Kappa. “There is a complicated combination of meetings, decision structures and teams at Kappa, and everyone thinks that is perfectly normal” (paraphrased), she says, indicating that she feels there is a kind of blindness to the complexity, it is seen as a fact of life. When the upper management team did not approve a proposal, the director blamed herself, because she felt she missed out on having preparative talks with a key decision maker: “I need to do it according to the rules of the game [‘de regelen der kunst’]”. With that, she acknowledges that there is a specific, unwritten way to get things done, that one cannot skip. Even simple discussions sometimes turn out to be complex, like assigning result expectations to the heads, “Should we discuss this, it speaks for itself,” (paraphrased) the director asks. It should be easy because there is an agreed “portfolio” for each of the heads. Discussion starts anyhow because everything is connected to everything. At various moments, interlocutors suggest that there is a value in keeping things vague. When things are made explicit and clear, a public organization like Kappa gets to be accountable too, as then progress can be evaluated more easily. That it is important for Kappa to consider its external image I noticed when the management team had to provide input for a yearly publication that serves to inform the external world about the results that year. The team discussed whether to mention a specific change, on which visible steps were taken in the past year, yet there was a hesitation to mention it. Being new in the team, I did not understand that. A head explained to me: “The external world thinks we have advanced more on [this change] than we are. That is why there is some reluctance to talk about it.” The head reflects an awareness of the importance within his work to not only manage the change inside, but also in the outside world, as such adding complexity.

One more circumstance seems to impact the ability to clarify changes. At some point, I was supporting the management team of the division to structure the improvements and changes they envisaged. That added up to over eighty initiatives, some small, others larger. Some down-to-earth, others more strategic. Those initiatives need attention “while we keep the store running” (Remco), so come on top of the activities required to just deliver on the core tasks. To me, that means that it is not only complicated to clarify changes, but there might be also a lack of time to dedicate to it.

Summarizing, I have observed leaders who influence the thinking of employees ad hoc, using situations that appear spontaneously as part of the day-to-day work and leaders who influence, or are asked to influence, the thinking in a more planned manner, for example by organizing gatherings in which the direction of a change is explained. The complexity of the organization, imposing certain rules of interaction or a need to also manage the external image seem to adversely affect the clarification of changes. A second complexity presents itself when realizing that people require clarity on the high-level aspects of a change (like its purpose) but also about the intricate ways it influences the details of the work. To gain understanding of those, leaders need to somehow involve employees, as they have the best view on the details of their work. That takes time, which is probably also demanded elsewhere.

4.4 "Aanhaken" | How employees influence leaders

In the previous sections I have illustrated how employees are longing for clarity of changes and how difficult it seems to be to offer that clarity within the context of the organization. In this section, I will discuss how employees influence the thinking of their leaders. Are employees invited to give input? How do employees express concerns with the way forward? How do leaders respond to that?

In various cases, leaders put employees in a position to provide input. For example, the leader of Maartje (operational employee) is apparently able to shape a team atmosphere that welcomes suggestions, as she feels invited to speak up: "In our meetings there is a lot of opportunity to bring topics to the table." When robotizing options became available, her leader asked the team to think along to figure out what tasks could be taken over by the robot. Maartje likes to be involved like that, it was one of the reasons why she moved to this team: "In the other team I felt it was more like, just do your work [...] all the other things didn't seem to matter. That didn't suit me well." Also the leader of Mark's team, a team of managers, seems to actively stimulate influencing by employees. He (a head) organizes workshops to clarify changes. Mark explains how it helps him and the team:

> If I come up with something I think is correct, something that would be good to do, the others can pose critical questions. [...] what do you then expect, what do you want done? How do you want to go about that? That type of questions. It is good too that someone has a critical look at that. Of course it is not always nice. Because then you think you came up with a great plan and then others say, yes, but...- Mark.

According to Mark, having the opportunity to think along and further define the change from multiple viewpoints induces a constructive discussion among employees and among leader and employee. The active involvement of employees leads to addressing problems that are important to them. Remco explains how it is not difficult to bring about a minor change, but it is more difficult to find the issues that need change:

> User happiness is not only in large things… [Name] told me that they have changed a date field. […] It was year, month, day, while all other dates are day, month, year. That we changed, everyone happy. The order of a drop down, which was in random order, we have adjusted to alphabetical order. That is, that you can always take along in a sprint, it is peanuts, but you only know if you sit down with the employees. – Remco.

So, to gain insight into what are the issues, one needs to sit down with employees and collect their insights at the place where the work is done. That aligns nicely with the tension that was illustrated in section 4.3, the leader can only achieve a high perceived clarity of change if he actively involves employees.

That a workshop involving employees is not a magic bullet, is illustrated by Kim:

> Then the managers meet with the director and the heads, and then every single time the same topics appear. Not only I think like that, we all think the same. We think it is utter nonsense. Then they listen, they say we are going to do something about it, and then we are three years later and still nothing happened. That is kind of the red thread that returns every single time. – Kim.

Apparently, in this case, the employees (note that the managers are in the employee position in this example), have been experiencing that their attempts to influence the change were not successful, leading them to think it is pointless to try again. A similar example came up when I was talking to a manager who was asked to make a plan to solve a problem in her department. She sighed and said, "I gave a lot of advice about that, but it wasn't adopted." This might mean that organizing opportunities for employees to influence is not enough, the leader should also have the willingness and ability to change course. If that is not the case, the involvement might become frustrating rather than successful.

When there is not an active invitation to provide input, like in the examples above, that does not mean the employee is not attempting to influence the change. The first type of employee influencing seems to be an attempt to influence whether one is involved. This influencing effort expresses a willingness to become involved. Within Kappa, this is referred to as "to hook on" ['aanhaken']. For example, Astrid went out to gather information on person-oriented work. "[I ask] what are your plans? Where are we? How will we get there? How can we be involved ['aanhaken'], don't forget us… Hello!? Don't forget us, that is what I say every single time I speak to him." Astrid is apparently not yet in the position to influence the contents of the change and engages in influencing to become able to influence. Also Nathalie (support employee) notices that she is often involved too late in the process: "Well, if […] I am asked to deliver information […] I would please like to be involved ['aangehaakt'] earlier." She argues she is often not put in the position to influence the course of the change timely. When she has the opportunity, she however takes it: "Like yesterday, at the drinks ['borrel'], I heard they are planning a few changes. I said, well, I will contact you ['ik kom bij je op de lijn'], because I need something of you. You do it like that." These examples seem to indicate that it is not easy "to hook on." The words of Astrid express a concern to be forgotten and Nathalie seems to be dependent on coincidences that make her aware of a project for which it is important that she is involved.

It is not easy to know whether an employee is consciously and deliberately influencing his leader. An example of deliberate influencing came up when a colleague and I presented a three-slide argumentation to a head, proposing to change course in a particular improvement effort. Another example is the way in which Astrid actively collects information. She seems to have learned that there is no active sharing of information and organizes meetings to still obtain the information she needs.

> I drink a cup of coffee with [the product owner], just to ask, have you got news for me, because if I do not do that, I do not hear anything about it […] If I do not fetch the information, Suzanne, it won't get to me. – Astrid

Employees may also explicitly influence the contents of a change, like an employee Nathalie (support employee, in leader position) was working with to implement a change. They struggled to get it right, when the employee stepped up: "Give me all of those files, I will make a proposal," as such influencing where the change would go.

Next to these clearly deliberate ways of influencing, I observed many situations in which employees seemed to influence the way their leaders thought or felt about a change, yet it was not clear whether that was a conscious act of influencing. For example, the employee of a team that I helped to improve on-the-job training. She narrated how she felt bad when quality control revealed errors in her work, whilst she was executing the work as she was taught. "You want to be a good employee." This had an impact on both me and the manager, we felt we needed to make sure that everyone felt safe to make mistakes. The employee influenced how we felt about the change, but it was not clear whether that was her aim or not.

Another example of such a situation is provided below.

I am invited to the MT of [head]. The discussion on a new policy of HR is messy. There is a proposal of [the head] on how to handle it. Suddenly, irritation rises. "I fell over that point immediately, when that memorandum was shared," the most experienced manager says. Others then also get started. That it "is very difficult all of it," that "it hurts that operational employees are not seen and heard with such a policy," "HR with its little policy," "written by staff for staff." [The head] invited the managers to be more constructive and try to limit the negative impact to their teams.

The irritation of one person got the others started. The discussion felt intense, there was hardly a way for the leader to intervene, as if all the indignancy needed to get out. The managers are very clear about the reasons for their indignancy. They think that the policy does not suit the needs of their teams, and they apparently want their head to know that, although it is not clear what they want him to do. It is not clear whether the head is susceptible to their influencing. He is asking for more constructiveness and is not showing he understood their message. However, he might now better understand how important it is for the managers to take good care of their teams, and he may act differently in supporting the managers to implement the new policy.

The sidelines of meetings employees also seem to be moments where employees influence the thinking of leaders. The messaging may be implicit though. For example, in a workshop that I was leading, people continued to explain to me how impeding it was that Kappa stuck to a particular policy. They knew I was working on that too and it was somewhat related to the topic of the workshop. The frustrations about that policy were huge, people used words like “ridiculous” and said that the policy did not lead to anything good. My attempts to park the topic were not particularly fruitful, which signaled to me that the team took the opportunity to influence my thinking about that policy. Perhaps they hoped I could take it along in my work on it, and in turn influence the leadership. Odds are that I might not be able to do such.

Finally, I observed employees engaging in wait-and-see. A number of employees told me that they see change as a given and that it does not make sense to resist it. Like Maartje:

> You just sail along […] You do not really have a choice. You must let it happen and from there see what opportunities arise. That is what I mean with making the best of it. – Maartje.

Bram (support employee) agrees to that: “Every day is change, if you resist that, you resist life, and when you realize that you can more easily cope with it […] you only have to feel where it goes” he says. Mark (manager) sees people behaving in a similar manner: “[They] go along with the changes of the organization, rather than making steps themselves because they would like to do something else.” The reactions of Maartje, Bram and Mark’s team members cannot simply be labeled as passive, though. It might also be a way to relate themselves to the change and only try to influence what they believe they can. Maartje does seem to confirm that, when she continues to explain that “unavoidable does not mean negative […] you have to let it happen and see from there what opportunities arise.” That would mean that employees engaging in this type of wait-and-see will start to involve themselves in the change once they see an opportunity for it. In that way, the wait-and-see is a signal the change is not clear enough at this point in time.

Another reason to engage in wait-and-see appears to be overload. Kim (manager) explains: “I also think honestly, if you look at the work package of managers […] it is that extensive that you sometimes cannot do anything else than to follow the train and jump on.” Also Remco (head) reckons it might be because of that: “People are busy doing their own things, I think they didn’t get to it really.” If the wait-and-see is because of overload, the employee might be aware of the change, but is not really involved. Therefore, there is no attempt to understand the change, let alone to influence the leader’s thinking about it. Perhaps it is this type of wait-and-see that is most impactful to the change process, as when the wait-and-see behavior goes unnoticed, or is interpreted as approval, the employee insights that would improve the understanding of the impact of the change arrive much later in time, or not at all.

In both wait-and-see modes, it at first sight does not look like the employee is influencing the course of action around a change. However, they do signal how they assess the status of the change. The implicit signal is that it is not explicit enough to see where the opportunities (or threats) are within their own work, or it is not clear enough to see the need to prioritize it over other things. It seems that if the leader would be able to pick up that signal, he might be able to orchestrate involvement so that employees can help to clarify the change and get to appropriate action sooner.

In sum, employees influence the thinking of their leaders on request, explicitly and implicitly. If employees are not actively put in a position to influence, they seem to need to make an effort to be involved ("to be hooked on"), which does not seem to be an easy task. Once involved, it seems that employees who have a desire to be heard engage in explicit influencing, such as making proposals. Most examples of employee influencing are seemingly less deliberate ways of influencing and wait-and-see, for which the impact depends on the extent to which the leader senses the signal and decides to act upon it.

4.5 Conclusion | How change happens at Kappa

In this section, I will interpret the presented observations to obtain an overview of how change happens at Kappa. I will present the key themes and reflect upon those to understand what that may say about how people interact with each other around organizational change.

A central concept for organizational changes is the perceived clarity of the change. Clarity refers to whether it is understood what the purpose of the change is, what the change entails and how it might change the day-to-day activities, and whether someone higher up in the hierarchy has endorsed the ideas. With that, a perceived lack of clarity has a pretty broad scope, and therefore there can be many reasons for people to perceive a change as unclear. Those reasons may be factual or more experiential in that people feel uneasiness or sense misalignments. The lack of clarity can be on two levels of abstraction. A more abstract layer that explains what the purpose and direction of the change and the plans ahead are and a more detailed layer that is concerned with how change works out in a specific everyday work situation. The first layer includes the common understanding of what the change entails. It is what the organization tells itself about the change and what the organization shares about the change to the outside world. The second layer, about how the change impacts everyday work, seems to be more volatile. The point here is that people in different positions see other details of the work and therefore perceive unclarity at different times, around various aspects of the change, leading to a high number of responses and outcomes appearing at unpredictable moments.

The main theme of interactions around changes seems to be the clarity thereof in one way or the other. People either signal a lack of clarity or are providing clarity. For example, to signal a lack of clarity they ask more information or wait for the clarity to increase before taking action (section 4.4). To provide clarity, they for example emphasize a certain aspect of person-oriented work (section 4.3) or organize a workshop to allow people to discuss about changes such as the Mark's leader (section 4.4). To obtain clarity on how the change is supposed to play out in the details of the everyday work people need "to figure out so many things" (Bram in section 4.3). Hence, those clarifications require the insights of people who know how that detailed work is done. The challenge is then to make sure that those insights are included in the common understanding of the change and its consequences. To get that done, people connect across hierarchical layers and influence each other's assessment of the change.

Leaders seem to primarily be concerned with influencing the assessment of the more abstract layer of change clarity. Some of them organize gatherings and workshops to allow discussion and information sharing about changes. Nevertheless, employees feel that they have not enough information. They, for example, miss explanations of the bigger picture. Possible explanations for this contradiction are the complex context of Kappa, with both an internal and an external world to manage, the high number of initiatives and the difficulty to gain oversight on the ways in which changes impact the details of the work.

Employees attempt to influence the thinking of their leaders in several ways. They do that directly– asking to be involved, asking for more information, or making proposals, or in more indirect ways– for example by expressing their frustration, their concerns, or their indignancy. Also, people may decide to wait until changes become clearer and, in the meantime, carry on doing their work. It seems that Kappa prefers more formal forms of communication, such as through documents, meetings, and workshops. The question is whether the more indirect signals are sufficiently influencing the thinking of leaders and hence, the common understanding of what a change entails.

Summarizing, for change to happen, it needs to be understood both in terms of its purpose, direction, and plan ahead, and in terms of what it implies for the details of the day-to-day work. The large variety of views on the detailed work will lead to the expression of a myriad of signals. The success of the change process depends on the ability of the organization to use these signals to increase the common understanding of what the change entails. Within Kappa, the preference for formal forms of communication may negatively impact that ability, because informal signals are less likely to be picked up.

5 Discussion | Change as a messy process

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how people within Kappa interact with change and with each other on the topic of change. I have shown how the perceived clarity of changes is important for people. A lack of clarity seems to be associated with a discomfort to take action to implement the change. I showed in what ways leaders influence the thinking and feeling of employees about changes and vice versa.

In this chapter, I will set up a dialogue between these findings and the scholarly literature about change in relation to sensemaking that was presented in chapter 2. Why does the clarity of changes play such a vital role in the ability to take action? How can we understand immanent, the more embodied, sensemaking in an office context? How is everyday sensemaking related to sensemaking associated to the direction and purpose of the change at large? How are these layers connected? Can organizational change be managed as a neat staged or cyclic process?

5.1 The quest for change clarity

My observations show that the clarity of changes is important for people. To decide whether a change is clear, people look at its purpose, its contents, and the level of leader endorsement (see section 4.2). Different people have different responses when they perceive a change as unclear. For example, when Kim did not feel the change was clear enough and the leaders claimed it was, that appeared to lead to discomfort (section 4.2). I observed people choosing to wait for more clarity, "happily do their job" ignoring the change ahead (Fien in section 4.2), or rather waiting for an opportunity to influence (Bram, Maartje and Mark's team members in section 4.4). Whereas others seem to be activated by a lack of clarity, like Astrid, who plans meetings with people to gather information about changes (section 4.4).

In her work on social processes of organizational sensemaking Maitlis (2005) has linked the availability of a detailed, common picture of a change to the ability to implement it with consistent action. She shows how such a "rich account" of the change can only arise when both leaders and employees engage in sensegiving, that she defines as "predominantly engaging in behaviors that attempt to influence other's sensemaking" (p. 29). When Mark's leader puts him in workshops to jointly explore the consequences of changes (section 4.4), he aims at creating a situation in which both he and his team can engage in sensegiving, because everyone can share information and express their thoughts about it. When Astrid asks to "think along, know along" (section 4.3) she probably asks for this type of interaction. When she "gets herself involved for a while" to iron out confusions between her team and other teams (section 4.3), she exploits an everyday situation to allow sensegiving from her to her team and vice versa.

According to Maitlis (2005), the absence of leader sensegiving leads at most to a situation where there are many different high-level views on the change (fragmented sensemaking) that lead to inconsistent action. When Kim observes that there are various views on a change, and these are not brought together into a shared picture (section 4.2), that can be understood as a lack of leader sensegiving. Kim's uneasiness can be explained, because she "enjoys completing tasks and likes results," but now she lacks the basis to take consistent action: there is no common, detailed view on the change.

On the other hand, when there is a lack of employee sensegiving, that leads at most to a situation in which there is a common view on the change, but that is very much high-level (Maitlis, 2005). When employees are waiting for more clarity (section 4.4) then they are not opposing the leader's views, nor they are enriching it. Because the details are missing, the action depends on the extent to which the leader demands it. For example, when Rutger would confirm his support to make a list of improvement initiatives, it may lead to an action to get that done, but nothing more– there is no effort to create a shared view on the need of such a list (section 4.2).

The ideas of Maitlis (2005) do help to understand why clarity is important for people. Clarity of the change, having a shared and detailed view of what it entails, helps to take consistent action to implement it. At the same time, Weick (1995) argues that accuracy is not at all needed to make sense; a "plausible story" (p. 55) is sufficient. Similarly, in his case study Vlaar (2008) observed that employees engage in "sensedemanding", when they find a situation within their everyday work unclear. Then, they engage in discussion or ask questions until they have "a workable level of uncertainty" (p. 240). In contrast to the work of Maitlis (2005) that would suggest that a "rich account" is not strictly required to get to action. In the next section, I will in more detail discuss this apparent contradiction, starting from the ideas of Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) that sensemaking happens both as part of the everyday work and detached from it, looking at the work from some distance.

5.2 Everyday sensemaking: finding a way forward

When Fien and her colleagues were put in workshops to "investigate [their] interests," she did make sense of that at a higher level: "That seems to me a very clear signal that something is going on," she said. For her, that lead to a feeling of insecurity, triggering a need for more clarity: "If people tell me, it will be all right, your work will remain […] that would help." Knowing that such clarity cannot be provided ("they might not be able to make that happen"), her sensemaking returns to the everyday level. It leads to just carrying on, hoping it will not work out as badly as it looks.

The example above nicely shows that sensemaking can happen at organizational level ("something is going on") as well as on an everyday level (to carry on and hope). The clarity that is missing in the examples presented in the previous section relates to lack of organizational sense, because they relate to joint understanding. With that, it becomes clear that there are two sensemaking lenses onto organizational change: a higher-level, organizational lens and a lens observing everyday work. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) offer typology helpful for such discussion and discern sensemaking as part of the work (immanent and involved-deliberate sensemaking) and sensemaking detached from the work (detached-deliberate and representative sensemaking).

Weick (1995) argues that sensemaking happens based on cues that are selected from a continuous flow of happenings. He points to the fact that people are involved in an "ongoing experience" (p. 44), a large variety of endeavors. When something interrupts that flow of activities, it is a cue for sensemaking (p. 45). In the case of an organizational change process, there is a desired, new way of doing things next to the old way of working. Understanding the new direction may be a cue to make sense of the old way of working differently. For example, when the director stood up to emphasize the presented way of working is person-oriented work despite that it isn't about avoiding problematic debts (section 4.3), she aims at increasing the understanding of the new direction, and people may start to think about how their own work relates to that.

Immanent sensemaking floats on an understanding of how things work (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). When a head explained to me that "the external world thinks we have advanced more than we are" (section 4.3) he reflects a deep understanding of the political context of Kappa. He seems to be able to naturally use that understanding to do the right things. Similarly, when the director sighed that she "has to follow the rules of the game" (section 4.3), she reflects that she is very well aware of those rules and knows how to use them in her favor. Also Nathalie intuitively understands that she must "mention names" to get people along (section 4.3). The head, the director and Nathalie adjust their behavior to fit the needs of the situation in the moment. They do not need to think about it. I think that offers a way to understand the concept 'embodied' in an office context. A "lived experience" (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012) in an office setting may include the way people talk to each other, the topics they choose to bring up and how they respond to questions or remarks. For example, when I am delivering training, I sometimes feel that one sentence naturally follows the other. When someone interrupts me with a remark, I can include that without really having to think about it, as if I needed it to round off my argument.

Scholarly work on embodied experiences is usually related to bodily sensations, for example the lactate acid building up in your muscles while rowing (De Rond et al., 2019), or sensory knowing, such as smelling the danger of an approaching fire (Weick, 1993). In offices they maybe take the shape of the ability to, based on one's experience and (contextual) knowing, know what to do or say. It would be interesting to study immanent sensemaking in office contexts in more detail, because it would counterbalance the common idea that an office is an environment that prefers verbal interaction. This could be done through a combination of observation and asking questions to figure out why things were done in a particular way. An example of such study is the study of Yakhlef and Essén (2013). Although it is situated in elderly care (a situation where the body is important more obviously), it contains examples of how employees in more office-like situations, such as arriving at a service plan (p. 895).

Next to immanent sensemaking, also involved-deliberate sensemaking happens as part of the work itself (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). People experience an interruption, which needs to be handled, they have to find a way forward. To be able to move forward, people do not need very detailed information– they need a plausible story (Weick, 1995, p. 55). Erik can work with an assumption that automation helps to resolve the problems associated with a tight job market (section 4.2) and the belief that changes come with opportunities helps Maartje to “sail along” without having to know what those opportunities exactly are (section 4.4). When the managers were confronted with the new HR policy that didn’t suit the needs of their teams, they had to figure out a way to handle that (section 4.4). I think it is important to realize that the way the managers choose to handle it may not be (fully) in line with the new policy. They may “adopt, alter, resist or reject the sense they have been given” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) and adjust the policy to their needs, or even put it aside. Similarly, when people decide to not prioritize to work on a change, because they “are busy doing their own things” (Remco, section 4.4), they do not resolve the interruption in a way that increases the common understanding of the change, they resolve the interruption in a way that allows them to move forward. So, the sensemaking is related to the change, but it does not necessarily lead to an increased understanding of thereof. In other words, sense made on the level of everyday work life provides a way to relate oneself to the situation, but that does not necessarily include making sense of the higher-level aspects of the change. For example, waiting for the change to become clearer is a good way to avoid disturbances of the work today, but it will not increase the common understanding of the change, because that requires both the employee and the leader to be actively engaged in sensegiving (Maitlis, 2005).

Summarizing, the apparent contradiction between the commonly shared “rich account” (Maitlis, 2005) that is required to make sense of organizational changes and the “plausible story” (Weick, 1995) that is required to make sense of an interruption of the everyday work is resolved when realizing that the sensemaking as part of the everyday work has got a different goal, it aims to enable to continue the work rather than to implement a change in a structured manner. This however raises another issue, because a detailed view onto an organizational change can only be obtained if there are inputs of employees who have the detailed knowledge on the work itself (see sections 2.3 and 4.3), and some consequences of the change will only be discovered while doing the work (Pedersen, 2019). Therefore, for changes to succeed, there needs to be a link between everyday sensemaking and the longer-term sensemaking to create a common understanding of changes. This I will discuss in the next section.

5.3 Employee sensegiving: bridging everyday and longer-term sensemaking

Pedersen (2019) explains why it is important that the sense that employees made in their everyday work is noticed and made sense of by leaders. If that would not happen, the unwanted and ambiguous consequences of the change would not be addressed. I think that means that the bottom-up part of the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle (e.g., Cristofaro, 2022) is an important bridge between the longer-term sensemaking and the everyday sensemaking around the change, because it ensures sense-exchanging between employees and leaders.[18]

A first way in which employees are engaging in sensegiving is when they are invited to do so. When Maartje is asked to think along where robotization may add value (section 4.4), her leader is asking his team members to use their knowledge of the everyday work to inform him about what might be the opportunities ahead. Similarly, when Remco asks his technical experts to “sit down with employees” to know what aspects require improvement he makes sure that the voices of employees working with the system are heard (section 4.4).

A second type of employee sensegiving is when employees are pro-actively and deliberately attempting to influence the sensemaking of leaders. Astrid asks to be included in discussions around the change (section 4.4), probably because she feels her team will be impacted by the change and she is not able to manage that properly. The employee that Nathalie worked with is deliberately influencing by taking the lead. She pulls a task towards her to make a proposal that fits her needs (section 4.4).

These two types of sensegiving are organized. Action is taken to ensure that those that understand the details of everyday work are able to influence the thinking around the change. Such action is taken by the employee herself (second type) or by the leader (first type), but in both cases, it concerns organizing sensegiving from employee to leader, and it seems to happen in a cognitive modus, aiming at a shared interpretation of the change (Kraft et al., 2015).

My observations reveal a third type of employee sensegiving. In this case, the sensegiving does not appear to be organized, it is not even clear whether the employee intends to influence the sensemaking of the leader. When the employee vulnerably narrated that she “wanted to be a good employee” and therefore felt bad when she made mistakes (section 4.4) she did influence the thinking of me and her manager, making us more cautious about implementing the new continuous learning process. Also when the managers indignantly opposed the new HR policy (section 4.4), their message could hardly be missed– at least it was very clear for me how important it was for them to serve their teams well and how this policy didn’t help them to do that. The most used definition of sensegiving, “attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others,” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), includes a merely cognitive act of influencing (“meaning construction”) and the explicit willingness (“attempting to”) to do so. In the presented examples, the explicit willingness does

[18] This can be understood as if leaders do not engage in everyday sensemaking, yet that is not how it is meant. Also leaders make sense in immanent or involved-deliberate ways. However, in change processes, especially the everyday sensemaking of employees reveals the unseen and ambiguous consequences of the intended change (Pedersen, 2019). This is why I in this section focus on the sensegiving from employees to leaders that is triggered by their everyday work experiences.

not visibly appear, and both the signal itself and the effect on the leader has got an embodied nature, it was felt (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). In my view, this is not 'just' a definition problem, rather it reflects a tendency to prioritize organized and verbal signals above spontaneous and non-verbal signals.[19] Those spontaneous and non-verbal signals may however reveal an "unseen consequence" (Pedersen, 2019, p. 131) of the change that is too important to not notice. A better understanding of this type of embodied sensegiving might therefore be an important topic for future research.

Summarizing, the bridge between the everyday sensemaking of employees and the longer-term sensemaking to jointly understand change depends on the ability for employees to engage in sensegiving towards their leaders. Aside on arranging opportunities for employees to do that, this is also dependent on the ability to sense the more embodied signals that employees send.

5.4 Conclusion | Change as a messy process

Many scholars have suggested that organizational change can be managed in a staged process (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Lewin, 1947). Other scholars have argued that it is a process of continuous improvement, in which change happens with small steps at a time (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Sensemaking scholars argue that there is a sensegiving-sensemaking cycle, in which leaders influence the sensemaking of their employees and vice versa (e.g., Cristofaro, 2022).

My findings suggest that organizational change is a much messier process, in which leaders and employees continuously interact with the change and with each other. They do that by making sense of what happens in their day-to-day work lives in relation to their understanding of the direction of changes and evolving that understanding in a longer-term sensemaking process that aims at creating a common view on change.

I found four reasons for the messiness of sensemaking within the change process. First, everyone has their own view on reality. An event within a change process can be a cue (i.e., a violation of expectations) for one person but not for another, because people have got different expectations (Weick, 1995). Therefore, people make sense of different things at different moments in time. Second, when people engage in everyday sensemaking, they are looking for ways to make the situation work for them. Being different people in different roles and situations, they arrive at different outcomes (Weick, 1995). Therefore, everyday sensemaking does not necessarily add to creating a shared view onto the change. Third, sensemaking does happen at two layers, the everyday layer and the longer-term layer (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). The sensemaking in these layers does not need to align. That means that accounts (Maitlis, 2005) created at the longer-term layer may conflict with accounts created in the everyday layer. Finally, people do not only make sense, they are also influencing the sensemaking of others (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). While important for the

[19] Both in the scholarly and in the organizational world?

link between the two layers of sensemaking, especially the sensegiving of employees often (see section 5.3) has an ad hoc and embodied nature (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). These signals may go unnoticed or made sense of in numerous ways.

Sensegiving by leaders is often equated with providing visionary guidance, for example an explanation of why the change is required (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kraft et al., 2015). However, Maitlis (2005) identifies another type of leader sensegiving, namely their effort to align the different views onto the change into one shared account. This particular type of sensegiving seems instrumental to resolve some of the mess that organizational changes bring along. Therefore, I think the mechanics of this type of sensegiving deserve attention in future research. In my view, the alignment of views will not resolve the mess, because that is also created by the high number of events that are made sense of by a large number of individuals and teams having different views onto reality. However, it does provide people with a guiding vision, providing the confidence they need to make sense of the chaos of everyday work life. Understanding the way (people in) organizations handle this ongoing chaos might be another interesting viewpoint for further study.

Summary | Samenvatting

In this thesis I present an ethnographic study of sensemaking in relation to organizational change within a public organization. The main outcome is that organizational change is much messier than suggested by the staged, continuous, or cyclic processes that scholars propose. Using the sensemaking perspective, I found four reasons for that. First, different people make sense at different moments of different events. Second, people make sense of happenings in their everyday work lives with the aim of making the situation work for them and are not necessarily concerned about creating a commonly shared view. Third, sensemaking is done both at the longer-term level to create a common understanding of the change and on the level of the everyday work and those levels do not necessarily align. Finally, people engage in sensegiving, they attempt to influence the sensemaking of one another, which is often ad hoc and embodied in nature, and hence might go unnoticed or made sense of in numerous ways. Although I think that the messiness cannot be avoided, I suggest that leaders can use their position to see and align the different views that live within the organization, providing employees with the confidence they need to make sense of the chaos in their everyday work life.

Ik heb etnografisch onderzoek gedaan over hoe mensen aspecten van organisatieverandering duiden. De belangrijkste bevinding is dat organisatieverandering veel rommeliger is dan de gefaseerde, continue of cyclische processen die academici veronderstellen. Ik heb daar vier redenen voor gevonden. Ten eerste, verschillende mensen duiden verschillende gebeurtenissen op verschillende momenten. Ten tweede, als mensen iets dat in hun dagelijkse werk gebeurt een plek geven, dan doen zij dat om ervoor te zorgen dat zij verder kunnen. Ze zijn niet per sé bezig met het vormen van een algemeen gedragen beeld van de verandering. Ten derde, mensen geven betekenis aan veranderingen op twee niveaus die niet noodzakelijk met elkaar in overeenstemming zijn, namelijk het niveau waar op de langere termijn gezocht wordt naar een gedetailleerd en gedeeld beeld van de verandering en het niveau waarop geprobeerd wordt de gebeurtenissen in het dagelijkse werk te duiden. Tenslotte, mensen beïnvloeden ook de manier waarop anderen gebeurtenissen duiden, en zij doen dat vaak ad hoc en non-verbaal. Mensen zouden deze signalen kunnen missen of op verschillende manieren kunnen interpreteren. Alhoewel ik denk dat deze rommeligheid onvermijdelijk is, is mijn idee dat leiders hun positie kunnen gebruiken om de verschillende beelden over de verandering te zien en samen te brengen. Daarmee zorgen zij ervoor dat medewerkers het vertrouwen hebben dat zij nodig hebben om de chaos in hun dagelijkse werk te begrijpen.

List of figures and tables

Table 1. Overview of the sensemaking typology proposed by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020, p. 9).

Figure 1. Schematic illustration of the sensegiving-sensemaking cycle.

Figure 2. Conceptualization of different forms of organizational sensemaking based on the extent at which leaders and employees engage in sensegiving (Maitlis, 2005, p. 32).

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Appendix A: overview of informants

Name	Gender	Interview type	Department	Role
Astrid	F	Semi-structured	C	Operational manager
Bram	M	Explorative	E	Support employee
Erik	M	Semi-structured	D	Operational employee
Fien	F	Semi-structured	A	Operational employee
Kim	F	Explorative	A	Operational manager
Maartje	F	Semi-structured	B	Operational employee
Mark	M	Semi-structured	B	Operational manager
Nathalie	F	Explorative	E	Support employee
Remco	M	Semi-structured	D	Head

Appendix B: questionnaires used for semi-structured interviews

Note: I did use a similar framework for each of the interviews but adjusted it slightly dependent on the role of the interviewee.

Target group: operational employees

Interviewvragenlijst semi-gestructureerde interviews
Doelgroep: operationeel medewerkers

Informed consent!

Ik heb eerst wat vragen over jouw werk.

- Hoe zou je jouw werk beschrijven?
    - Hoe ziet je werkdag eruit?
- Kun je je voorstellen dat je op een dag heel ander werk zou doen?
    - Zo nee: wat maakt dat dit werk zo goed bij je past?
        - Welk stuk van je werk geeft je de meeste energie?
        - Welk stuk van je werk vind je niet leuk?
    - Zo ja: wat zou je dan voor werk doen?
        - Wat zou je van je huidige rol missen, denk je?
        - Wat zou je juist helemaal niet missen?

- Er zijn twee belangrijke bewegingen in bij <deze directie>. Die naar persoonsgericht werken en die van de steeds verdere automatisering en robotisering. Welke daarvan raakt jouw werk het meest?
  De volgende vragen gaan over <die beweging>.

- Kun jij mij vertellen wat <die beweging> volgens jou inhoudt?
    - Weet je ook waarom <die beweging> belangrijk is?
- Ik ben benieuwd hoe je dat te weten bent gekomen. Kun je mij een moment omschrijven waarop <de beweging> voor jou duidelijker werd?
    - Wat gebeurde er precies?
    - Op welke manier praat jouw manager over deze beweging?
- Als jij met je partner, met familieleden of vrienden over <de beweging> praat, wat zeggen jullie dan? Wat is er belangrijk in zo'n gesprek?
- Is <de beweging> wel eens ter sprake gekomen in gesprekken met je directe collega's?
    - <Zo ja> Wat zeggen jullie dan tegen elkaar?
    - <Zo nee> Waarom denk jij dat dit onderwerp niet ter sprake komt?
    - Wat zouden jullie graag willen weten over die beweging?

- Hoe denk je dat <de beweging> jouw eigen werk zal veranderen?
  [grijp eventueel terug naar antwoorden vorige blokje]
    - Wat vind je daarvan?
    - Zijn er nog andere mogelijkheden denk je?
    - Hoe denk je dat collega's met hetzelfde werk erover denken?
- Als je uit deze beelden een beeld zou kiezen dat past bij het gevoel dat je bij <de beweging> hebt, welke zou dat zijn?
    - Kun je dat beeld omschrijven?
    - Wat voor gevoelens passen erbij? Waarom? Kun je daar meer over zeggen?
    - <Indien negatieve emoties> Kun je me vertellen wat je nodig hebt om je bij <deze beweging> gesteund te voelen?
    - <Indien positieve emoties> Heb je een idee wat maakt dat je dat zo voelt? Wat heb je nodig om dat zo te houden?

We zijn bij het einde van het interview. Laten we het proberen samen te vatten.

- Mijn onderzoek gaat over verandering bij Kappa.
    - Hoe zou jij samenvatten wat we daarover in dit gesprek hebben gezegd?
    - Is er nog iets dat niet aan bod is gekomen, wat jij wel heel belangrijk zou vinden om daarin mee te nemen?

Bedankt!

Target group: operational managers

Informed consent!

Ik heb eerst wat vragen over jouw werk.

- Hoe zou je jouw werk beschrijven?
    - Hoe ziet je werkdag eruit?
- Kun je je voorstellen dat je op een dag heel ander werk zou doen?
    - Zo nee: wat maakt dat dit werk zo goed bij je past?
        - Welk stuk van je werk geeft je de meeste energie?
        - Welk stuk van je werk vind je niet leuk?
    - Zo ja: wat zou je dan voor werk doen?
        - Wat zou je van je huidige rol missen, denk je?
        - Wat zou je juist helemaal niet missen?

- Er zijn twee belangrijke bewegingen in bij <deze directie>. Die naar persoonsgericht werken en die van de steeds verdere automatisering en robotisering. Welke daarvan raakt jouw werk het meest?
  De volgende vragen gaan over <die beweging>.

- Kun jij mij vertellen wat <die beweging> volgens jou inhoudt?
    - Weet je ook waarom <die beweging> belangrijk is?
- Ik ben benieuwd hoe je dat te weten bent gekomen. Kun je mij een moment omschrijven waarop <de beweging> voor jou duidelijker werd?
    - Wat gebeurde er precies?
    - Op welke manier praat jouw hoofd over deze beweging?
    - Kun je iets zeggen over hoe deze beweging gemanaged wordt?
        - Wat vind je er goed aan?
        - Wat kan beter?
- Als jij met je partner, met familieleden of vrienden over <de beweging> praat, wat zeggen jullie dan? Wat is er belangrijk in zo'n gesprek?
- Is <de beweging> wel eens ter sprake gekomen in gesprekken met je directe collega's?
    - <Zo ja> Wat zeggen jullie dan tegen elkaar?
    - <Zo nee> Waarom denk jij dat dit onderwerp niet ter sprake komt?
    - Wat zouden jullie graag willen weten over die beweging?
- Hoe denk je dat <de beweging> het werk van jouw team zal veranderen? *[grijp eventueel terug naar antwoorden vorige blokje]*
    - Wat vind je daarvan?
    - Zijn er nog andere mogelijkheden denk je?
    - Hoe denk je dat collega's met hetzelfde werk erover denken?
- Hoe denk je dat <de beweging> jouw eigen werk zal veranderen?
    - Wat is jouw rol bij die beweging?
- Als je uit deze beelden een beeld zou kiezen dat past bij het gevoel dat je bij <de beweging> hebt, welke zou dat zijn?
    - Kun je dat beeld omschrijven?
    - Wat voor gevoelens passen erbij? Waarom? Kun je daar meer over zeggen?
    - <Indien negatieve emoties> Kun je me vertellen wat je nodig hebt om je bij <deze beweging> gesteund te voelen?
    - <Indien positieve emoties> Heb je een idee wat maakt dat je dat zo voelt? Wat heb je nodig om dat zo te houden?

We zijn bij het einde van het interview. Laten we het proberen samen te vatten.

- Mijn onderzoek gaat over verandering bij Kappa.
    - Hoe zou jij samenvatten wat we daarover in dit gesprek hebben gezegd?
    - Is er nog iets dat niet aan bod is gekomen, wat jij wel heel belangrijk zou vinden om daarin mee te nemen?

Bedankt!

Target group: head

Informed consent!

Ik heb eerst wat vragen over jouw werk.

- Hoe zou je jouw werk beschrijven?
    - Hoe ziet je werkdag eruit?
- Kun je je voorstellen dat je op een dag heel ander werk zou doen?
    - Zo nee: wat maakt dat dit werk zo goed bij je past?
        - Welk stuk van je werk geeft je de meeste energie?
        - Welk stuk van je werk vind je niet leuk?
    - Zo ja: wat zou je dan voor werk doen?
        - Wat zou je van je huidige rol missen, denk je?
        - Wat zou je juist helemaal niet missen?

- Er zijn twee belangrijke bewegingen in bij <deze directie>. Die naar persoonsgericht werken en die van de steeds verdere automatisering en robotisering. Welke daarvan raakt jouw werk het meest?
  De volgende vragen gaan over <die beweging>.

- Kun jij mij vertellen wat <die beweging> volgens jou inhoudt?
    - Kun je ook uitleggen waarom <die beweging> belangrijk is?
    - In hoeverre heeft dat te maken met externe doelen en commitments?
    - Wat is de status van <de beweging>? Wat is er al bereikt bijvoorbeeld?
- Kun je aan mij uitleggen hoe <die beweging> wordt gemanaged?
    - Wat zijn de verwachtingen, in termen van wat er wanneer bereikt moet zijn?
    - Wie zit er aan het stuur van de beweging?
    - Wat maakt dat het op die manier (al dan niet) gemanaged wordt?
      Wat zijn de voordelen voor de organisatie om het zo te doen?
- Hoe denk je dat <de beweging> het werk van jouw afdeling zal veranderen?
- Wat zijn acties die het MT heeft gedaan (of gaat doen) om mensen mee te nemen in <die beweging>?
    - Zijn er events, bijeenkomsten, artikelen, …? Wat is het doel daarvan?
    - Hoe wordt <die beweging> expliciet gemaakt, vertaald naar de teams? [Hoe vertaal jij hem naar jouw teams?]
    - Wat is jouw rol daarin? Wat vind je daarvan [hoe sluit het aan bij waar hoofd energie van krijgt?]
- Als je uit deze beelden een beeld zou kiezen dat past bij het gevoel dat je bij <de beweging> hebt, welke zou dat zijn? En als je een beeld kiest voor jouw afdeling? Voor de staforganisaties?
    - Kun je dat beeld omschrijven?
    - Wat voor gevoelens passen erbij? Waarom? Kun je daar meer over zeggen?
    - <Indien negatieve emoties> Kun je me vertellen wat je denkt dat er nodig is zodat zij, jij zich bij <deze beweging> gesteund voelt?
    - <Indien positieve emoties> Heb je een idee wat maakt dat je/zij dat zo voelt(en)? Wat is er nodig om dat zo te houden?

We zijn bij het einde van het interview. Laten we het proberen samen te vatten.

- Mijn onderzoek gaat over verandering bij Kappa.
    - Hoe zou jij samenvatten wat we daarover in dit gesprek hebben gezegd?
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Bedankt!