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EXPLORING CHANGE READINESS AMONG ENTREPRENEURS

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SUMMARY

The doctoral dissertation explores individual change readiness - a concept that strongly permeates the organizational change literature, as it has been identified as a key, and critical factor for successful implementation of planned organizational change. Despite the literature on change management, and change readiness is vast, and largely noncontroversial, organizations still struggle to achieve employee' change readiness. Our general motivation was to explore the possible reasons, and give suggestions, that would help to achieve employee' change readiness, and consequently the success of organizational change implementation. We turn to entrepreneurs, to help us uncover how to achieve change readiness, and cope with change successfully. Because they are individuals that need to be change ready and master change well to survive and thrive in fast-changing, turbulent environments.

Due to conceptual ambiguity concerning the individual change readiness concept, we start our exploration by providing a literature review of our focal concept, clarifying its meaning, to establish firm ground for further empirical exploration and theorizing.

Our first chapter is a qualitative review of two concepts: change readiness and resistance to change. Individual change readiness, and resistance to change, have been assumed to present the same phenomenon from opposite perspectives. We review their use, clarify their conceptual underpinnings, and address the assumption of them being the opposite poles of the same continuum. We juxtapose the two concepts and analyze their dimensions which commonly represent a source of ambiguity about their meaning, review their evolution, and compare them to similar concepts. We argue that resistance to change addresses two important aspects: resistance as behavior and resistance as attitude. We argue that because resistance to change and change readiness share attitudinal roots, they should be looked at in conjunction – not on a bipolar continuum but as coexisting orthogonal dimensions – to grasp the full complexity of change-related attitudes. We discuss implications and offer guidance for future research, whereby we propose building blocks for a potential new measurement instrument.

The literature review guided us to focus on the affective dimension of change readiness in the second chapter. Change readiness research has concentrated on the beliefs employees hold toward organizational changes, paying little attention to the role of affect in shaping their change readiness. We conduct a qualitative study of organization-initiated changes imposed on employees to examine how affect comes about through four factors that shape individual's change readiness well established framework: change content, context, process, and individual differences. To better understand individual's change readiness, we take all four factors to the individual level, and explicate why affect is of special importance for the concept of change readiness. Through the lens of affect, we discuss the interconnectedness of the four factors of the individual's change readiness framework. We conclude the chapter with theoretical and practical implications.

In the third chapter, we delve deeper into the process of individual's change readiness development. This chapter builds on the findings concerning the change process dimension of the individual change readiness framework presented in the second chapter. Now we look at the individual's change process in more depth and draw on feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012) to better understand the role of affect in the process of change readiness development. We explain how affect influences one's change readiness, although more implicitly. We examine the interplay of affect and cognition in the process of change readiness through three stages of the process – primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and the coping stage. We present a model of affective change readiness development, identifying major sources of affect and what influences the valence of feelings in the change process.

In the fourth chapter, our qualitative empirical research examines entrepreneurs' ability to successfully deal with change, through the lens of entrepreneurial cognition, whereby affect plays an important part. Based on the findings on how they attain change readiness, and which strategies they employ to cope with change we propose suggestions for organizations to help overcome its employees struggle to cope with change. Ultimately, drawing on conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we see the success of managing change to be the question of cognitive resources. First the sum of cognitive resources, and second the allocation of cognitive resources along the change process.

Keywords: change readiness; qualitative research; feelings-as-information theory; entrepreneurs; entrepreneurial cognition

POVZETEK

Raziskovanje pripravljenosti na spremembe med podjetniki

Doktorska disertacija raziskuje posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembe – koncept, ki močno prežema literaturo o organizacijskih spremembah, saj je prepoznan kot ključni in kritični dejavnik za uspešno izvedbo načrtovanih organizacijskih sprememb. Čeprav je literatura menedžmenta sprememb in pripravljenosti na spremembe obsežna, skladna, ter večinoma dosega konsenz o dobrih praksah, se organizacije še vedno precej neuspešno trudijo doseči pripravljenost zaposlenih na spremembe. Naša splošna motivacija je bila raziskati možne razloge in podati predloge, ki bi pripomogli k doseganju pripravljenosti zaposlenih na spremembe ter posledično uspešnosti izvedbe organizacijskih sprememb. Ker so podjetniki posamezniki, ki morajo biti pripravljeni na spremembe in jih dobro obvladati, da preživijo in uspevajo v hitro spreminjajočih se, turbulentnih okoljih, se obračamo na podjetnike, da nam pomagajo odkriti, kako doseči pripravljenost na spremembe in se s spremembami uspešno spopasti.

Zaradi konceptualne dvoumnosti v zvezi s konceptom posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembe, začnemo naše raziskovanje s pregledom literature našega osrednjega koncepta, da pojasnimo njegov pomen ter vzpostavimo trdno podlago za nadaljnje empirično raziskovanje in teoretiziranje.

Naše prvo poglavje je kvalitativni pregled dveh konceptov – posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembe in odpora do sprememb. Predpostavlja se, da posameznikova pripravljenost na spremembe in odpor do sprememb predstavljata isti pojav z nasprotnih perspektiv. V prvem poglavju pregledamo uporabo teh dveh konceptov, razjasnimo njune konceptualne podlage in obravnavamo predpostavko, da gre za nasprotna pola istega kontinuuma. Koncepta primerjamo in analiziramo njune dimenzije, ki običajno predstavljajo vir dvoumnosti o njunem pomenu, pregledamo njuno evolucijo ter ju primerjamo s podobnimi koncepti, s katerimi ju običajno zamenjujemo. Trdimo, da odpor do sprememb obravnava dva pomembna vidika: odpor kot vedenje in odpor kot odnos. Ker sta tako odpor do sprememb, kot pripravljenost na spremembe izvorno odnos, ju je treba obravnavati skupaj – ne v smislu bipolarnega kontinuuma, pač pa kot so-obstoječi pravokotni dimenziji, – da bi razumeli celotno kompleksnost odnosa do sprememb. Razpravljamo o implikacijah in ponudimo smernice za prihodnje raziskave, pri čemer predlagamo gradnike za potencialni nov merilni instrument.

Pregled literature nas je vodil, da smo se v drugem poglavju osredotočili na afektivno dimenzijo pripravljenosti na spremembe. Raziskave o pripravljenosti na spremembe se osredotočajo na prepričanja, ki jih imajo zaposleni glede organizacijskih sprememb, (pre)malo pozornosti pa namenjajo vlogi afekta pri oblikovanju posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembe. Izvedemo kvalitativno študijo na primeru načrtovanih organizacijskih sprememb, da preučimo vlogo afekta v okviru štirih dejavnikov, ki

oblikujejo posameznikovo pripravljenost na organizacijsko spremembo – vsebine, konteksta in procesa spremembe ter izbranih razlik med posamezniki. Da bi bolje razumeli posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembo vse štiri dejavnike popeljemo na individualno raven in razložimo, zakaj je afekt še posebej pomemben za koncept pripravljenosti na spremembo. Skozi lečo afekta razpravljamo o medsebojni povezanosti štirih dejavnikov, ki predstavljajo okvir posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembo. Poglavje zaključimo s teoretičnimi in praktičnimi implikacijami.

V tretjem poglavju se poglobimo v proces posameznikovega razvoja pripravljenosti na spremembo. To poglavje gradi na ugotovitvah v zvezi z dejavnikom procesa v okvirju pripravljenosti na spremembo, predstavljenim v drugem poglavju. Zdaj podrobneje obravnavamo proces spremembe pri posamezniku, pri čemer se opremo na teorijo občutkov kot informacije (Schwarz, 2012), da bi bolje razumeli vlogo afekta v procesu razvoja pripravljenosti na spremembo. Razložimo, kako afekt vpliva na posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembo, čeprav bolj implicitno. Preučimo medsebojno igro afekta in kognicije skozi tri faze procesa pripravljenosti na spremembo – fazo primarne ocene, sekundarne ocene in fazo obvladovanja spremembe. Predstavimo model razvoja afektivne pripravljenosti na spremembo, kjer identificiramo glavne izvore afekta ter vplive na valenco občutkov v procesu spremembe.

V četrtem poglavju naša kvalitativna empirična raziskava proučuje sposobnost podjetnikov, da se uspešno spopadajo s spremembami. Na tematiko pogledamo skozi lečo podjetniške kognicije, pri čemer ima afekt pomembno vlogo. Na podlagi ugotovitev o tem, kako dosegajo pripravljenost na spremembe in katere strategije uporabljajo za spoprijemanje s spremembami, oblikujemo predloge za organizacije, da bi svojim zaposlenim pomagali premagati izziv spopadanja s spremembami. Na podlagi teorije ohranjanja virov (Hobfoll, 1989), vidimo uspeh obvladovanja sprememb v svojem bistvu kot vprašanje kognitivnih virov (ki sestojijo iz kognicije in afekta) posameznika. Prvič, kot vsoto kognitivnih virov in drugič, kot razporeditev kognitivnih virov v procesu spremembe.

Ključne besede: pripravljenost na spremembe; kvalitativna raziskava; teorija občutki-kot-informacija; podjetniki; podjetniška kognicija

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INTRODUCTION

Change is constant and inevitable. For an organization to be successful and stay competitive, managing change is of a vital importance. The literature on change management is vast and largely noncontroversial (Herold, Fedor & Caldwell, 2007). A recent review of organizational change management models by Errida and Lotfi (2021) concludes they share many similarities; thus, it is even more intriguing that around 70 % of organizational change initiatives fail to meet the goals (Jones, Firth, Hannibal et al., 2018; Ashkenas, 2013; Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004). The concept of change readiness strongly permeates the change management literature, as it has been identified as a key, and critical factor for change implementations' success (e.g. Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994). Since Lewin, employee resistance to change has been a common intrinsic element of planned organizational change models (Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018). However, the high rate of unsuccessful change initiatives signals there is something we are missing, and the issue needs to be addressed from a different perspective. After reviewing the literature and practices one can realize that the attention has mainly been given to the processes that affect change reactions of employees such as procedural justice (e.g. Kebede & Wang, 2022; Brockner et al., 1994), sufficient and clear communication and change leadership (e.g. Appelbaum et al., 2017; Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018); and content of a specific change (e.g., a merger, layoff, reorganization etc.), while ignoring the important role of the context and individual differences.

The context within which change occurs can be understood in terms of change turbulence, denoting the extent of other changes encompassing the focal change (Herold et al., 2007). As individuals possess finite adaptation resources, »even a necessary and well-planned change may be doomed by the lack of support on the part of affected individuals who are already experiencing change overload« (Herold et al., 2007, p.944). Thus, perceived change context (turbulence) should represent a crucial component when researching change readiness, defined as »individual's beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully undertake those changes« (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993, p.681).

With increasing turbulence in the environment and thus organization, increased demands to cope with change are put on employees. Aiming to better understand individuals' change readiness and (in)ability to cope with change we will focus on the cognitive perspective, that we propose holds great promise to help understand change readiness and change related behavior, as »everything we think, say, or do is influenced by mental processes« (Baron, 2004, p.221).

Entrepreneurs are individuals that need to be change ready and cope with change well, to flourish in volatile environments under high uncertainty, information overload, and time pressure (Forbes, 2005). Thus, they seem to be the perfect population to reveal some answers

to attaining change readiness and successful coping with change. We will look for answers by examining the characteristics of entrepreneurial cognition.

Our cognition, however, does not operate in isolation from affect (e.g. Baron 2008). Despite the idea not being new (studies demonstrating the connection date back in 1983), the affective element has been omitted from the majority of change readiness definitions, and especially operationalization and thus also from empirical studies. Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) argue this is one of the major limitations of change readiness research. We aim to address this limitation by researching this neglected component through qualitative method, using in-depth interviews. Here again, entrepreneurs seem an especially interesting group of individuals to study. They tend to be confronted with emotional cues more frequently and intensely than individuals in most other professions (Grégoire et al., 2015), and entrepreneurship is often compared to an emotional rollercoaster (De Cock, Denoo & Clarysse, 2020), with extreme positive and negative emotions alternating rapidly (Baron, 2008; Foo, 2011; Cardon et al., 2017; Middleton, & Donnellon, 2017).

Our study examines change readiness at the individual level. We begin the monograph by reviewing the definitions of change readiness construct and its nomological net, to gain better understanding of the core concept¹. Next, we focus on the affective component of change readiness², that has been found to be largely neglected in organizational change literature. Last but not least, we turn to entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial cognition³, to seek for the recipe of successful coping with change.

Change readiness and related constructs

Being identified as one of the most critical issues when implementing planned change (Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994) the change readiness concept strongly permeates the organizational change literature. According to Bouckenoghe's (2010) review of the literature, over 90% of the conceptual work on change attitudes has been done either on change readiness or resistance to change, that presumably presents the same phenomenon from the opposite perspective (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993).

However, the construct leaves some open issues. A growing interest in employee attitudes toward organizational change resulted in proliferation of concepts that appear along the change process, such as openness to change, coping with change, resistance to change, and others. To provide a firm ground for theorizing, resolve the conceptual confusion, and gain better understanding of change readiness concept at the individual level, we will first review existing definitions, differentiating change readiness from similar concepts, and conduct a

¹ Chapter 1 Change ready, resistant, or both? Exploring the concepts of individual change readiness and resistance to change

² Chapters 2 Adding a missing puzzle: The affective nature of the change readiness construct, and 3 Affect-as-information in the process of individual's change readiness development

³ Chapter 4 Using entrepreneurial cognition to understand change readiness and successful coping with change

qualitative review of individual change readiness and resistance to change. We will answer the research question *What is change readiness at the individual level? (RQ1)*.

The affective nature of change readiness construct and the cognition -affect interplay

Although social psychologists define attitudes as »evaluative summary judgments that can be derived from qualitatively different types of information (e.g., affective and cognitive) « (Crites, Fabringar, & Petty, 1994, p.621), the affective component has not been sufficiently researched, and has been, as already mentioned, omitted from most definitions as well. Since research suggests the affective change readiness might be an even stronger predictor of change outcomes than cognitive component (Rafferty et al., 2013) when intense on individual or collective level, it must not be overlooked. Recent research implicates that positive emotions about change are a key source of variation in change readiness (Rafferty & Minbashian, 2019). In a qualitative study of organization-initiated changes imposed on employees we will answer the research question *What is the role of affect in the individual change readiness concept? (RQ2)* and examine how affect comes about through four factors that shape individual change readiness. We answer *How does affect impact the elements of individual's change readiness framework – the change content, context, process, and individual differences? (RQ3)*. Further, we will discuss through the lens of affect *What is the interconnectedness between the elements of the framework? (RQ4)*.

Our next research focus will be on the process of individual's change readiness development. Drawing on feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2010), positing »individuals use their affective states as relevant when making evaluative judgments« (Niedenthal et al., 2006) we will answer the research question *What is the role of affect in the process of an individual's change readiness development? (RQ5)*, whereby we will examine the affect-cognition interplay through three stages of the process – primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and the coping stage. We will specify at what stages of the change process is affect of special importance, and what are the main sources of individual's affect in the process of organizational change.

Using entrepreneurial cognition to understand change readiness and successful coping with change

Entrepreneurship is associated with environment characterized by information overload, high uncertainty, and time pressure (Forbes, 2005). Entrepreneurs thus seem to be the perfect focus group to reveal some answers related to the challenge of successful coping with change and change readiness sources, because they need to master change well to survive and flourish in that type of environment. Aiming to understand why are some individuals more change ready and able to cope with change, we will seek the answers by digging into characteristics of entrepreneurial cognition.

As our resources to cope with change are limited there are two important issues that we would like to point out. The first one is the processing strategy we use to cope with perceived

change turbulence and make decisions. Research shows that entrepreneurs use heuristics more extensively than managers in large organizations (Baron, 1998; Busenitz & Barney, 1997). The managerial cognition is more systematic, factually oriented, building on proven information, with the rationale for a new opportunity progressing in a logical manner (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). The heuristic type of processing allows us to preserve more cognitive resources compared to substantial processing. The next research question that we propose is *How do entrepreneurs attain change readiness?* (RQ6). Answering this question, we will identify dispositional factors typical of entrepreneurial cognition such as specific cognitive biases and heuristics relevant in the context of change, and most importantly, non-dispositional factors that could serve as advice for individuals less successful with attaining change readiness and coping change.

As we can never possess all the information about future events to make a completely rational decision, using heuristics might be ecologically more rational than using substantive analytical processing (cf. Bettis, 2017). Preserving our resources in the phase of getting ready is especially important, since it is followed by the act of change and adaptability, that denotes the success of change implementation.

This brings us to the second important issue to consider, the allocation of cognitive resources. We propose the allocation of cognitive resources between change readiness (the *thinking, getting ready* phase) and undertaking change (the *doing, adapting* phase) as essential for successful coping with change. Discussing resources in the framework of Conservation of resources theory (COR), Halbesleben and colleagues (2014) note it is not necessarily the sum of resources that determines the one who will thrive, but the allocation of resources allowing to maximize the fit of the individual with environment (Hobfoll, 1988). The differentiation between threat (e.g., threat of job loss, that is reflected in the phase of *thinking, getting ready*) and loss (e.g., actual job loss, that possibly denotes the phase of *doing, adapting*) has been under investigated, yet both can lead to strain (Halbesleben et al., 2014), affecting employees' cognitive resources. Therefore, our next research question is *RQ7: What is the role of allocation of cognitive resources between getting ready and actual adapting to change in coping with change?*

Research approach and methods

This is a qualitative study. In the initial phase, searching to answer the *RQ1: What is change readiness at the individual level?* we conduct a literature review of the change readiness concept, as well as resistance to change, that supposedly presents the opposite (negative) pole of the same continuum. The clarification what change readiness is, established firm ground for further theorizing and together with a general review of the change readiness literature enabled us to continue with an abductive approach.

The abductive approach was selected as it is well suited to discover new things, focusing on theory development, rather than theory generation (Dubois, & Gadde, 2002). Moreover, the

phenomenon of change readiness is complex, reflecting multiple dimensions, disciplines, and stakeholder perspectives, which makes it suitable for an abductive approach to produce fruitful results (Sætre, & Van de Ven, 2021). We combine the literatures on change management, psychology, entrepreneurship, and neuroscience to advance existing knowledge of the change readiness phenomenon.

The anomaly⁴ that challenged our minds was the high rate of unsuccessful change implementations in face of vast and largely noncontroversial literature that exists on this topic. Since employee change readiness has been identified as a key factor when dealing with change it is the focal construct of our study.

Throughout the process of generating ideas to answer the anomaly, we came down to three hunches or half-baked ideas (Sætre, & Van de Ven, 2021; explanatory hypotheses Peirce, 1934) that seemed most plausible to us. The first hunch was that the anomaly exists simply because 1) the praxis does not follow the prescribed steps on how to implement organizational change. Despite this hunch was not our strongest one it was important to verify it since it is a plausible one due to numerous factors (change process, content, context, and individual differences) that need to be aligned to achieve change readiness. Our stronger hunch was that 2) there is something more and the issue needs to be addressed from a different perspective. Since the attention in research and praxis has mainly been given to change process and content, more focus should be put on the change context, and individual differences. The third hunch was fuelled by construct measurement and evolution and says that 3) the affective component has been lost and neglected. Upon consulting the literature on affect, we realized that in the relation to individual's change readiness, the change context defined in terms of change turbulence is tightly connected with affect, through the concept of 'body budget'. As such, the two hunches must be explored simultaneously. While we use the lens of affect, our chapters 2 and 3 touch on the first two hunches as well.

While chapter 2 examines all the elements of the change readiness framework consisting of change content, change context, change process, and individual differences, chapter 3 focuses on the change process, and builds on the findings regarding change process of chapter 2.

In the last step of our study we focus on entrepreneurs, to seek for what important lessons concerning attaining change readiness, and coping with change can be learned. We adopt classification of change readiness process from chapter 2– psychological change readiness, and operational change readiness.

We gather the data through in-depth interviews. To address *RQ2: What is the role of affect in the individual change readiness concept?*, *RQ3: How does affect impact the elements of*

⁴ We define anomaly as »a novel or unexpected phenomenon that cannot be explained or is poorly understood using existing knowledge«(Sætre, & Van de Ven, 2021, p.684).

individual's change readiness framework – the change content, context, process, and individual differences?, *RQ4: What is the interconnectedness between the elements of the framework?*, and *RQ5: What is the role of affect in the process of an individual's change readiness development?* interviews have been made with employees in large companies that were undergoing a larger change or just finished the implementation of it. To answer *RQ6: How do entrepreneurs attain change readiness?* and *RQ7: What is the role of allocation of cognitive resources between getting ready and actual adapting to change in coping with change?* we have conducted interviews with entrepreneurs.

To analyze the interviews, content analysis is performed. We use the Nvivo tool to facilitate the coding process, write memos, perform text searches, and examine the relationships between codes. The research method along with the sampling and analysis is explained in more detail in the corresponding chapter⁵ that addresses a specific research question.

1 CHANGE READY, RESISTANT, OR BOTH? EXPLORING THE CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUAL CHANGE READINESS AND RESISTANCE TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Employee attitudes toward change are a key factor that determines the success of an organization's change efforts (Elias, 2009). Identified as critical for implementing planned change (e.g., Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994) the concept of change readiness strongly permeates the organizational change literature. Presumably presenting the same phenomenon from the opposite perspective (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993), resistance to change has been one of the most frequently cited reasons for why firms fail to implement change (Anuradha & Kelloway, 2004). According to Bouckenoghe (2010), more than 90% of the conceptual work on change attitudes has been done either on change readiness or resistance to change.

Indeed, the two concepts frequently appear in conjunction⁶ in the literature, mostly represented as two opposite poles of a continuum (e.g., Salleh et al., 2011). However, calls for the clarifications of both concepts that have been raised many times (e.g., Dent & Goldberg, 1999) suggest this might have been an unnecessary simplification. Moreover, as the interest in employee attitudes toward change has grown, so has the number of other concepts that appear along the change process, such as openness to change, change cynicism, and others. Depending on their positive or negative valence toward change, they have interfered or have been used as synonyms for either change readiness or resistance to change. This process resulted in the proliferation of concepts and confusion. Stevens (2013), for

⁵ Chapter 1 addresses RQ1; chapter 2 addresses RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4; chapter 3 addresses RQ5; chapter 4 addresses RQ6, and RQ7.

⁶ Change readiness and resistance to change have largely been used interchangeably, depending on which valence was more convenient (resistance for negative and readiness for positive valence).

example, borrowed Block's (1995) expression of “jingle and jangle fallacies” to capture the pool of change readiness conceptualizations.

The goal of our review paper is twofold. First, we aim to clarify the concepts of resistance to change and change readiness along with interactions among them in order to facilitate further development of this interesting body of knowledge. Only a clear understanding of the concepts' meanings provides firm ground for sound theorizing and clarifies incommensurability issues. Second, our goal is to show that resistance to change and change readiness need to be inspected simultaneously to grasp the full complexity of change-related attitudes. We argue that employee attitudes toward organizational change are not as black-and-white as originally assumed.

We confront the concepts of resistance to change and change readiness, and simultaneously analyze their dimensions to clarify ambiguity about what these concepts are and what they are not. We first review the evolution of both concepts through time by (a) inspecting their cognitive, affective, intentional, and behavioral aspects, and (b) presenting the evolution of theoretical approaches regarding the origin of the concepts. Next, we clarify the focal concepts by (a) further exploring the dimensions of an attitude, (b) applying both focal concepts to stages of change, and (c) comparing them to other, similar concepts. We conclude with a discussion and directions for future research.

1.1 The evolution of the uses of both concepts through time

The first observation regarding organizational change literature is that resistance to change began to appear much earlier than change readiness and also trumps change readiness in the number of total publications (210 vs. 648) (see figure in Appendix 1). This is not surprising because people naturally resist change as it concerns moving from the known to the unknown (Coghlan, 1993). The introduction of the term *resistance to change* is credited to Kurt Lewin (1947). The term appeared in the first stage of his three-stage change model: the “unfreezing” stage, referring to the application of an additional force to break employees' social habits (Burnes & Bargal, 2017), current mental models, and behavior. However, Lewin “introduced the term as a systems concept, as a force affecting managers and employees equally” that could be found and rooted anywhere within the system of roles, norms, attitudes, and other factors—the psychology of the humans being just one element of it (Dent & Goldberg, 1999, p. 25). Interestingly, the first reference to resistance to change was made by McMurry (1947), with “The problem of Resistance to Change in Industry,” and the second by Coch and French (1948) in a paper titled “Overcoming Resistance to Change,” followed by other works all offering prescriptions to fight against resistance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). It seems that authors aimed to prevent or overcome resistance to change as soon as it was recognized to exist. Despite resistance to change being the longest-present and probably the best-known attitude toward change in the literature (Bouckennooghe, 2010), Dent and Goldberg (1999)

observed in their comprehensive review it was not well-defined and frequently lacked definition.

The concept of *change readiness*, on the other hand, was introduced more recently. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) define it and propose a model for creating change readiness at the individual level in 1993. In earlier literature, change readiness was not conceptually differentiated from resistance and can be traced in discussions with regard to reducing change resistance (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993).

In search of ways to prevent resistance, calls for the retirement of resistance to change have been raised; however, resistance to change perseveres, together with the growing body of literature on change readiness from 1993 on. A review of publications published in the year 2022 reveals that 30 publications dealt with resistance to change compared to only 16 dealing with change readiness, and the gap is consistent through the years (see Appendix 1).

Despite the popularity of both concepts and their interconnectedness, a search⁷ for publications dealing with both concepts simultaneously resulted in a surprisingly low number of publications. Only six publications⁸ address the two concepts at the same time: the Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder paper from 1993 aiming to differentiate change readiness from resistance, and five empirical papers. This observation, in addition to the pivotal role the two concepts have in the broader change management literature, supports the need for our review.

1.1.1 A review of conceptualizations

As we dig into conceptualizations of resistance to change and change readiness, different paths in their evolutions can be detected. Below, we list (see Tables 1 and 2) and review

⁷ We searched the Social Sciences Citation Index edition of the Web of Science Core Collection database. Publications of document types article, review, proceedings paper, and book chapter, written in English between 1900 and 2018 (June) were included. We searched the database for works with the words “change readiness” or “readiness for change” in their abstracts, titles, or keywords for the first concept of our interest, and “change resistance”, “resistance to change”, or “resistance toward* change” for the second. The search was undertaken using the Web of Science categories, namely Management, Psychology Applied, Psychology Multidisciplinary, Psychology, Business, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Psychology Social, and Behavioral Sciences.

⁸ These three publications are: (1) Armenakis, A. A., Harris, S. G., & Mossholder, K. W. (1993). Creating readiness for organizational change. *Human relations*, 46(6), 681-703; (2) Mlekus, L., Kato-Beiderwieden, A. L., Schlicher, K. D., & Maier, G. W. (2021). With a Little Help From Change Management. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits-und Organisationspsychologie A&O*. (3) Liu, H., Zhou, J., Liu, H., & Xin, B. (2021). Is the uncertainty of gaining legitimacy from organizational change an antecedent of employees' resistance to change?. *Chinese Management Studies*, 15(4), 769-784. (4) Güntner, A. V., Endrejat, P. C., & Kauffeld, S. (2021). The emergence of employees' change readiness for energy-conservation behavior during guided group discussions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 587529. (5) Rehman, N., Mahmood, A., Ibtasam, M., Murtaza, S. A., Iqbal, N., & Molnár, E. (2021). The psychology of resistance to change: The antidotal effect of organizational justice, support and leader-member exchange. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 678952. (6) Peng, J., Li, M., Wang, Z., & Lin, Y. (2021). Transformational leadership and employees' reactions to organizational change: evidence from a meta-analysis. *The Journal of applied behavioral science*, 57(3), 369-397.

their conceptualizations. We discuss their evolution addressing the four different dimensions of employee responses toward change: cognitive, affective, intentional, and behavioral.

With the *behavioral dimension* we denote actual behavior. For the *intentional dimension*, we follow Piderit's (2000, p. 787) understanding of "an intention" in his debate on attitudes toward an organizational change that denotes "a plan or resolution to take some action, rather than a plan to try to achieve some goal (Bagozzi, 1992)". This understanding is in line with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) and the tripartite attitude model (Smith, 1947), on which our theorizing is based on. Moreover, our aim is not to observe what the goal of a dimension is. We draw on the assumption that humans as rational beings will always act rationally - with an intention.⁹ The *cognitive dimension* refers to beliefs, thoughts, perceptual responses, and knowledge structures about change (Breckler, 1984). The *affective dimension* refers to feelings about change. Eagly and Chaiken (1998, p. 272) define this dimension as "feelings, moods, emotions, and sympathetic nervous-system activity that people have experienced in relation to an attitude object and subsequently associate with it."

The literature focusing on resistance to change departed from the behavioral dimension (see Table 1). Researchers describe resistance to change as behavior intended to protect recipients from change (e.g., Zander, 1950), and to avoid change (e.g., Herscovitch, 2003). Coch and French (1948), the authors who made one of the first references to resistance to change, as well use desirable (compliant) behavior as a criterion in their quasi-experiment on resistance to change (Piderit, 2000).

In later stages of evolution of resistance to change we spot the intentional dimension was added (see del Val and Fuentes, 2003) and finally we arrive to the contemporary definition that describes it as a multidimensional attitude (Oreg, 2006).

The cognitive dimension can as well be identified in early definitions (see Argyris, 1985). Also, when advising on how to overcome resistance, a "cognitive realignment of resisters' espoused theories and their theories-in-use" is recommended (Diamond, 1986, as cited in Dent & Goldberg, 1999, p. 786). Also, among the causes of resistance Dent and Goldberg (1999) find misunderstanding to be a common cause, exposing its cognitive component. Zander (1950), for example, notes that resistance may surface "if the change is open to variety of interpretations" or "if the nature of the change is not made clear to the people who are going to be influenced by the change" (Dent & Goldberg, 1999, p. 34-35). Lawrence (1954) also emphasized management should use understandable terms so that the change makes sense to employees. Cognition as a part of the phenomenon can as well be found in the early work of Coch and French (1948) discussing participation that might have motivational and cognitive effects (Piderit, 2000).

⁹ Acting "rationally" in the social sciences usually means "acting with instrumental rationality – doing what will get you whatever ends you wish to achieve, whether they are in your best interest or not (Korsgaard, n.d.).

Table 1: An overview of resistance to change definitions

Source	Definition	Dimension
Zander (1950, p. 9)	“Behavior which is intended to protect an individual from the effects of real or imagined change”	Behavioral
Argyris (1985, p. 5)	“Thoughts and actions used to protect individuals', groups', and organizations' usual way of dealing with reality”	Cognitive, and behavioral
Brower & Abolafia (1995, p. 151)	A particular kind of “action or intentional inaction”	Behavioral
Ashforth & Mael (1998, p. 90)	“Intentional acts of commission or omission that defy the wishes of others”	Behavioral
Folger & Skarlicki (1999, p. 36)	“Employees’ behaviour that seeks to challenge, or disrupt the prevailing assumptions, discourses, and power relations”	Behavioral
Herscovitch (2003, p. 14)	“Employee action or inaction that is intended to avoid a change and/or interfere with the successful implementation of a change in its current form”	Behavioral
del Val & Fuentes (2003)	Any set of intentions and actions that slows down or hinders implementation of change	Intentional, and behavioral
Oreg (2006, p. 76)	“Tri-dimensional (negative) attitude towards change, which includes affective, behavioural, and cognitive components”	Affective, cognitive, and behavioral or intentional ¹⁰ ,

Source: Own work

The affective dimension can be found in early descriptions of resistance to change, but not in its definitions. Shimoni (2017) notices that Dent and Goldberg (1999) list terms such as *fear*, *frustration*, *emotionality*, and *innate aggression* when discussing resistance to change, all of which expose the emotional or affective nature of the concept. Notions of aggression can be traced back to the work of Coch and French (1948). In Diamond's (1986) view, the underlying nature of resistance to change is highly emotional (Piderit, 2000), even though not explicitly noted in its earlier definitions, as opposed to more recent definitions, where the affective component is included (e.g., Oreg, 2006). Oreg et al. (2018) describe resisters’ responses to change with underlying core affects, such as stressed, angry, and upset.

¹⁰ To Oreg (2006) the behavioral dimension denotes action or intention to act.

Table 2: An overview of change readiness definitions

Source	Definition	Dimension
Armenakis Harris, & Mossholder (1993, p. 681)	“Organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully make those changes”	Cognitive, affective, and intentional
Cunningham et al. (2002, p. 377)	It involves “a demonstrable need for change, a sense of one's ability to successfully accomplish change (self-efficacy) and an opportunity to participate in the change process”	Cognitive ¹¹
Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris (2007, p. 235)	“The extent to which an individual or individuals are cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo”	Cognitive, and affective
Weiner (2009, p. 68)	“Organizational readiness for change refers to organizational members' change commitment and self-efficacy to implement organizational change”	Cognitive ¹¹
Holt & Vardaman (2013, p. 9)	“The degree to which the organization and those involved are individually and collectively primed, motivated and capable of executing change”	Cognitive ¹¹
Stevens (2013, p. 346)	“A positive and proactive response to change over time as a function of contextualized affective and cognitive evaluations.”	Cognitive, and affective

Source: Own work

In contrast with the beginnings of resistance to change, Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) explicitly position the core of creating change readiness in changing individuals' cognitions, the latter representing a precursor to behaviors regarding change efforts. In their view, readiness is “reflected in organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to

¹¹ Perhaps not explicitly stated, the definitions of Cunningham et al. (2002), Weiner (2009), and Holt & Vardaman (2013) describe the cognitive dimension. The concept of self-efficacy is even entailed in the operationalization of change readiness discussed in more detail in Section 1.2.

successfully make those changes” (p. 681). Thus, the change readiness concept puts cognitions in the focus of attention from its beginnings.

Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) do not explicitly mention affect in their conception of change readiness, but it can be traced in the notion of readiness being an attitude because an attitude is comprised of “qualitatively different types of information (e.g., affective and cognitive)” (Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994, p. 621). In more recent conceptualizations, we can find readiness explicitly defined as consisting of cognition, as well as affect. Nevertheless, affect still remains an understudied dimension in change readiness research (Rafferty et al., 2013). Some definitions also note intentions but not behaviors. Rafferty et al. (2013) conclude intentions should be excluded from the conceptualization, since they are indications of how hard one is willing to try and how much energy one is willing to invest in order to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991) concerning employees’ *motivation*.

1.1.2 Theoretical approaches to studying resistance and readiness to change

Besides dimensions of the focal change concepts, the literature has also put a lot of emphasis on the sources of change readiness and change resistance. We draw on Shimoni's (2017) grouping of approaches to resistance to change and identify the following evolutionary lines of the sources of both concepts: (a) deriving from an individual’s psychological disposition, (b) arising from the change context, (c) being a product of interplay between disposition and context, and (d) arising from habitus.

The first, and the earliest one — deriving from the individual’s psychological disposition, has only been discussed in connection to the concept of resistance to change. This approach is also called the traditional approach to resistance to change. The other three approaches listed above are relevant for both concepts, thus we adopt them to discuss change readiness as well.

1.1.2.1 *An individual’s psychological disposition as a source: The traditional approach*

Traditionally, scholars approached resistance to change as something rooted exclusively within individuals. What people actually resist is not change per se, but letting go of something that is familiar. They fear to lose status, pay, or comfort (Dent & Goldberg, 1999), or even their identity (Karp & Tveteraas Helgø, 2009), seeing change in organizations as shifting of identities. Neuroscience complements biologists' findings that the human brain is wired against loss (e.g., Cozolino, 2006) – loss aversion – and our brains tell us to resist change and save energy if change is not necessary for our survival (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

In his review, Shimoni (2017) notes that organization development scholars and practitioners often see resistance to change as pathological — a defensive routine that change creators

need to defeat. Being something that organizations need to overcome also implies the position of the concept in the four-phase reaction process to change that individuals go through, according to Scott and Jaffe (1988, as cited by Bovey & Hede, 2001, p. 534), being: “initial denial, resistance, gradual exploration, and eventual commitment”. The traditional view assumes employees' resistance can be turned into more supportive orientation if employees do the best they can (Illouz, 2007) and has been, in Krantz's (1999, p. 42) opinion, “transformed over the years into a not-so-disguised way of blaming the less powerful for unsatisfactory results of change efforts”.

Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio (2008, p. 362) emphasize that the “change agent-centric” view that sees change agents as unbiased observers (who do the right thing to overcome the objective reality of change recipients who are seen as obstacles resisting the change) should be discarded. We should realize that resistance is a result of interactions and relationships between change agents and recipients and does not reside completely “over there, in them (i.e., in change recipients)” (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008, p. 362).

1.1.2.2 Change context as a source: The social context approach

Recognizing there is more to it than just individuals, scholars began to see resistance as a product of the social context. Contextual factors are the circumstances under which change occurs and can inhibit or accelerate the effectiveness of change implementation (Self, Armenakis, & Schraeder, 2007). Lewin's field theory argues an individual's behavior needs to be understood within the context, taking into account all the forces of the life space that affect it (Lewin, 1947).

Ford, Ford, and D' Amelio (2008) advocate for the importance of change agents' role and their relationships with employees. Change agents need to be able to restore trust and establish fairness, call to action, and communicate effectively to avoid misinterpretation that could cause resistance. This factor belongs to the process factors of the change process, which include strategies and tactics, justifying organizational change, communicating a shared vision, and executive visibility (Self et al., 2007; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Supporters of this approach see inappropriate organizational cultures as obstacles to or enablers of reducing resistance by guiding their members on how to act, perceive, and feel (Shimoni, 2017). Often, the organizations' structures are sources of resistance (e.g., narrow job categories can force employees to choose between new perspectives and their self-interests; Burnes, 2015, Kotter, 1995). Holt and Vardaman (2013) add encouraging climate, and reward or incentive systems as relevant structural factors. Kotter (1995) finds individual resistance to be rare and states employees usually understand the new vision and desire its realization but are restrained by the system.

The social context approach was used by Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) to build foundations of the concept of change readiness on. They acknowledge the contextual factors influencing the creation of change readiness, especially the role of change agents through

influence strategies, such as persuasive communication, management of external information, and enabling active participation. Change managers should take the role of proactive players instead of trying just to “reactively monitor the workplace for signs of resistance” (p. 682), thereby taking the role of proactive change agents as coaches and champions of change. Second, they emphasize change readiness is a social phenomenon influenced by other peoples' readiness, another factor showing the context-dependency of change readiness.

1.1.2.3 Interplay between an individual's psychological disposition and change context as a source: The social construction approach

While the first two approaches view the personal and the social aspects as relatively separated (Shimoni, 2017), the social construction approach integrates both. This approach returns to Lewin's roots. This time, the whole content, not just the nomenclature, has been adopted because Lewin saw the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations as a function of a totality of a life space entailing both — the individual and the environment (Burnes & Bargal, 2017). According to Burnes (2015), contextual factors moderate the level of dispositional resistance, and organizations being social systems, resistance should be seen as emerging from the mutual effects of individuals' and organizations' characteristics.

In the evolution of the concept of change readiness, the social construction approach was adopted as well, recognizing the importance of individual and contextual mutual effects. Holt and Vardaman (2013) named them *individual factors* (psychological) and *structural factors* (the circumstances under which change occurs).

1.1.2.4 The habitus-oriented approach

Shimoni (2017) acknowledges the advantage of the social construction approach and returns to the original Lewin's idea, but criticizes it for ignoring the dynamic nature of resistance. Thus, he proposes a habitus-oriented approach to resistance to change. He argues that “resistance is a social practice built into the system, produced by social agents' habitus, historically developed in constant interactions between human agents and social structures in a given social field” (Shimoni, 2017, p. 263). In line with the concept of habitus, social agents' behavior is not a direct reaction to external conditions (Swartz, 2002) but an improvisation of action strategies within structural constraints, also in terms of deeply rooted past experiences (Shimoni, 2017). For Shimoni, individuals or groups (social agents) are active producers of meaning. Bourdieu (1989) explains that by adopting the social structure of organization through the process of socialization, the social structure becomes a part of individuals' habitus or social disposition, which influences their thoughts and behaviors, including resistance to change (Shimoni, 2017). The habitus approach emphasizes the mirroring of organizations' material and symbolic social structures in an individual's

cognition. As Shimoni (2017, p. 264) notes, it is “something people learn, and once it is learned it 'naturally' affects the way they think and behave.”

Holt and Vardaman (2013) propose an expanded conceptualization of change readiness by incorporating the factor of awareness. They draw on Gondo, Patterson, and Palacios's (2013) research on mindfulness, which points out the uselessness of willingness and capability of employees in the absence of awareness of the need for change and of their routinized or automatic behaviors. With this, we are rapidly approaching the habitus-oriented approach to resistance, as discussed by Shimoni (2017), incorporating the social disposition that influences our thoughts and behaviors, meaning that we are not (fully) aware of our routinized behavior.

1.2 Clarifying the concepts

As the review of the evolution of the concepts has shown, the contemporary definitions describe change readiness as well as resistance to change as having an attitudinal core. However, this still leaves some ambiguity about the entailment of intentions and behavior in these two concepts. We discuss the dilemma of whether they should be included or excluded from the conception of an attitude and address some other aspects in the following subsections to improve the understanding of the focal concepts.

The tripartite attitude model (Smith, 1947) that led the development of attitude research constitutes of three attitude components: the cognitive, the affective, and the conative. While the cognitive component clearly denotes the beliefs (e.g., believing the change is beneficial), and the affective refers to feelings (e.g., being angry about change) about the attitude object (a specific change), the conative component is the most complex of all. In some cases also named intentional, in others behavioral, this dimension created substantial conceptual confusion. It denotes future intentions to act based on past behaviors or experiences with the attitude object. Some studies place more emphasis on past experiences and behaviors to reflect evaluations of an attitude object, while others criticize this, and focus on intentions, saying that one might not have past experiences when responding to a novel event (Piderit, 2000).

However, some researchers (e.g., Oreg, 2006), understand this component as entailing both, intentions to act as well as actions (e.g., verbally expressing intentions concerning change adoption, trying to convince others that the change is not beneficial). Thus, we identify the first source of conceptual confusion, especially concerning resistance to change, in different interpretations of the conative component. We need to understand that attitudes are a psychological phenomenon and higher-order classes of response to stimuli that cannot be observed directly. Thus, Breckler (1984) sees overt actions as expressions of the behavioral dimension. Behavior in a sense of action or intentional inaction was often the only dimension in earlier stages of resistance to change definitions, as our review reveals.

However, intentions, and attitudes in general, do not necessarily end in behavior consistent with them (Fazio & Olson, 2007). This brings us to the second important issue in need of attention in order to understand our focal concepts better – the attitude-behavior gap. Drawing from critiques of attitude-behavior consistency of the tripartite model and consistent with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985), behavioral intention does not always lead to actual behavior because the individual's control over the behavior is incomplete.

The third issue is the absence of agreement on whether to omit the conative component (intentions) from conceptualizations of an attitude altogether. Because the findings of the existence of the conative dimension are mixed (some advocates of the multidimensional view find evidence of only affective and cognitive dimensions in an attitude structure and some find all three), Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 13) in their review of the literature on the tripartite model conclude that “evidence supports the empirical separability of three classes of evaluative responses under some but certainly not all circumstances.”

Based on our discussion, we propose behavior should be excluded from conceptualizations of change readiness and resistance to change that are defined in attitudinal terms, and should be seen as their possible outcome. Furthermore, we call for an agreement on the entailment of the conative component in attitudes that should be followed in both concepts consistently. The gap regarding the conative component is clearly visible in the operationalization of the concepts.

The constitutive definition of change readiness does not entail intentions or behavior. To comprise the concept of individual change readiness at lower levels of abstraction, Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) proposed two factors that change agents need to cover through communication: (a) *discrepancy* between the desired state and the current state the employees need to realize (i.e., the need for change), and (b) *self-efficacy* (i.e., perceived ability of individuals and collective to change). Later, other factors were added, and today, the most popular and frequently used manner to operationalize change readiness at the individual level features the five dimensions by Holt and colleagues (2007). These include additional questions of (c) the *appropriateness* of the proposed change for addressing the discrepancy; (d) *principal support* being the degree to which organizational leaders support the change; and (e) *personal valence* (e.g., Is the change beneficial for the individual?). Finding positive answers to these questions will form an attitude of change readiness. This operationalization is referred to in the literature as “the message” and shows how salient cognition or individuals' beliefs are in the conceptualization of readiness.

On the other hand, the operationalization of individual resistance to change includes all three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and conative. Oreg (2006) followed Piderit's (1999) work and designed the Change Attitude Scale based on a conceptualization of resistance to change as a multidimensional, which previous studies did not consider (Oreg, 2006). The items measuring affect question (positive and negative) feelings one has toward a specific change.

The cognitive dimension involves items about the employees' evaluations of the worthiness and potential benefit of the change. The last, conative dimension (also called *behavioral* and *intentional* in Oreg's [2006] in Piderit's [1999] nomenclature, respectively) addresses intentions to act and actions against the change (Oreg, 2006). At this point, we need to mention the Resistance to Change Scale (Oreg, 2003) that has been widely used and accepted the operationalization of change resistance. This instrument was designed to measure an individual's dispositional resistance to change. It includes items measuring emotional reactions to imposed change, routine seeking, and cognitive rigidity. As such, it can be understood as an antecedent to a change-resistant attitude (Oreg, 2006) and must not be confused with change resistance conceptualized as an attitude.

1.2.1 The coexistence of change readiness and resistance to change

An important underlying assumption of the tripartite model is the consistency of all dimensions of an attitude because they are part of the same underlying construct experienced by an individual. However, besides the attitude-behavior consistency, this is one of the significant critiques of the tripartite model because numerous studies show the existence of inconsistencies (Fazio & Olson, 2007). With new research advocating a reconceptualization of individual responses to change as multidimensional attitudes, it is becoming clear that attitude toward change is not all black-and-white. One can foster a positive attitude toward change, yet at the same time resist it. In other words, resistance to change and change readiness can coexist.

Individual's "simultaneously oppositional positive and negative orientations toward an object" including cognition ("I think about X") and/or affect ("I feel about X") is defined as ambivalent (Ashforth et al., 2014, p. 1455) and is perhaps the most prevalent type of response toward change that has been ignored for a long time (Piderit, 2000).

1.2.2 Using time to improve understanding of the concepts

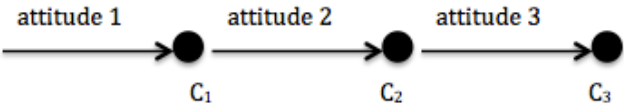
It is important to note that change readiness and resistance to change are, as attitudes, situational and time sensitive. If the situation or the context within which change occurs changes, attitudes can change as well.

Referring to change readiness, Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993, p. 700) noted that "the creation of readiness is not necessarily a pre-change concern only." They posited readiness should be maintained throughout the duration of the change process because change is composed of smaller, ongoing changes and thus initial change readiness will not suffice.

We illustrate this in Figure 2 and add that the focal change stays the same, however, with each new piece of information from the external or individual's internal environment (the

changing of the context) becoming available, the focal change subjectively changes for the individual, and thus the attitude toward it can change, too. The issue of time and context changes that it brings is especially significant to our discussion of change-related attitudes, since attitudes form before change takes action. For the formation of an attitude toward future events that we can never possess complete information on, every new piece of information we obtain can importantly change our attitude. Thus, change readiness and resistance to change must be seen as fluid.

Figure 1: The role of time and change context in attitude change



Source: Own work

Note. C1 means change 1, C2 change 2, and C3 change 3. We are talking about the same change (e.g., a merger), however, as the context changes, the change is not the same for the individual anymore because with time new information that changes the context of the change is obtained.

Stevens (2013) offered clarification of change readiness by applying stages of change. Drawing on Lewin's three-stage model of unfreeze–change–refreeze, there is a consensus that change readiness applies to the phase of unfreezing and “equates to the preparation stage” (Holt & Vardaman, 2013). However, as Stevens (2013) noted when applying it to the phases of the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), it is not clear where to apply it. Thus, he proposed conceptualizing change readiness as a process referring to the transitions between the phases of precontemplation to contemplation and contemplation to preparation, reflecting the shifts in an individual’s decisional balance rather than positioning it in a particular phase. We propose this approach could be applied to resistance to change as well.

1.2.3 Confusion with similar concepts

While the majority of definitions of change readiness draw on Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993), some definitions are closer to other concepts and some even contain them in the definitions of readiness, such as change commitment (e.g., Weiner, 2009). For this reason, we review some of the concepts most often used in conjunction with change readiness or as its synonym in Table 3.

Table 3: Concepts similar to change readiness

Construct	Source	Definition
Openness to change	Miller, Johnson, & Grau (1994, p. 66)	“willingness to support organizational change and positive affect toward change”
Commitment to change	Herscovitch & Meyer (2002, p. 475)	“a force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative”
Coping with change	Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis (1986, p. 572)	“a person's cognitive and intentional/behavioral efforts to manage (reduce, minimize or tolerate) the internal or external demands of the person-environment transaction when it is appraised as taxing or exceeding a person's resources”

Source: Own work

The confusion can be partly resolved by considering the stages of change. Readiness, in comparison to commitment, refers to the stages prior to the action stage, while commitment is in Armenakis, Harris, and Feild’s (1999) view typical of Lewin’s freezing stage. However, it may apply to any of the change stages, and thus in the earlier stages of the change process these two concepts can indeed be indistinguishable, since they are both described as precursors to change-supportive behaviors (Armenakis & Harris, 2009) and entail cognitive and affective dimensions (Hersovitch & Meyer [2002] suggest the force might also be classified as affective).

Some authors distinguish openness from readiness, saying it is a prior condition to it (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), while others (e.g., Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007) treat the two concepts as nearly synonyms. Since openness does not entail the intentional component, the similarity of the two depends upon whether we include intentions into conceptualization of readiness (Stevens, 2013). Thus, in the early stages when it is not clear what type of behaviors will change require to form intentions readiness may indeed take the form of openness (Stevens, 2013).

Coping with change differs from change readiness by involving behavioral effort to manage change. Moreover, it implies change is already occurring, as opposed to readiness that happens before change occurs.

The problem of differentiating between similar concepts deriving from stages of change is not that salient with resistance to change. An issue that seemingly needs to be clarified is activation. Coetsee (1999) places resistance on a continuum of intensity ranging from apathy (i.e., indifference) to aggression (i.e., destructive opposition), positing that resistance can be passive when forms of opposition are weak, expressed for example by voicing opposition, or active when blocking or impeding change. We agree with Coetsee (1999) that a more nuanced approach is needed. However, we share the views building on Lewin's (1947) and other behavior-oriented conceptualizations, as well as affect-focused conceptualizations describing change resistance with core affects high in activation (e.g., Oreg et al., 2018), implying resistance to be high in activation.

Change readiness or resistance happens when individuals foster psychological attachment to change. Change entails psychological involvement for them and triggers psychological arousal (Baek, 2010). The psychological arousal can be in a form of cognition or affect. Arousal of cognition and activation of an individual's cognitive resources show through answering questions, such as "Is the change needed? Am I capable of change? Is the change beneficial for me?" and others explained in Section 3. In other words, we speak of change resistance and change readiness when employees care for the change. In terms of affect, emotions high in activation are felt, such as excitement, fear, or anger (Oreg et al., 2018). Coghlan (1993) for example describes resistance as a dynamic energy and emphasizes it is not passive.

We posit other concepts are more appropriate for capturing low levels of psychological activation, such as disengagement (Oreg et al., 2018) or indifference, as mentioned by Coetsee (1999) himself. Jermier, Knights, and Nord (1994, p. 9) observe that seeing resistance as "a reactive process where agents embedded in power relations *actively* oppose initiatives by other agents" is the most prevalent view in the literature and this is also the view advocated in our paper as the most appropriate. We present the concepts of psychological disengagement and indifference, together with another concept similar to resistance to change – change cynicism in Table 4.

Cynicism about change can be found on the negative side of attitudes toward change. Bommer, Rich, and Rubin (2005) see it as a complex attitude comprised of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. However, as Reichers, Wanous, and Austin (1997) observe, cynicism does not necessarily result in change-resistant behaviors, which is compliant with our discussion on the behavioral component of attitude in Section 3. Cynicism is distinct from resistance in that it arises from a loss of faith in change leaders and the history of unsuccessful change attempts, whereas resistance as a negative attitude toward change is based on self-interest, misunderstanding, or inherently limited tolerance for change (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997). Thus, being cynical about change will not aim to seek answers to questions such as "Is change needed and beneficial for me?" because a cynic fosters feelings of distrust or unfairness toward those responsible for change (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005).

Table 4: Concepts similar to resistance to change

Construct	Source	Definition
Psychological (change) disengagement	Major et al. (1998, p. 35)	“a defensive detachment of self-esteem from outcomes in a particular domain, such that feelings of self-worth are not dependent on successes or failure in that domain”
Indifference	Ben-Ze’ev (2000)	Perceiving something as unimportant, thus feeling no emotion in response
Change cynicism	Wanous, Reichers, & Austin (2000, p. 135)	“a construct that has two elements: a pessimistic outlook for successful change and blame placed on “those responsible” for lacking the motivation and/or the ability to effect successful change”

Source: Own work

1.3 Discussion

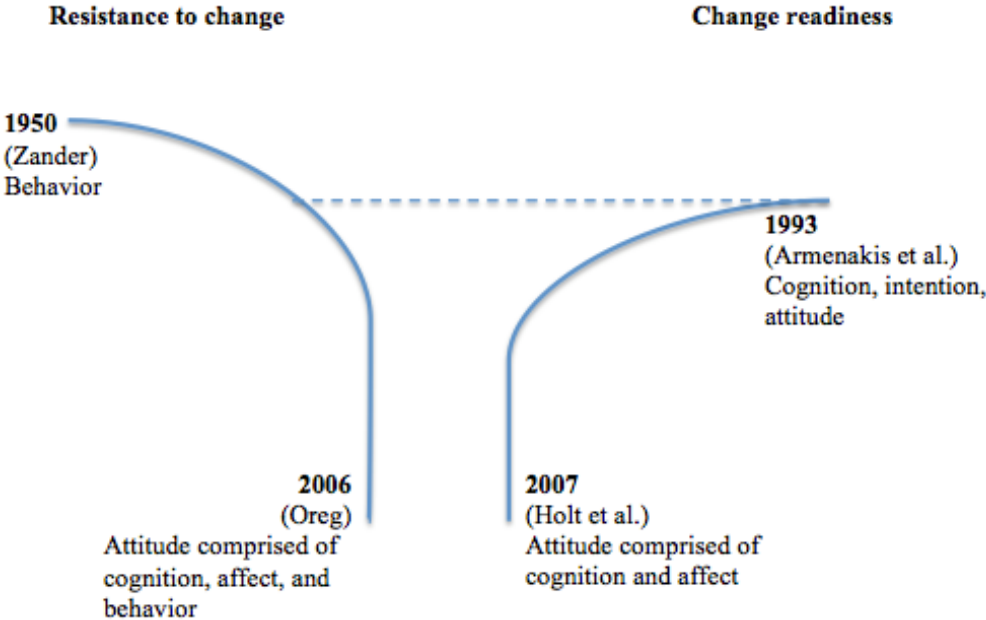
Armenakis et al. (1993) tried to differentiate the concept of change readiness from resistance to change, however, they were not as successful in resolving the confusion as in preventing further calls for clarifications after their publication (e.g., Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Their differentiation draws on the majority of past definitions of resistance to change defining the concept in behavioral terms. Armenakis et al. (1993, p. 681) differentiate readiness from resistance by defining change readiness as “a cognitive precursor to the behaviors”. They leave resistance to change conceptualized as behavior solely. In their view, the behavior could be of either support for change or resistance towards change, despite the term “resistance” being usually associated with a negative orientation toward change. Similarly, their view allows for assigning the possible negative valence to the change readiness attitude, meaning a sort of change readiness (i.e., negative change readiness) could be a precursor to the change resistance (the behavior). However, what seemed a clear differentiation between the two focal concepts opens new questions, one of them being “What was their basis for defining resistance as behavior?”, while the cognitive component is present in some definitions and literature preceding their paper (e.g, Argyris, 1985), as revealed in our review.

Based on our review and discussion in Section 3, we claim that the ambiguity and therefore calls for clarifications were justified. Resistance to change cannot simply be conceptualized as behavior, as Armenakis et al. (1993) proposed. The two concepts share attitudinal roots. When we speak of resistance to change as behavior (as the majority of early definitions do), we know today that we should be speaking of a different concept. We are witnessing a polysemy, meaning using the same phrase (resistance to change) to denote two different meanings and thus two concepts: (a) resistance to change: the attitude, and (b) resistance to change: the behavior. However, back in 1950, when Zander defined resistance to change, behaviors were assumed to be visual expressions of attitudes – the directly unobservable psychological phenomena.

Figure 2 illustrates our understanding of how the two concepts grew more together through their evolution. According to clarification, our proposal for resistance to change as a behavior should be seen as a separate concept from resistance to change as an attitude, we could assume the resistance to change “curve” presents two different concepts. But knowing the background and the development of attitude-behavior consistency literature, it becomes clear it depicts the evolution of one concept.

Nowadays, resistance to change and change readiness are conceptualized as attitudes. However, due to the different evolutions of our focal concepts, and the issues raised in Section 1.2, the conative or behavioral component is still present in the operationalization of resistance to change but not in the operationalization of change readiness.

Figure 2: The evolution of resistance to change and change readiness conceptualization



Source: Own work

As for their use, resistance to change nowadays is still operationalized in research in different ways. While the majority of research acknowledges the multidimensionality of the concept and uses Oreg's (2006) definition (e.g., Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017; Moutousi & May, 2018), some authors still use it exclusively in behavioral terms (e.g., Furst & Cable, 2008), and do not recognize it as an attitude. Change readiness, on the other hand, is consistently used as an attitude. Its possible consequent behavior is discussed as change-supportive behavior.

We conclude that the concepts do represent the opposite poles of a continuum. They share the core property of being attitudes, readiness being the positive, and resistance the negative orientation toward change. However, both concepts should be operationalized along the same dimensions to enable complete alignment. Thus, we call for a unified approach to the operationalization of both concepts to facilitate commensurability. More specifically, we suggest that an agreement on the entailment of intentions in the conceptualization of an attitude should be reached and consistently implemented into both concepts. Furthermore, the behavior should be excluded from the resistance to change concept, and change-resistant or change-supportive behaviors seen as possible outcomes of resistance to change and change readiness, respectively.

To ensure commensurability, an important property of the concepts, as well as their similarity by involving activity and not passivity of change recipients, is deriving from psychological attachment to a specific change. With activity we refer to a form of psychological arousal, the activation of recipients' cognitive resources and/or emotions. In other words, employees will experience resistance or readiness when they care for the change, and the criterion of activation importantly separates them from other change-related attitudes.

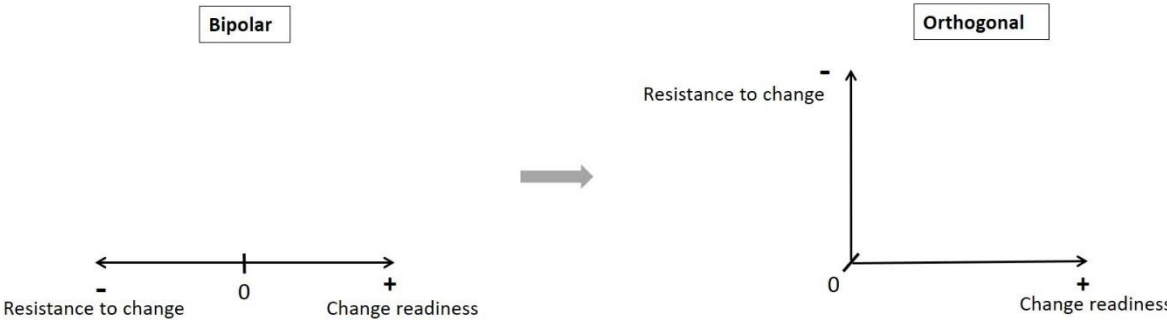
Another criterion that we propose to help clarify the two concepts is the role of time and change context. Resistance to change and change readiness concern the pre-change phase, however, as attitudes they are situational and are as such ongoing processes. As the context changes constantly with time, the attitude can change as well and should not be treated as a pre-change concern only because every change is composed of many other smaller changes. In line with this finding, the two concepts should be seen as continuous and measured accordingly.

The situational property of change attitudes should not be lost or the terms confused with trait-like concepts. Resistance especially, is often seen as a psychological disposition of individuals and has been measured in many studies, using Oreg's (2003) Resistance to Change Scale. An individual's dispositional inclination to resist change is a possible source or antecedent of a change-resistant attitude. The same could be applied to readiness.

Despite the finding that change readiness and resistance to change can be put on a bipolar continuum, the question is, should they be. Change is one of the major triggers of

ambivalence (Piderit, 1999), and an individual can simultaneously hold positive and negative orientations toward change. Moving beyond the seminal work of Thurstone (1928), who saw attitudes on a bipolar continuum ranging from positive to negative, with a neutral point in the middle, we draw on social psychologists' work (e.g., Kaplan, 1972; Breckler, 1994) to suggest that a more nuanced approach is needed by separating the positive and negative components of an attitude and placing them in a two-dimensional space. According to the traditional bipolar attitude approach, individuals who have mixed feelings, as well as the ones who are indifferent, would report the same neutral attitude (Baek, 2010). We note that change readiness and resistance indeed can and should be looked at in conjunction, however, not in the sense of a bipolar continuum but rather as simultaneously present orthogonal concepts, as depicted in Figure 3. Within the spectrum of attitudes, which arises from the orthogonality of the two concepts, there are many nuances of attitudes that need to be further researched in the future.

Figure 3: Resistance to change and change readiness: From bipolar to orthogonal concepts



Source: Own work

With our review, we contribute to the clarification of the change readiness and resistance to change concepts. Our findings bear insights for future research on the integration of the two concepts. Moreover, we see our results as building blocks to help align and integrate existing measures or develop new ones. Drawing from our clarification of the focal properties of the concepts, we propose a new measurement instrument should be developed in the future that would improve the validity of resistance to change and change readiness and better reflect the realities of change-related attitudes.

In Table 5, we summarize the proposed building blocks for a potential new measurement instrument.

Table 5: Building blocks for a potential new measurement instrument

Building block	Description
Catching ambivalence and attitudinal nuances	The new measurement instrument should be able to measure Resistance to change and Change readiness simultaneously (i.e. as orthogonal concepts) to be able to capture the realities of change-related attitudes that are often ambivalent.
Aligning the attitude components	An agreement on the entailment of the conative component in the conceptualization of an attitude should be achieved and followed in both focal concepts consistently. This would facilitate the commensurability of Change readiness and Resistance to change and establish the condition to treat the two concepts as orthogonal on one another.
Separation of the behavioral dimension from conceptualization of resistance to change	Behavior should be excluded from the resistance to change concept and seen as a possible outcome (change-resistant behavior) of the attitude. This would also establish a condition for orthogonality of the concepts.
Psychological activation	We speak of Resistance to change and Change readiness when change triggers psychological (cognitive and/or emotional) arousal and an individual cares for the change. Activation in a sense of behavior is a possible outcome of the focal concepts.
Continuance of measurement	Despite concerning the pre-change phase, Resistance to change and Change readiness are situational, and should be understood and measured as an ongoing process, as the context changes constantly with time. One-time pre-change measurement will not suffice.

Source: Own work

Based on Holt and Vardaman's (2013) definition of change readiness, which entails the capability of executing change, and following the ordinary meaning of the term *readiness* (i.e., to be fully prepared for something; *New Oxford American Dictionary*), we find another interesting avenue for future research and conceptualization of change readiness. A question appears of whether the self-perceived capability (self-efficacy) captured in existing definitions of change readiness should be expanded to capability in more objective terms as well. Drawing on the plain readiness definition, Weiner (2009) noted that change readiness means being willing and able to change. The issue of actual ability should receive attention in future research, especially because change readiness is used as a tool by practitioners to predict the success of future change implementations. By expanding the definition in such a way, we would radically redefine change readiness, making it more than an attitude and

moving it away from the concept of resistance to change. An alternative would be to define a new concept that entails both, readiness and ability.

1.4 Conclusion

In Chapter 1, we juxtaposed the concepts of resistance to change and change readiness, and reviewed their evolution through time. This allowed us to explore the sources of ambiguity in their conceptualizations that is still present in the literature today. The originality of our approach stems from the simultaneous review of resistance to change and change readiness.

Examining the two concepts simultaneously is important for two reasons. First, change readiness has been in prior literature assumed as the opposite pole of resistance. To validate this assumption, we should first explore common grounds for comparing both concepts. A major finding of our study suggests that the two concepts can be compared because they share being an attitude. Moreover, they both include activation of an individual's cognitive resources and/or emotions and are thus not passive attitudes. Drawing from this evidence, we confirm that the two concepts can be treated as opposite poles of each other.

However, the attitudes toward change should not be put on a bipolar continuum. Theorists and practitioners alike should realize change is one of the major triggers of ambivalence (Piderit, 1999), and the orientations of attitude dimensions will not always be aligned. We suggest that future researchers pay more attention to understand the spectrum of ambivalence toward change given that an individual's attitude toward change is rarely bipolar. We advocate that a more nuanced categorization of attitudes toward change is needed in the future and propose more precision and richness should be added by combining the orientation toward change (positive or negative) with the level of activation (activation of positivity and/or negativity that arises from the psychological attachment to change) and by acknowledging multiple dimensions of an attitude that will not always be aligned in terms of orientation toward change.

Last but not least, our study does not come without limitations. It is a qualitative review of the concepts of change readiness and resistance to change that was driven by a goal to clarify them to be able to understand them better and answer the question of whether or not they are representing opposite poles of the same continuum. A combination with a quantitative review of the concepts in terms of bibliometric analyses might reveal some interesting additional insights. We present only a brief quantitative review of the number of publications to show the popularity of the concepts through time.

Second, as a result of our review, we propose some building blocks for a potential new measurement instrument. We do discuss the existing operationalization of the concepts, however, with a more thorough review of the measures of both concepts we would be able to better examine the downsides of the existing measures and provide more practical suggestions to improve future measures of our focal concepts.

2 ADDING A MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE: THE AFFECTIVE NATURE OF THE CHANGE READINESS CONSTRUCT

Change readiness is a popular concept in organizational change literature, but little is known about what is the role of affect in individuals' change readiness. As organizations still struggle with achieving employee change readiness, despite vast and non-controversial literature on the topic, the affective dimension might be the missing piece of the puzzle.

The affective element has not emerged as a definitional element of the majority of change readiness definitions, its operationalization, and thus also from empirical studies. Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis's (2013) review argues this is one of the major limitations of change readiness research. The sole focus of change readiness research were the cognitions and beliefs people hold toward change initiatives. The lack of attention directed toward affect is an important omission for two major reasons.

First, change readiness has been conceptualized as an attitude – »a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor« (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1; see also Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). As an attitude, it involves individuals' cognitions and affect towards change. Affect is thus an integral part of change readiness conceptualization. The affective dimension of change readiness presents a fruitful field of exploration, because feelings bear not only information about valence, but action tendencies as well (Oreg et al., 2018). Sole beliefs about change do not mean an individual wil employ in some kind of action toward change. Affect moves individuals toward action, and organizations want their employees to be actively involved in efforts to adopt the change. Or on other hand raise opposition that would improve the design of the change or the change process so that employees would find the change more appropriate, and thus more likely to adopt. Moreover, nowadays we know that affect is not a reaction to our cognitive processes, but rather the first information we receive (Barrett, 2017). For this reason, it deserves more attention within the change management literature.

Secondly, some research suggests that the affective change readiness might be an even stronger predictor of change outcomes than the cognitive component in regard to individual or collective level (Rafferty et al., 2013). Recently, Rafferty and Minbashian (2019) addressed the calls not to neglect affect, through quantitative research focusing on positive emotions and change beliefs. Their research implicates that positive emotions about change are a key source of variation in change readiness.

We share Rafferty and Minbashian's aim (2019) to build momentum for a stronger emphasis on the role of affect in individual's change readiness. Our goal is to answer the research questions: *What is the role of affect in the individual change readiness concept?* and *How*

does affect impacts the elements of individual's change readiness framework¹² – the change content, context, process, and individual differences? Moreover, we discuss What is the interconnectedness between the elements of the framework?

The focus of our study are organization-initiated changes imposed on employees, that usually encounter the most resistance (compared to employee-initiated change). Through in-depth interviews we discussed with respondents their attitude toward a specific organizational change, and what change readiness means to them. Affect was explored in connection with a specific situation – a specific change that has been recently implemented (situational affect), and the interviewees as well marked themselves on an optimist – pessimist continuum, signalling dispositional affect.

Our contribution lies in positioning affect in the change readiness concept. Specifically, we explain how it relates to the elements of the change readiness framework – the change content, context, process, and individual differences. Consequently, we show why it is important not to neglect it. Also, giving center stage to affect, seeing it as a pre-condition to change readiness, and explicating its strong impact on all elements of the framework, we aim to create a shift in focus from cognition to affect, that is needed in the change readiness literature. Method-wise, we enrich the change readiness literature consisting largely on quantitative and conceptual studies by employing a qualitative method. As our focal concept is operationalized in the past research solely in terms of beliefs, only qualitative study was appropriate to tackle the affective dimension of change readiness.

The paper continues as follows. First, we review the literature on individual change readiness concept, with an emphasis on affect, and define affect. The review of the relevant literature includes contemporary insights from the field of neuroscience that positions affect as a prerequisite for forming change readiness attitude. We continue with methodological approach and framework that guided our research and continue with the chosen methodology and approach to analyzing the data. We then proceed to introduce the findings of our qualitative analysis. We debate the four dimensions interconnectedness in terms of affect.

2.1 Review of the relevant literature

Here we review relevant literature for our discussion of the role of affect in individual's change readiness. We first review change readiness literature and the current role of affect in change readiness concept, and continue with positioning affect as a pre-condition to change readiness based on contemporary findings in the neuroscience literature.

¹² The framework proposed by Holt, Armenakis, Feild, and Harris (2007) that consists of change content, context, process, and individual differences.

2.1.1 The current role of affect in change readiness concept

Affect is currently not addressed as integrative to change readiness and yet also not outside of it. Interestingly, a popular definition of individual change readiness by Holt et al. (2007, p.235) specifically mentions affect, as change readiness being "The extent to which an individual or individuals are cognitively and *emotionally* inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo". Despite Holt and colleagues (2007) and Stevens (2013) acknowledge affect in their change readiness conceptualizations, affect seems to dwindle from change readiness literature. The focus in majority of definitions, despite the general agreement change readiness being an attitude, is one-handed, focusing on the cognitive aspect and ignoring affect (e.g., Weiner, 2009; Holt & Vardaman, 2013) (Repovš, Drnovšek, & Kaše, 2019). Individual change readiness has been operationalized, by Holt et al. (2007) who even defined it in terms of affect, as comprised of five dimensions, all focusing on the cognitive aspect: discrepancy (i.e. realizing the need for change), self-efficacy (i.e. perceived ability to change), appropriateness (of the proposed change to address the discrepancy), principal support (support from leadership), and personal valence (benefits for the individual).

Studies of change recipients' reactions to organizational change that deal with other concepts than change readiness do consider affect as well. Oreg et al.'s (2011) review of change recipients' reactions to organizational change reveals that affect was considered in several studies, through concepts such as stress (e.g., Begley & Czajka, 1993; Bordia et al., 2006; Amiot et al., 2006;) or fatigue (e.g., Pierce & Dunham, 1992), anxiety (Paterson & Cary, 2002; K.I. Miller & Monge, 1985; V.D. Miller et al., 1994), negative emotions (Fugate et al., 2002; Kiefer, 2005), and affective resistance to organizational change (Oreg, 2003, 2006). In some studies affect was assessed through pleasantness and arousal toward changes by using Whissell's Dictionary of Affect in Language (e.g. Mossholder et al., 2000; Bartunek et al., 2006).

The ambiguity of affect being currently not addressed as integrative to change readiness, yet not outside of it, partly exists due to lack of concept clarity. The literature of change recipient's reactions to change suffers from »jingle-jangle fallacies«, to borrow Block's (1995) expression (Rafferty et al., 2013), where equivalent constructs are given different labels, or different ones given the same label by different researchers (Oreg et al., 2011). Concepts often confused with change readiness are openness to change, coping with change, or commitment to change. Perhaps the most relevant alternative concept for the discussion of change readiness that deals with affect would be resistance to change, since it represents the opposite (negative) pole of the change readiness continuum (Repovš, Drnovšek, & Kaše, 2019). Also, some studies use concepts that involve cognitive content, but are misleadingly named affective, such as affective commitment to change (e.g., Hersovitch & Meyer, 2002; G.B. Cunningham, 2006). On the other hand, we have affective content comprised in measures that are labelled cognitive, such as the normative commitment scale (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

To our best of knowledge, the study of Rafferty and Minbashian (2019) is to date the sole empirical study that deals with affect in relation to change readiness concept. As already mentioned, they found positive emotions about change to be a key source of variation in recipients' change readiness. Going beyond the concept of individual change readiness, some authors offered models concerning planned organizational change, that include individual's affect. Liu and Perrewe (2005) build on Lazarus' (1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) work on emotion and stress to propose a cognitive-emotional model of organizational change. They emphasize the importance of understanding emotions in the change process, and acknowledging their dynamic nature, as the past research had a tendency to see it rather statically. In their view employees' emotional experiences go through four phases – primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, coping stage, and the outcome stage – whereby communication of information, and individual attributions may influence the emotion process.

Oreg et al. (2018) also offer an affect-based model of recipient's responses to organizational change events. They highlight emotional episodes as a crucial component of organizational change and introduce a circumplex of change recipients' affective and behavioral responses to change events, whereby, distinguishing between two dimensions of affect – activation, and valence. They portray four possible outcomes, with underlying core affect, as a result of valence and activation combinations: change resistance (High activation and negative valence; core affect being stressed, angry, upset), change proactivity (high activation and positive valence; core affect being excited, elated, enthusiastic), change disengagement (low activation and negative valence; core affect being despaired, sad, helpless), and change acceptance (low activation and positive valence; core affect being calm, relaxed, content).

While Liu and Perrewe's (2005) and Oreg et al.'s (2018) models, as well as Rafferty and Minbashian's (2019) study limit to emotions, we believe to understand the full story of affective change readiness we should define affect broader, in terms of Eagly and Chaiken's (1998, p. 272) understanding of the affective dimension of an attitude as “feelings, moods, emotions, and sympathetic nervous-system activity that people have experienced in relation to an attitude object and subsequently associate with it.” It seems like existing research has focused on emotions, because they have a clear referent – the specific change. However, not only emotions, but the broader experience of affect, including a more free-floating affect, can influence individual's readiness towards a specific change. We explore that in more detail in the chapter 3 *Affect-as-information in the process of individual's change readiness development*.

2.1.2 Affect as a pre-condition to change readiness existence

The recent advances in neuroscience have finally given the fruitful field of affect research the chance to further our understanding and begin to clarify what affect is, how it comes about, and what is its relationship with cognition. Contemporary research on cognition and

affect shows the primacy of affect (e.g. Barrett, 2017) and uncovers an interesting paradox we are facing concerning the concept of change readiness. Not only is affect an integral component of change readiness, because attitudes are evaluative summary judgments derived from two types of information - cognitive and affective (Crites, Fabringar, & Petty, 1994, p. 621), it gives us the chance to speak about the concept of change readiness at all. Humans form attitudes only toward objects that psychologically arouse us or are in other words important to us. What we care about in the moment (is the change important to us or not) is determined by our interoceptive predictions which produce affect. Interoceptive predictions are a primal function of humans that help us stay alive and take actions (interoception drives our actions) to balance our »body budget¹³ - what we care about in the moment is called our affective niche, everything else is just noise to our brain. From the perspective of our brain only entities in the affective niche matter, because they could affect our body budget (Barrett, 2017). Paradoxically, affect is thus the pre-condition to change readiness existence and yet it has been given considerably less attention than cognition in the change readiness literature.

2.2 Methodological approach

We adopted an abductive approach. This approach was selected as it is well suited to discover new things, focusing on theory development, rather than theory generation (Dubois, & Gadde, 2002). Moreover, the phenomenon of change readiness is complex, reflecting multiple dimensions, disciplines, and stakeholder perspectives, which makes it suitable for an abductive approach to produce fruitful results (Sætre, & Van de Ven, 2021). We combine the literatures on change management, psychology, and neuroscience to advance existing knowledge of the change readiness phenomenon.

Our hunch¹⁴ that affect may be a missing puzzle to better understanding individuals' change readiness was fuelled by construct measurement and evolution, where the affective component has been lost and neglected. To abduct means “to interpret and recontextualize individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or a set of ideas. To be able to understand something in a new way by observing and interpreting this something in a new conceptual framework.” (Richter et al., 2017, p. 72). Individual change readiness framework by Holt and colleagues (2007) comprised of change content, context, process, and individual differences presented a guideline in our research. This framework is well established in

¹³ “»Body budget« is a useful metaphor dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett uses to denote our metabolic resources such as blood, oxygen, glucose etc. Our body constantly makes deposits and withdrawals of these resources based on predictions of interoceptive signals. Whereas the term »body budget« focuses on the state, allostasis is »the process by which the brain efficiently maintains energy regulation in the body« (Kleckner et al., 2017).

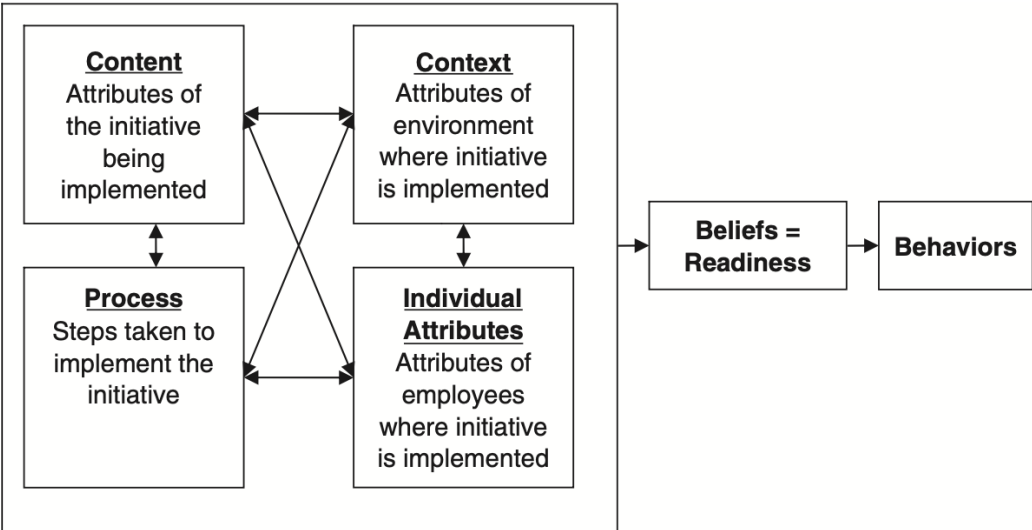
¹⁴ According to Sætre, and Van de Ven (2021) there are four steps of the abductive process. Step 1: observe anomaly, step 2: confirm anomaly, step 3: generate hunches, that present possible explanations for the observed anomaly, and step 4: evaluate hunches, and moving on to deductive fleshing-out and inductive testing. We describe the step 1, and step 2 in chapter 1.2 *Methods and research approach of the dissertation*, while steps 3 and 4 are the subjects of the quantitative study presented in chapter 2 *Adding a Missing Piece of the Puzzle: The Affective Nature of the Change Readiness Construct*.

change readiness literature and encompasses four broad categories to capture the totality of antecedents that shape individual's change readiness. We present it in the next chapter, before continuing with describing our sample, data collection, and data analysis. We stay within this framework; however, we re-define it to better reflect the individual level. Our aim is to deepen the knowledge on how the four antecedents influence individuals' change readiness, with an emphasis on affect. To achieve our aim, we employ qualitative method. The research process was highly iterative. We repeatedly switched between the data and literature, and refined the coding book.

2.2.1 Change Readiness Antecedents Framework

The literature sees change recipients' change readiness as being shaped by four factors – content, process, context, and individual differences. Individual change readiness is seen as a comprehensive attitude, simultaneously influenced by these four elements. Figure 1 depicts the relationships between the four factors. In Holt, Armenakis, Feild, and Harris's, (2007) view, that permeates the change readiness literature, the four factors shape beliefs that equals individual's change readiness. Change readiness, that is conceptualized as a general set of beliefs provides the foundation for adoptive behaviors.

Figure 4: The relationship between content, process, context, and individual differences with readiness



Source: Holt, Armenakis, Feild, and Harris, 2007.

2.2.1.1 Content

The change content describes the “what” of the change, and refers to the type of change and its inherent characteristics. In describing what will change, it typically involves the following

change categories: administrative, structural, procedural, or technological (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007).

2.2.1.2 *Process*

The change process describes how the change is being implemented (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007). It encompasses the steps and methods taken by organizations (before, during, and after implementation) to successfully implement change initiatives (Self, Armenakis, & Schraeder, 2007). The important role of the change agent in the process has been recognized since the classic work of Coch and French (1948). Change agents send messages directly through strategy of persuasive communication (e.g. communicating the need for change (e.g. Nutt, 1986)) or indirectly through active participation by allowing employees to self-discover “the message” of proposed change (Armenakis et al. 1993). In our study, we look at the process from the individual's perspective, as how the process of getting change ready evolves within an employee.

2.2.1.3 *Context*

The organizational change context are the circumstances within which change happens (Self, Armenakis, & Schraeder, 2007). We share Caldwell's (2013, p.19) view that “what is salient to individual employees is not an *organizational change* but rather a *changing organization*, which places multiple, simultaneous adaptive demands on them from many forces within the organization.” We aim to expand the knowledge about interacting complexities of multiple, simultaneous changes on one's change readiness, that we know little about (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). We define the change context in terms of change turbulence – the amount of all the other changes going on the same time as the focal change (Herold et al., 2007). This property of the change context importantly shapes individual's change readiness, due to individual's limited cognitive resources.

2.2.1.4 *Individual differences*

Individual differences are the differences between individuals that make some employees more inclined to favor organizational changes than others (Holt et al., 2007).

The pre-defined individual differences we payed attention to in our empirical research, were past experiences with organizational change, and personality trait of optimism. We payed attention to what kind of past experience one has with change in general (positive vs. negative vs. mixed) and what role past experience have in affective change readiness.

We explicitly asked the respondents where on the optimist to pessimist continuum they perceive themselves to be. Based on their subjective perception - they marked themselves on a continuum where “complete realist” and “complete pessimist” presented the opposite

poles of the continuum – we classified them into optimism categories (see in table 6). The dispositional theories of optimism refer to expectations of experiencing more positive than negative things in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1993). From the explanatory style approach optimism and pessimism have been applied to the ways in which people routinely explain events (Seligman, 1991)– optimists tend to attribute negative events to external, temporary, and specific causes (e.g. an unfortunate coincidence), and positive events to internal, stable, and general causes (e.g. one's own characteristics). Pessimists show the reverse pattern (Reformulated Learned Helplessness Theory, RLHT; Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). The RLHT predicts that optimistic and pessimistic explanations will lead to different expectations about the future (Gillham, Shatte, Reivich & Seligman, 2001).

2.2.2 Sampling

A purposeful sampling technique was applied to recruit participants aiming to achieve depth of understanding through information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Through authors' social networks, we contacted (large) companies that were undergoing a larger change or just finished the implementation of it. A person in charge of the change described the change to us in more detail and directed us to individuals that were affected by that change. Our aim was to recruit participants that were engaged in different roles in organizations in terms of whether they create change/implement it or usually just receive it.

We were especially interested how people who usually hold the role of change initiator or/and implementor process a top-down change when they are in the change receiver role solely. We were interested in how they process a top-down change themselves and what are, from their experience with other employees, the key findings of the most problematic and important issues, since people who know this best are the ones responsible for change implementation. The broad spectre of participants (change initiators, implementors, and change receivers) allowed us to gain rich information of the individual's change readiness phenomenon from different perspectives. The role regarding change (i.e. change initiator, receiver etc.) the interviewees usually have, was identified based on interviewee's position in the organization and through conversations with them.

The final sample consisted of 19 respondents working in 7 large organizations in 5 different industries (retail, tech, banking, energy, and manufacturing). 7 different change types were discussed in our study, namely: change of ownership, change of working process, reorganization of working space, introduction of a new software, change of leadership, development of a new product, and change in organizational structure. Table 6 provides a more detailed overview of respondents' profile. Beside sociodemographic data we list respondents' first association concerning the word »change« that captures their implicit attitude towards change, and optimism, to provide richer context for the reader to refer to.

Table 6: Sample characteristics

Inter-viewee	Position	Role	Gender	Association »change«	Type of change	Industry	Optimism
No.1	Head of purchasing in winter division	CR	F	Change of status quo; unknown	Change of leadership	Retail	R-
No.2	Strategic designer	CR	M	Progress; chaos; tension; uncertainty	No specific change	Sports equipment	O
No.3	Ski constructor	I, CR;	M	Necessity	Development of a new product	Sports equipment	R+
No.4	Product manager	CR	M	Necessity	Change of position and relocation	Sports equipment	R+
No.5	Head of business innovation and digitalization unit	CI, I;	M	Something new; work on oneself; discomfort; motivation	Change in organizational structure	Energy	OR, O -
No.6	Process technologist	CR	M	Problems	Development of a new product	Sports equipment	R -
No.7	Head of winter division	I, CI, CIm	M	Something »add, drop, keep«	Change of ownership and position	Sports equipment	O +
No.8	Idea manager	I, CI;	F	Excitement	Change of working process	Banking	O
No.9	Head of sales of winter division	CI, CIm;	M	People; Resistance; out of the comfort zone	Change in organizational structure	Sports equipment	O-
No.10	Head of product management	CI, CIm, CR;	F	Challenges; Innovation; A step forward	Change of ownership; change of strategy	Sports equipment	O

To be continued

Table 6: Sample characteristics (cont.)

Inter-viewee	Position	Role	Gender	Association »change«	Type of change	Industry	Optimism
No.11	Purchasing division – head of a program	CR	F	Improvement	Reorganization of working space	Retail	O
No.12	Head of department	I, CI;	M	Change to the better	Process reorganization	Home appliance manufacturing	O
No.13	Head of innovation	I, CI, CIm;	M	Uh, what now?; Progress;	Department reorganization	Production of measuring systems and devices	RO
No.14 ¹⁵	Purchasing division – head of a program	CR	F	Uncertainty; fear	Change in the working process; Introduction of a new software	Retail	O-
No.15	Purchasing division – head of a program	CR	F	Excitement	Change in the working process; working space reorganization	Retail	O
No.16	Investment execution	CR	F	Uncertainty; stress	Change of working process	Retail	R -
No.17	Head of department	CR	M	Fear	Change of position	Production of glass	R
No.18	Head of projects	CR	M	Constant; Stress; Out of the comfort zone;	Change in organizational structure	Production of glass	P+

To be continued

¹⁵ We refer to interviewee No. 14 as “Jane”, and interviewee No. 11 as “Meghan” for the ease of discussing the comparison between them in chapter 2.3.1.1 Change content re-defined, and 2.3.3.2 Change turbulence.

Table 6: Sample characteristics (cont.)

Inter-viewee	Position	Role	Gender	Association »change«	Type of change	Industry	Optimism
No.19	Head of controlling	CR, CI, CIm;	F	Discomfort	Change of leadership	Production of glass	O

Note. Role: CR – Change receiver, CI – Change initiator, CIm – Change implementor, I – Intrapreneur; Optimism personality trait: O – Optimist, RO – Realistic optimist, R – Realist, OR – Optimistical realist, P – Pessimist.

Source: Own work

2.2.3 Data collection

Data were collected through 19 semi-structured interviews with a duration of approximately one hour, which were conducted by a single interviewer from June 2017 to December 2017. They were conducted in person at the interviewees' office location or via teleconference calls (2 out of 19 were teleconference videocalls), audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

All interviews followed a uniform protocol where each respondent was assured strict confidentiality and anonymity when reporting results and using quotations. 15 out of 19 respondents gave permission to audio-record the interview.

We made several pilot semi-structured in-depth interviews that helped us refine the interview questions and also adjusted the questions throughout our research process.

We asked interviewees to bring to mind a recent top-down change that they did not initiate, thus they were in the receiver role. A top-down change is much different from bottom-up change in a sense that it is imposed to employees, and usually encounters more resistance than bottom-up changes.

The recency of the event is important to avoid the recall bias, and the direct experience of the event, according to early research (see Fazio & Zanna, 1981), results in forming stronger attitudes than indirect experience or observation. The majority of participants chose a major change that was going on at the time in their organization, however we did not want to limit them to that specific change, we wanted them to choose the change that came to mind, as it needed to be 1) important to them, and 2) have influence on their work. These are two important pre-conditions to be able to speak of individual's change readiness attitude in an organizational setting.

In line with our hunches created through the abductive method, three pre-defined themes were explored during the interviews. The first theme focused on change turbulence, stress, and respondents' perceptions of work pace, denoting the change context. The second theme was the attitude toward a specific change and the process of getting change ready, where special attention was paid to affect – our third focus. Affect was explored in connection with this specific change (situational affect), and the interviewees as well marked themselves on an optimist – pessimist continuum, signalling dispositional affect.

Since the field of affect is especially interesting from the implicit attitude aspect, we aimed to tackle the implicit attitude respondents held, by asking them to tell us their first association when they hear the word »change«, before we discussed the topic of change in more detail, and ask for explicit opinions. When asked to name the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the word “change” some respondents took a few seconds to give their answer and seemingly give it a bit of a thought. The point of measuring first associations was to get a sense of respondent’s implicit attitude toward organizational change. However, in some cases the implicit attitude signaled with first association might have been compromised with deliberate thought, introducing their explicit attitude. For this reason, we payed attention to their implicit attitude throughout the whole conversation.

We made sure to cover all the topics from the interview guide (see Appendix 5), yet allowed for digressions where relevant. We did not follow the same order of questions in all interviews, but rather adapted to each individual interviewee, guided by the natural flow of the conversation to better capture their sensemaking. We posed additional (sub)questions to explore revelatory thoughts raised by interviewees and ask for examples and clarification to ensure that we comprehended the message they wanted to convey (see Maxwell, 2012). After each interview notes with reflective commentary were made, documenting emergent understanding of the examined phenomenon. Post-interview notes were also made regarding amendments to the interview guide, for subsequent interviewing.

2.2.4 Data analysis

We follow Timmermans and Tavory (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) three-step abductive analysis – revisiting the phenomenon, defamiliarization, and alternative casing. We share Peirce's (1974) view that the qualitative research process is iterative in nature, where abduction, induction and deduction are not exclusive inferences, but can rather act as different stages of the process. We use methodological precepts of grounded theory to stimulate abductive reasoning (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The same person who performed the interviews, conducted analysis as well. Below we describe the data analysis process in more detail.

In general, our analysis was split in two phases. First, we approached the data from the grounded theory perspective, and second, we observed how affect relates to the themes found prominent and the four elements of the change readiness framework. We first went through

the transcripts several times, to get familiar with the text. Then, to analyze the data, we began by conducting several rounds of open coding – a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) method. Strong themes that emerged from open coding were: 1) The importance of the process and context beyond change content 2) the ambivalent nature of change readiness 3) the importance of feeling a part of a team in the process of change implementation, and 4) the uncertainty and discomfort that change brings. Another interesting discovery of this process was change readiness as part of a person's identity.

When coding, we thought through different conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In the next rounds the process of axial coding (relating categories to one another) was conducted. We looked how affect relates to the four abovementioned strong themes. Further, we sought how affect can contribute to the understanding of aspects found prominent in our data concerning change content, process, and context. We sought for counter-evidence in our data to alleviate the potential for bias. Throughout our research process, we repeatedly switched between the data and literature, and refined the coding book. The final data structure can be found in Appendix 2.

While the tabula rasa in analyzing qualitative data is an imaginary goal (Van de ven, 2020), we went through the transcripts again one year after initial coding, to bring a more clean slate approach into the analysis and to see possible new patterns that were previously overlooked. This represented an important step in defamiliarization of the data. Pause of 12 months served us for the loss of immediacy with data collection results (field notes) and initial coding (Vila-Henninger et al., 2022) and created another instance to revisit the phenomenon (besides field notes, transcriptions, reading transcriptions several times, several rounds of open coding, axial coding). Revisiting the phenomenon is vital to abductive approach, as it forces the researcher »to re-evaluate and rethink mundane experience to break the habituation of perception (Kilpinen, 2009). /.../ As we attend to the phenomenon over time, we revisit our experience, and as we revisit it, we reexperience it in different ways« (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 176).

A second researcher was engaged to perform a full round of coding based on our coding scheme. In several meetings we discussed and resolved differences in the coding that we each completed independently (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In general, interrater agreement was high. We subsequently consulted to define interviewees' implicit, explicit and overall attitude toward the focal change.

2.3 Findings

Following the change readiness framework, our findings are organized in terms of its four factors, that influence the development of individual's change readiness – the change content, process, context, and individual differences.

2.3.1 The change content

In terms of change type, the experiences of our respondents are narrated around 7 different changes: change of ownership (structural), change of working process (procedural), reorganization of working space (procedural), introduction of a new software (technological), change of leadership (procedural), development of a new product (procedural), and change in organizational structure (structural).

However, throughout conversations it became clear that it makes more sense to conceptualize the content in terms of the anticipated impact the change will have on employees personally, as some researchers suggested (e.g. Self, Armenakis, and Schraeder, 2007). In this sense, we identify three properties of the change, relevant to the debate of individual's affective change readiness. The first two are tightly connected being the subjective perception of the impact the change has on one's job, and the degree change is perceived as personally important or relevant. These two characteristics will define the strength of **affect element in change readiness**. The third property of change content is its perceived valence (Is the change perceived by an individual employee as positive or negative), that will subsequently define the valence of affect.

2.3.1.1 *Change content re-defined*

The subject of our study was a top-down change, that is imposed to employees. This might be the reason that the respondents did not seem to be bothered with the change content as much as we would expect from past research that gave the »What type of change is it?« question a great deal of attention when addressing employee change readiness. The respondents took change as given, realizing that changes of different type happen constantly and their influence to change that is minimal. The specific content of the change (e.g., change of a superior, a reorganization, a change in the working process, etc.) seems not to matter, since individuals perceive these situations differently – favorably or unfavorably – depending on other attributes discussed in our paper (individual attributes, the change process, and the change context). Despite not being included in our study, we could presume an extremely negative change such as a layoff would have been perceived as negative by all employees affected by it. However, depending on a personal situation and perceiving events that happen to us subjectively, that might not be the case, and some research reports lay-off victims may see it as an opportunity (e.g. Latack & Dozier, 1986). We found the respondents perceiving events of the same type of change (e.g. change of leadership) differently. Despite the specific type of change seems not to play a role in change readiness, respondents referred to some properties that we group into the change content category.

The first characteristic of a particular change initiative is the **impact it has on one's job**. The bigger the impact, the more we found responses to change (especially affective), and

thus attitude, to be strong. Jane¹⁶ (Interviewee No.14) referred to a transition to a paperless office that affected the habits at her job - the usual way of doing things - strongly. Her attitude toward that change before it happened was as she put it »very negative«.

»There was a lot of fear present in me and in my co-workers as well./.../ How will we manage? This was basically a very big challenge for us and when it got to the point that we had to separate ourselves from all the folders and papers...we were horrified.«

She described strong feelings as fear, shock, and disapproval. She even started thinking of ways to avoid this change. Because this change affected Jane's job strongly she put a lot of effort and cognitive resources into it.

The second characteristic is the perception of a change as **personally important or irrelevant**. A change that has great impact on one's job will probably be personally important to them as well, however, contextual properties and subjective perception of importance can have an influence. At some point in life there might be other changes that people find more important than the change affecting their job, which can alter their attitude and readiness for organizational change. Megan¹⁶ (Interviewee No. 11) for example, who had a lot of change going on and an important event in her private life saw the same change as Jane⁵ more »*by the way*«. Even though the change of paperless office and workspace reorganization had an impact on her job and required to change her routine, she did not pay that much attention to it. The more change is personally important, the stronger the attitude toward that change will be, whether positive or negative. We see one reason for that in the limited resources people have to cope with change. We put more resources into coping with change that is more important to us. In the case of Megan¹⁶, the resources were being put into other changes, and less were left for a specific change happening at her job, despite this change was important to her as well (we asked interviewees to choose a change important to them).

The third characteristic of a specific change is its perceived **valence**. One perceives change in different shades of positivity and/or negativity. The perceived valence of the change can alter during the process of change implementation. That is to say that change readiness is a fluid construct that cannot be measured pre-change solely. It is affected by new information that we acquire, the process, and the changing context. Jane¹⁶ that initially fostered a very negative attitude toward change, as mentioned earlier, described her transition of attitude:

»There was a lot of fear before change, then when the change came there was reluctance. You are searching for documents and other things and it puts you in a bad mood. There were a few days that we were in a very bad mood, but then I think we all realized that we were thrown into this and we managed. To me personally it

¹⁶ We refer to interviewee No. 14 as "Jane", and interviewee No. 11 as "Meghan" for the ease of discussing comparison between them.

is better now and I am also very happy that we were able to take such a big step in such a short time.«

The element of change content is thus preserved in our conceptualization of change readiness, however not as a specific type of change but as three characteristics of a specific change: personal relevance, job impact, and subjectively perceived valence. Concerning valence, we would like to highlight its ambivalence.

2.3.1.2 The ambivalent nature of change readiness

Despite a lot of first associations the respondents gave were rather negative¹⁷ or challenges concerning organizational change were highlighted throughout the conversation, they repeatedly admitted the knowledge of importance and necessity of change. Interviewee No.13 found himself in a dilemma and felt split:

»On one hand there is »Oh, what about now?« on the other is »Yes, let's change something for the better.« It is strangely ambivalent«.

The negative valence was usually connected with the uncertainty change brings, and the positive with hope for a better future, when ambivalence was affective (simultaneously feeling positive and negative emotions), or the belief that change is a necessity, when there was a belief in support of the change. The third type of ambivalence detected was entirely cognitive, when the respondent saw positive and negative aspects of the proposed change and felt split.

2.3.2 The change process

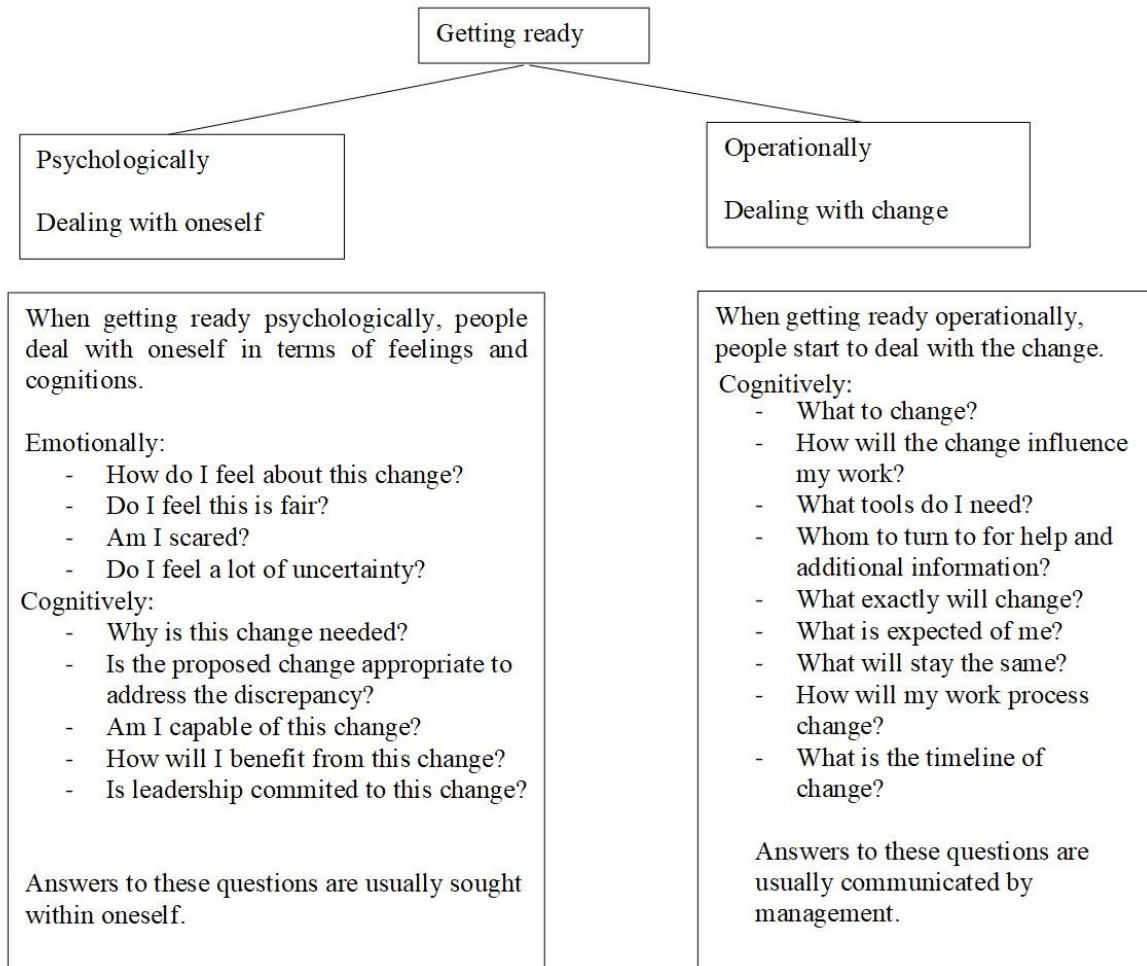
We claim that the process of an individual change readiness consists of getting ready psychologically or emotionally, and getting ready operationally (Figure 5). Getting ready psychologically puts affect in the foreground and deals with the uncertainty and discomfort that the change brings, while getting ready operationally concerns the change content and concrete tasks and routines we will need to change at our job.

While operational change readiness is entirely cognitive in nature, psychological change readiness presents a blend of cognition and affect, with an emphasis on affect. The cognitive part concerns change discrepancy (finding legitimate reasons for the change), appropriateness (of the proposed change to address the discrepancy), self-efficacy (i.e. perceived ability to change), personal valence (benefits for the individual), and perceived principal support (support from leadership). These are the dimensions as proposed in operationalization of change readiness (by Holt et al., 2007). If people would be completely

¹⁷ There was a 44-28-28 % balance between first associations concerning change with negative, positive, and neutral connotation, respectively. For the list of first associations see Appendix 3.

rational beings the psychological readiness would equal the cognitive dimension, however this is not the case.

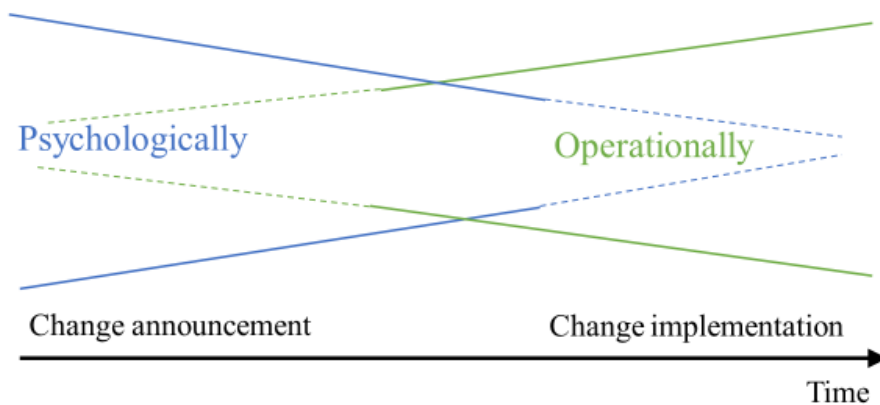
Figure 5: Two dimensions of getting ready at the individual level



Source: Own work

Employees first pose questions regarding psychological readiness. Once they start to get more information from management (depending on the quality of information given) and psychological readiness starts to resolve, they can move forward and start to deal with questions concerning change content and becoming operationally ready. Figure 6 depicts the dominance of psychological change readiness at the beginning of the change process, that gives way to operational readiness to be dealt with, when psychological readiness resolves. Through time of the change process, the focus shifts from psychological to operational readiness.

Figure 6: The interplay of psychological and operational readiness through timeline of change event



Source: Own work

At the same time resolving questions concerning operational readiness can lessen the uncertainty that is creating psychological unreadiness, thus we can understand as the two readinesses being in a loop, with a tendency of employees to establish psychological readiness at the beginning of the change process, as the level of uncertainty is highest. In interviewee's No.14 reflection we can see the dynamics between the two readinesses and their unfolding:

»Initially there was fear, shock, disapproval. Why is this really necessary? Who invented that? A lot of blaming and searching for causes. Maybe even hmm, what would I do to avoid this change? Everything was very negative before the change, permeated with fear. Then, after the change arrived there was bad mood /.../ There were a few days that we were in a very bad mood, but then I think we all realized that we were thrown into this and we managed.«

In terms of getting ready psychologically, there is a constant interplay between affect and cognition and those two concepts could never be isolated from one another (Fiske & Taylor, 2021). However, given the dominant role of affect and emotions in this process, we would prefer to call this component of the process the emotional component.

When getting ready emotionally, one does not focus on the content of the change itself and questions like »What exactly will change?« How will the change influence my work? Etc., instead the focus is within the individual or in other words one is »dealing with oneself, internally«, as interviewee No. 9 explained.

Let us exemplify the getting ready emotionally vs. operationally grouping. One of our respondents referred to taking a new role of his team as a part of reorganization:

»Basically, we weren't ready at all. We were ready to take on a new role, there were no problems there. We weren't prepared for what the role is about, what it brings and how to perform it.« (Interviewee No.13)

In an emotional (psychological) sense they were ready, however they were not ready operationally.

2.3.3 The change context

When looking at how employees fight change turbulence we find that happening through sustaining routine and restoring their resources. Interviewees were asked to describe their daily routine (from when they wake up to bedtime), and specify if needed how much free time they have spent as they please, how much physical activity they get on average per week, and how many hours on average they sleep per night.

2.3.3.1 Cognitive resources

Cognitive resources are spent throughout the change process, however with different emphases.

In the primary appraisal phase employees spend cognitive resources on emotion regulation and strain that derives from threat. The threat however is a subjective perception and it makes sense not to persist in this stage of rumination for too long, since the resources are needed for the next stages that focus on the actual change and coping. According to the feeling-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012) feelings that signal a “problematic” situation will foster an analytic processing style, and since the uncertainty provokes negative feelings, a shift to the second phase is vital. Besides, people like to believe that are rational beings and the secondary appraisal stage is needed to justify that belief. In the secondary appraisal phase cognitive resources are spent on more effortful processing strategies of information. In this stage our initial attitude toward change can change. In the coping stage breaking old ways of doing things and building new ones takes the large part of our cognitive resources.

People were aware that change takes energy. Some of the respondents expressed this more indirectly, and some expressed more self-reflective thoughts, such as:

»We people tend to work according to the criterion of the least effort and change is something that requires from us to change the routine or thinking. Until it becomes a routine again it represents additional mental or physical effort and thus we are attuned to resist change« (Interviewee No.9).

Different tactics or preferences were signalled to deal with resource consumption that change brings. One was to sustain routine and limit the amount of change. However, most of the time the top-down organizational change is determined to happen by management, and the

respondents learned with experience it does not make much sense trying to avoid or resist it. An engineer working in production explained it is easier » *When I checked the box that change must be*« (Interviewee No.3). It does not make sense to spend cognitive resources trying to make the management change their mind or mull over something that is set to happen. Or on the other hand the respondents saw change as a necessity that needs to be.

Restoring resources was recognized as the other important way of managing cognitive resources. For example:

»I manage stress with sports, otherwise I don't even know how would I manage...three, four times a week for sure. I run or do CrossFit, or some other exercise...cycling.« interviewee No.11 stressed the importance of exercise.

Some put focus on other free-time activities:

» When I come home /.../ there are tasks such as gardening, cutting grass, tree trimming. /.../ I spend a lot of time in my workshop. It is my oasis. If I come home in a bad mood they tell me »you just go down to the workshop« /.../ I also do three different sports. /.../ I have a theatre subscription...these are the things...I need that, a different view, that leads you in the direction that is not always given to you.« (Interviewee No.3).

Respondents that practiced sports more often, or have rich free time, gave themselves more opportunity to manage stress and restore cognitive resources.

2.3.3.2 Change turbulence

We already shed some light on the change turbulence in 2.3.1.1 *The change content re-defined* section, when we discussed the characteristic of personal importance of a specific change, juxtaposing attitudes towards the same change fostered by Jane⁵ and Megan⁵.

When change turbulence is too high things can get out of hand. To complete the comparison between Megan and Jane, Jane as well reported high change turbulence in her life, but contrary to Megan, she took time to think about this change more thoroughly at home – how will she archive the documents, how will she make her work easier, how to do things in a new way and better? Jane: *»you're basically really trying to get the most out of it. So, I also thought a lot about these things at home«*. (Interviewee No.14)

She concludes that some things are more optimized now, faster, and she is more productive. Megan, who did not have the »luxury of resources« to cope with change overload reports still not being well adapted to this change:

»We haven't adapted yet, because at the same time this (reorganization of working space) and other changes were introduced – the transition from Outlook to Google,

transition to paperless office - and it all comes crashing down on you. All those saved folders and Excel files and so on, now you had to put it all together again and I actually don't have time to deal with it because I have so many other things to do. Consequently, I am confused, because things are not in order.» (interviewee No.11). Megan does not have a tactic to deal with such overload »I used to write notes, but it is always something new. It is like you keep putting out fires.«

The case of Megan and Jane exemplifies not only how the perception of the importance of a specific change affects change readiness, but how change turbulence plays an important part.

2.3.4 Individual attributes

The individual differences that we discuss work through three different mechanisms – as personality trait (optimism, and openness to new experience), identity (change lover vs. change hater), and experience (one's past experience with organizational change).

In line with abductive manner of our research approach the pre-defined individual differences that we paid attention to were optimism, and past experience, while openness to new experience, defined as willingness to embrace new things, novel experiences and fresh ideas. and change as a part of one's identity emerged throughout analysis of the data. We became attentive to the difference between respondents talking just about their attitude toward change or describing (attitude toward) change as a part of their identity. This characteristic was often described by respondents with comparison to other people.

2.3.4.1 Past experience

The first individual difference that we observed in relation to change readiness, is past experience one has with organizational change. In general, bad experiences with change, will revive negative feelings, and positive experience with change would lead to positive feelings.

“Every change – it never makes something easier, it is always something new, something more, more difficult, or more challenging.” Interviewee No.6 explained.

Past experience with change however is usually mixed – some positive and some negative and it is hard to make a prediction what to expect of the next change. This fact itself can arise feelings of doubt and uncertainty. Referring to past experience our respondents learned other important lessons that can influence affect in the process of change introduction. Such as *“Things are never as bad as they look at the beginning”* (interviewee No. 9) or *“I do not manage change well...there is one change, and another, and another.”*

2.3.4.2 Openness to new experience

This trait of one's personality can help bridge the initial resistance to facing the unknown. One of our respondents who fosters openness to new experience feels "constantly ready" for change, saying:

»I am very open to change and novelty and I think I accept anything and I would like to try everything...I don't know how to explain when I am ready for change...I think I am constantly ready.« (Interviewee No.8).

This trait can also help to interpret stressful situations that change brings in favour of change readiness.

»But I still like new challenges and I understand stressful situations as situations that are the most creative and most progress is made there. So, it is a kind of positive stress, it is not something that would harm me, I think.« one of our respondents explained (Interviewee No.2).

2.3.4.3 Optimism

The third individual difference that works in favour to positive affect in the change readiness process is optimistic personality trait. This dispositional affect influenced respondents' attitude to the specific change and in most cases the two were aligned – people closer to the optimist pole of the continuum fostered a more positive attitude toward change, compared to people positioned closer to the pessimist's pole. First associations realists had connected to change were more negative such as »problems«, or they did not want to assign any connotations regarding valence and wanted to stay in the undefined, neutral area, for example:

»Change is when something is not the way it used to be./.../ I am neutral. It depends on what the change is, and the changes can be positive or negative. So, emotions are only here when you know in which direction these changes are going.«(Interviewee No.1)

What was common to all realists was that they seem to give it more of a thought than optimists. They gathered more information and contemplated more than optimists. Deliberate thought helped them to overcome the generally more negative orientation toward change, compared to optimists.

»Simply, if you look at the market, realistically, we know that there must be changes. When I ticked that box, I no longer worry about changes and accept them as part of what will have to be.« explained a realist (interviewee No.3), that has learned from experience this is the best way to go.

The observation that optimists contemplate less than pessimists is parallel with some research indicating that being in a happy, as opposed to a neutral, mood can make people more likely to rely on cognitive heuristics than on more effortful strategies (Ruder & Bless, 2003). Moreover, it is compliant with the feeling-as-information theory which proposes that feelings which signal a problematic situation foster an analytic processing style (Schwarz, 2012).

Given the fact that substantive, analytic processing is more taxing to cognitive resources, this has important implications for individual's change readiness, and we could expect optimists to outperform pessimists not just because of the more positive beliefs pertaining the future, but because the whole process of dealing with change taxes them less than pessimists, and they have more resources to invest into the change process.

While the individual differences of optimistic personality trait, openness to new experience, and past experience with change all work through the mechanism of expectation about the future, we found another mechanism that seems to bear an even stronger potential to foster change readiness and positive perception of change, than optimistic personality, openness to new experience, or positive past experience – the mechanism of identity (this is who I am – I like change).

2.3.4.4 Identity

A factor that played a role worth noting in shaping change readiness was how change stands in relation to our identity. Do we identify ourselves as **change-lovers or change-haters**? This will implicitly or explicitly (through mantras »this is who I am«) influence our change readiness to a specific change.

The majority of our respondents was not identified as change-lovers, however they attained it by seeking for reasons that made them believe that to go with the change was the right thing to do.

On the other hand, a 40-year old change receiver who was identified as a genuine change-lover, explained:

»I like change. But a lot of people does not.«. »I was excited, in anticipation of something positive and looking forward to it. /.../ I personally accepted the change well. I like changes, especially the ones that bring improvements.« (Interviewee No.7)

She states that she adapts quickly and doesn't have problems adjusting at all. Throughout the debate it becomes clear that she primarily refers to adaptation in a psychological sense, capturing the essence of change readiness. In operational sense, she had problems and still has not adapted fully to the focal change. Interestingly, when discussing pros and cons of a

specific change - the space reorganization and transition to a paperless office - it turned out she does not see this specific change as positive as one would expect.

»There is less personal space and that is a problem. /.../ and you have nowhere to put the paper at all, and you can't work without paper, that is a disadvantage.« The goal with changing desks was (people) to be as mixed as possible, so that information flows quickly /.../ but that turned out to be a disadvantage«. .../ »You don't have things orderly arranged and it is quite hard«. (Interviewee No.7)

After she names the pros and cons, she concludes:

»Yeah, now maybe I would change something, but now you take it the way it is.« (Interviewee No.7)

The change-lover identity helped her to form an initial strong positive affective attitude toward change that guided her throughout the change process and helped her embrace this change initiative even if, on a cognitive level, she finds quite a few flaws in it and could not decide whether or not this change was good and serves its purpose.

2.4 Discussion

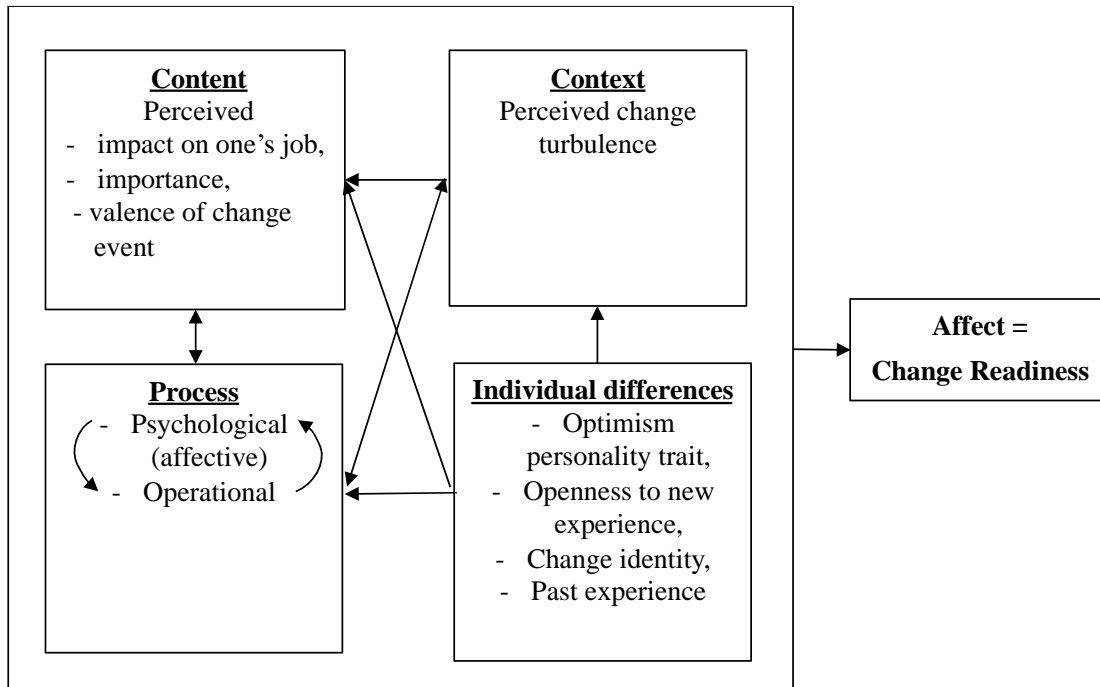
Our goal in this chapter has been to better understand how change readiness happens from the individuals' perspective. Specifically, how affect relates to change content, change context, change process, and individual differences and how the four factors relate to each other in terms of affect. Figure 7 presents these relationships and how we defined the four elements from the individuals' perspective.

From an individual's change readiness perspective, it makes sense not to define the change **content** in terms of type of the change but rather as the perceived impact and individual's interpretation of change initiative's relevance and valence. The impact of the change on one's job and the perceived relevance define psychological arousal and thus present a predisposition to form any kind of attitude, including change readiness. To form an attitude, a change initiative must fall into one's affective niche. In other words, affect determines the entities to which change readiness can be formed, since people can only form attitudes to entities in their affective niche. The degree of psychological arousal determines strength of affect, and thus the strength of change readiness attitude.

Whether or not a specific change initiative will appear in an employee's affective niche is to some extent defined by change **context**. When change turbulence is high, individuals share their cognitive resources among many events. Due to limited cognitive resources they need to prioritize which change is important enough to be identified as relevant. Thus, change context (defined as change turbulence) determines first - the existence of change readiness,

and second - again due to limited cognitive resources - later along the process of change the level of change readiness and success of change adoption.

Figure 7: Change readiness with an emphasis on affect through the prism of change content, context, process, and individual differences: the individual level



Source: Own work

While change context in part determines employee's perception of change event importance, it can influence the perception of change valence as well. An exhausted employee or an employee in a bad mood could have the tendency to assign more negative valence to the change initiative. Moreover, yet another change presents a threat to our exhausted cognitive resources, and affect being the product of prediction (Barrett, 2017) this will result in more negative affect towards the upcoming change event.

The change readiness **process** can be divided into two categories – psychological and operational. Since we know today that affect is a root to our cognitive processes and not vice versa, as was assumed for decades, we were tempted to name the psychological readiness affective readiness, just to emphasize the switch in focus from cognition to affect in change readiness literature. However, since the affect and cognition are intertwined and in constant interplay we decided to name it psychological readiness, emphasizing affect.

From a process perspective, one cannot begin to engage in actual change with full potential until one resolves the affective, psychological readiness. And - again in terms of one's cognitive resources - our attention is drawn away from coping with actual change by psychological (emotional) tensions. While the resolved psychological dimension (phase one) enables individuals to proceed in the process, and start dealing with operational readiness

(phase two), the information relating to the later (e.g. How will the change influence my work? Whom to turn for help?) can help diminish the uncertainty and contribute to attain psychological readiness faster. Thus, we see the two being in a loop.

The individual differences relevant to affective change readiness discussed in our research are optimism personality trait, openness to new experience, past experience with change, and change as a part of employee's identity. Individual differences will influence the perceived valence of the upcoming change event (e.g., optimists will tend to perceive it more positively than pessimists), thus the change process (due to individual differences individuals will have different duration of dealing with themselves period), and the change context (pessimists contemplate more than optimists in the change process, putting a higher tax on their cognitive resources which can change their perception of change turbulence). While the findings regarding optimism personality trait, openness to new experience, and past experience were not surprising, an interesting concept that emerged from our data and opens new alley for future research was **identity**.

If change is a part of who we are, we tend to perceive it as positive, to sustain the positive self-concept. Or in other view, as change and change readiness is perceived as socially desirable, we like to identify ourselves as change-lovers to build a positive self-concept. The genuinity of being a change-lover however, is rare. Respondents reported that change takes a lot of energy and discomfort. Compliant with Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) people are motivated to protect their resources, and acquire new ones. Thus, they will be motivated to avoid change. Majority of our interviewees do not identify as change-lovers, and they achieved the positive change attitude primarily through cognitive effort based on the fact that change is the unavoidable reality (and is socially desirable). People who are not »change lovers« are a priori in a disadvantaged position, because they are more resource-taxed, having to regulate emotions more and are left with less cognitive resources to continue.

Speaking of identity and organizational change, we would like to mention another concept – **organizational identification**. Identification of an individual employee with organization »aligns individual interests and behaviors with interests and behaviors that benefit the organization« (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 256). If an employee identifies with its organization, acting in favor of organization means acting in favor of themselves, and events threatening the organization would be perceived as threatening to the individual as well. Past research indicates a positive correlation between employees' organizational identification and their change readiness (e.g., Drzensky, Egold & van Dick, 2012). However, existing quantitative research ignores the affective aspect of change readiness construct, and measures only the cognitive aspect. Discussing turbulence and stress that the change brings, a specific sense-making caught our attention:

»Regardless of the fact that (the company) represents a large part of my life, I try to keep some distance, this is not my" life ". I am just here, who I am, and I do my best every day. That's it.« (Interviewee No. 7)

In the sense of affective change readiness, not identifying with the organization means less psychological arousal from organizational change initiatives, because »my job is not my life« philosophy means organizational events are not as important to us, and consequently people are able to hold affective distance as well. Participants of our study who held a certain distance from work, and typically had rich free time, were in general less affected by possible negative feelings that arose from unpleasant situations concerning change. We see the reason for that can be twofold. One is the already mentioned smaller psychological arousal, and the other is a chance to recharge from work that depletes our energy and build resilience through free-time activities (Achor &Gielan, 2016).

2.4.1 Theoretical implications and contributions

Definitions of change readiness vary, however there is no doubt change readiness is conceptualized as an attitude. As such, it consists of cognitive and affective appraisals of the attitude object – organizational change. Interestingly, change readiness has been operationalized solely in terms of individual's cognitions (e.g., Holt et al, 2007, Vakola, 2006). And paradoxically, as the contemporary findings in neuroscience show the primacy of affect, the affect represents a precondition to be able to speak about the attitudes we hold - including change readiness. Our study researched the concept of interest qualitatively, to be able to explore the neglected affective aspect of change readiness. Our contribution to the change readiness literature lies in explaining the role of affect in the change readiness and how it relates to change readiness core factors – change content, process, context, and individual differences. Thus, we illuminate why affect should receive more attention in future research.

We find supremacy of the change process and context over change content - defined in terms of specifics of the change – in shaping individual's change readiness.

However, given the primary role of affect in change readiness, we propose the element of the change content to be reconceptualized. When we speak of top-down organizational change, the specifics of the change or type (e.g. merger, reorganization, etc..) seem not to matter as much as past research assumed. We argue that from the perspective of individual's change readiness, we should be focusing on three properties of the change content. 1) Whether the change is important to the employee or in other words does it trigger psychological arousal (and thus involves affect). The change that impacts one's job will probably fall into their affective niche and trigger psychological arousal (Barrett, 2017), because impacting means we will need to change and we care about that because change takes our cognitive resources. 2) The second characteristic is the level of personal importance of the specific change. A change that enters our affective niche is by definition

important to our brain, otherwise it would be treated as just noise (Barrett, 2017). However, drawing on the fact of one's limited cognitive resources, resources are distributed between events that matter to us, and the more we find an event important, the more resources we will invest into it. We find contextual properties such as change turbulence – the amount of other changes going on the same time as the focal change - as an important factor in shaping ones (affective) change readiness. 3) The third property of the proposed reconceptualized change content is the change perceived valence. It is important to stress that ambivalence was common in our respondents' responses, and indeed organizational change events are one of the most profound sources of ambivalence (Rothman, Pratt, Rees, & Vogus, 2017), meaning “simultaneously oppositional positive and negative orientations toward an object.”, that includes cognition (what I think about X), and affect (how I feel about X) (Ashforth et al., 2014, p.1455). People often feel split about how they stand toward change because change is a complex phenomenon concerning the unknown future. On one hand they understand change is needed to achieve progress, but on the other hand it brings the burden of discomfort and requests an investment of cognitive resources. We see a major limitation of the change readiness literature not only neglecting affect, but ignoring the ambivalence, that we find a very common characteristic of this attitude. We concur with a call expressed in a review of change readiness and resistance to change concepts (Repovš, Drnovšek, & Kaše, 2019) not to measure change readiness on a bipolar continuum, but new measure is needed to grasp the richness of this attitude toward change that will allow for ambivalence.

2.4.2 Practical implications

Organizations should start to pay more attention to the context within which change occurs. They should not only be aware of the possible conflicting initiatives (see Kanitz, Huy, Backmann, & Hoegl, 2022), but the sum of changes happening in their employees' lives. All the changes in our affective niche consume our resources, and depending on their (subjective) importance, the cognitive resources are distributed between them.

There is a time when people like to implement change in their life and there is a time when they do not want to implement it, depending on the change turbulence one perceives, the goals we pursue, and especially the resources we have at our disposal. Since we find the employees mostly seeing top-down change as given, not trying to influence its implementation (to prevent it), change turbulence could imply the level of active participation of employees in the implementation process. The behavior of an employee with depleted resources will be reflected in less active participation in the change process, which is not beneficial neither for the organization, nor for the individual employee. Organizations must realize that not facing resistance from employees is not always a positive outcome of employee behavior, and could reflect employees' depleted cognitive resources.

The individuals' process of getting change ready is comprised of psychological, and operational readiness. While operational readiness is achieved by gathering factual

information communicated by management, psychological readiness is achieved by seeking answers within oneself. However, that does not mean that the management does not have an influence on it. Besides providing the legitimate reasons for the change, it is important to show their involvement and effort put into the organizational change process. Because the employees find the change effortful and they expect the management be the first to put effort in it, to experience a sense of fairness. The feeling of fairness is found to be extremely important. The implicit information of the organizational change process importantly shapes employees change readiness, because they involve a lot of affect. Organizations way too often focus on the cognitive aspects and provide explicit information about the change event, while ignoring the implicit information they provide by how things are told and done.

2.5 Conclusion

Affect has long been the submissive element of change readiness conceptualization, included in some of its definitions, however excluded from operationalizations. It is time to give it the deserved attention. Our study brings the four elements that affect change readiness – change content, context, process, and individual differences together, while defining the former three (content, context, process) at the individual level as well, to better understand individuals' change readiness. Through our research, we discuss how the four elements impact each other, with an emphasis on affect. The change content is not defined in terms of type of the change, but rather as the perceived impact and individual interpretation of relevance and valence. The change context is defined as change turbulence where one's limited cognitive resources present the boundary condition to form attitude toward a change initiative. The change process is from the perspective of an individual divided into getting ready psychologically (emotionally), and getting ready operationally. One can be emotionally ready, but not operationally, and vice versa. In essence, the change process from the individual's perspective defines the shift of the focus from the self (psychological change readiness) to the change (operational change readiness) What influences the psychological readiness is explored and theorized in more detail in the next chapter (chapter 3).

3 AFFECT-AS-INFORMATION IN THE PROCESS OF INDIVIDUAL'S CHANGE READINESS DEVELOPMENT

Employees' change readiness has received great attention in the change management literature, as it is found to be one of the primary determining factors of an organizational change intervention's success (e.g. Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007; Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Following a long period where scholarly attention was largely concentrated on the role of change agents in organizational change, the change recipients are starting to take center stage (Oreg et al., 2018). The bulk of research on employee change readiness has focused on their cognitions and the ability of the change agents to convey “the message”, and why an organizational change is needed. However, the

information provided by change agents that targets employees' beliefs is not the only one that shapes employees' change readiness. Affect as well plays a key part (Rafferty et al., 2013) and can serve as an important source of information. Drawing on feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012), the goal of this chapter is to show how change readiness can happen on a more implicit level, where affect plays a crucial part. Affect can serve as information, deriving from an individual and as such often hidden from change agents that try to navigate employees' beliefs toward supporting change.

The historical focus on cognitions largely derives from the traditional view of seeing affect as reaction to cognition. To target employees' often negative emotions that they experience when confronted with organizational change, this traditional view directed attention primarily at influencing their beliefs, that would subsequently change affective reactions. Consequently, change readiness has been operationalized in terms of cognitions, and not affect.

Recently change management literature started to recognize the importance of affect, and the body of research devoted to understanding what emotions arise when organizational change occurs, and how they impact the change process (e.g. George & Jones, 2001; Mossholder, Setton, Armenakis & Harris, 2000; Huy, 1999, 2002; Huy, Corley & Kraatz, 2014; Oreg, Bartunek, Lee & Do, 2018) is on the rise. However, the antecedents that influence what emotions are present in the change process still remain under-researched.

Our contribution lies in explaining *how* affect influences one's change readiness, how it comes about in the change process, and what are its main sources in the change process. The aim of this chapter is to answer the research question *What is the role of affect in the process of an individual's change readiness development?* Our motivation was to touch (address) one of many Rafferty and colleagues' (2013) directions¹⁸ for future research and clarify at what point of the change process has the affective component a stronger influence on forming change readiness and when in the process the cognitive component is likely to take foreground, and what are the reasons behind that. We realize that cognition and affect interact constantly and their workings can never be isolated from one another (Barrett, 2017). However, in some instances the environment provides conditions for one component to be more pronounced than the other (Fiske & Taylor, 2021).

This knowledge is crucial for change agents to be able to influence employees affect toward a change initiative, and to understand the timing and the actions needed to direct affective change readiness toward successful change implementation.

¹⁸ Rafferty and colleagues (2013) propose questions such as: *Is the affective component of change readiness a stronger predictor of change outcomes, especially in the early stages of change, when individuals and groups are likely to experience intense emotional reactions? Does the cognitive component of change readiness become a stronger predictor of change outcomes in the later stages of change, when individuals and groups have a clearer understanding of change?*

Bringing affect into the picture changes the perspective of looking at change readiness. While theorists have argued that cognitions are relatively stable over time (Fisher, 2002; Niklas & Dormann, 2005), affect is more dynamic, shifting over time (Weiss, 2002), with a long-standing consensus in the emotion literature that emotion is a process. (e.g., Plutchik, 1980; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Frijda, 1993; Gross, 1998). Seeing change readiness as a pre-change state and conceptualize it in a ready-set-go manner is false, despite this static view dominated the change readiness literature for quite some time, and it would make it easier for the practitioners if this would be the case. The inclusion of affect into the conception of change readiness consolidates it as being the process, rather than a state.

The chapter continues as follows. We position our research, and present the feeling-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012), that we draw on. We discuss the role of affect and its interplay with cognition in three different stages of the change readiness process – primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and the coping stage. We continue with the discussion of major sources of affect in this process. We propose a model of affective change readiness and emphasize the important role of cognitive resources, and thus the link with change context – the change turbulence. We conclude with theoretical and practical implications of our research.

3.1 Affect-as-information

We draw on feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012) to explain the importance of affect in the change readiness process, the beginnings of it in particular. Feelings-as-information theory provides a framework for conceptualizing the role of subjective experiences that accompany human thinking – moods, emotions, metacognitive experiences, and bodily sensations – in human judgement (Schwarz, 2012). Affect-as-information model posits »individuals use their affective states as relevant when making evaluative judgments« (Niedenthal et al., 2006). It emphasizes the significance of the information that affect communicates, rather than affective feelings themselves (Clore & Storbeck, 2006). Affective arousal provides information about relevance or importance (the higher the arousal, the more important is the change to the individual), while the affective reaction provides a source of information about valence or value (is change good or bad) (Clore & Storbeck, 2006).

Affect is a general sense of feeling that we experience in a moment in time. It is much simpler than emotion, and it is defined with two features - valence (how pleasant or unpleasant we feel) and arousal (how calm or agitated we feel) (Russell, 1980; Barrett, 2017). Before we continue with basic principles of the Feelings-as-information theory, we briefly explain feeling-related concepts that it entails – emotions, moods, metacognitive experiences, and bodily sensations.

Different definitions of emotion agree that emotions are brief reactions with sharp rise time and limited duration, with synchronized components (bodily reactions, expressions, feelings, appraisals, and action tendencies) triggered by “relevant” and “significant” entities (i.e. you

are scared of the upcoming change). While emotions have an identifiable referent, moods are more diffuse and lack a clear referent (i.e. you are in a bad mood). Other characteristics that distinguish moods from emotions are that “moods come about more gradually, may last for an extended time, and are often of low intensity” (Bollnow, 1956; Morris, 1989)” (Schwarz, 2012, p. 8).

Metacognitive experiences describe the ease or difficulty that pertains to the processing of new, external information (*processing fluency*; Winkielman, Schwarz, Fazendeiro, & Reber, 2003) or to the recall and thought generation (*accessibility experiences*; Schwarz, 1998), whereby easy processing is experienced by individual as more pleasant, and elicits a positive affective response than more difficult processing (Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001).

Bodily sensations inform us about physical state of our organism. They include for example pain, and hunger. We experience these bodily sensations – interoception – as affect. The purpose of interoception is to regulate one’s body budget. The affective feelings of calmness or agitation (arousal), and pleasure or displeasure (valence), are simple summaries of one’s budgetary state (Barrett, 2017).

The feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012) postulates that people attend to their momentary feelings as a source of information when making judgements and the use of feelings as information follows the same principles as the use of any other type of information. 1) First, their impact increases with their perceived relevance to the task at hand. 2) “When a feeling is attributed to an incidental source, its informational value is discounted. However, people usually experience their feelings as being “about” whatever is the focus of attention”. If a person is in a bad mood, and the change initiative is put into focus of the person’s attention, he or she will likely attribute the negative feelings to the change initiative, and not to the current negative mood. The question of “How do I feel right now?” can get mixed up with “How do I feel about this change?”.

Since emotions reflect one’s appraisal of a specific event (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Ortony et al., 1988), it makes emotions less likely to be misread as bearing on unrelated, incidental sources, compared to more diffuse moods, metacognitive experiences, and bodily sensations (Schwarz, 2012). However, this does not mean research can ignore them and consider emotions solely, as they still influence affective change readiness. Even more so, because people tend to interpret them as being about the change initiative. 3) The theory further postulates that the impact of feelings as information decreases when more other relevant information is available. Also, “The impact of feelings is more pronounced under conditions of low processing capacity (e.g., Greifender & Bless, 2007; Siemer & Reisenzein, 1998) or motivation (e.g., Rothman & Schwarz, 1998)” (Schwarz, 2012, p.8). Moreover, feelings can influence the choice of processing strategy. Feelings that signal a “benign” situation foster less effortful, heuristic processing style, whereas a “problematic” situation fosters more effortful, analytical processing style. Meaning, that happy feelings for example do not convey a need to employ in analytic processing.

3.2 Affect and the change process

Past research has focused on the communication of explicit information or persuasive communication in the change process, that has been proven to shape employees' attitudes toward change by numerous studies (e.g., Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). The role of persuasive communication is extremely important; however, its primary focus is the cognitive component of change readiness. The aim that management tries to achieve is to explain the legitimacy of a specific change, and deliver »the message« - the five beliefs about change (by Holt et al., 2007). First one is the belief that change is needed (discrepancy), second is the belief that suggested change is an appropriate response to a situation (appropriateness), third is the belief that one is capable to implement change (self-efficacy), fourth is employee's belief that his or her organization will provide information and resources to support the change (principal support), and last but not least is individual's assessment of the costs and benefits for his or her job (personal valence) (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

Liu and Perrewe (2005) offered a cognitive-emotional process model of organizational change, and argued that employee emotions go through four sequential and distinguishable phases : primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, coping stage, and outcome stage of the planned change. We advance their work by taking a different perspective of affect, namely not seeing affect as a reaction to cognition, as early research assumed. Alternatively, we specify the role of affect at different stages and identify constructs of special importance influencing affect in a certain stage. Whereas cognition and affect together influence individual's attitude toward change, we signal at what stage is affect more likely to take the lead.

Moreover, our focus is the information affect communicates, rather than affect itself, as is in the bulk of other existing research dealing with affect in recipients' responses to change. We advance existing research that largely focuses on the concept of emotion, by going beyond that, to include a more free-floating affect such as moods, and bodily sensations, compliant with feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz, 2012) that we draw on.

3.3 Method

Chapters 2 *Adding a Missing Piece of the Puzzle: The Affective Nature of the Change Readiness Construct* and 3 *Affect-as-information in the process of individual's change readiness development* were part of the same qualitative study, with shared methodology. The methodology along with the sample, data collection, and analysis are thus described under chapter 2. This chapter (chapter 3) covers the following two strong themes that emerged from the open coding process: 1) the importance of feeling a part of a team in the process of change implementation, and 2) the uncertainty and discomfort that change brings. While chapter 2 adopted comprehensive view of the elements of the individual change readiness framework, we deep dive into the process element in chapter 3 and explore in more

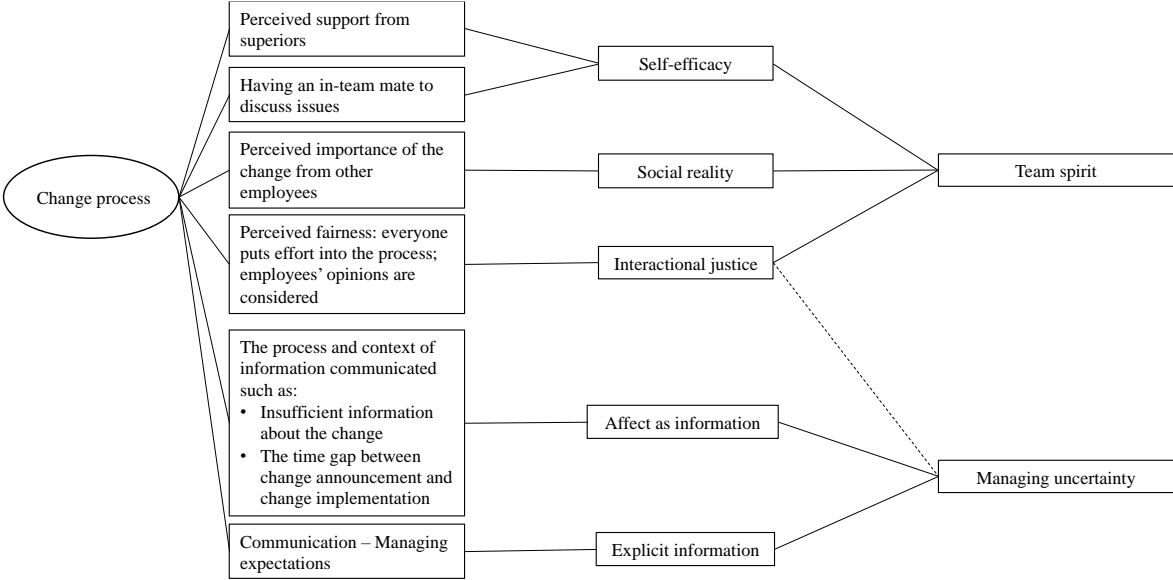
depth how change readiness evolves through time. The proposed model of affective change readiness presented in the discussion section¹⁹ of this chapter²⁰ is based on the findings of both chapters (chapter 2 and 3).

3.4 Findings

In the findings section we first present the data structure and the representative data of the first-order categories. We then present the findings concerning the interplay of affect and cognition in the process of change readiness through three established stages of the process – primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and the coping stage. We continue with focusing on the uncertainty and the team spirit – the two major sources of feelings identified in the change readiness process.

The data structure concerning the individual's change process consists of three levels. Figure 8 depicts how we categorized first-order categories into second-order concepts, and third-order themes. The dashed line between interactional justice and managing uncertainty denotes interactional justice is as well part of the managing uncertainty theme, as perceiving interactional justice can help employees manage uncertainty in the change process, but for the clarity of reporting results we report it under the team spirit theme. Table in Appendix 4 provides illustrative examples of first-order data from the interviews, with corresponding second-order concepts, and third-order themes.

Figure 8: The data structure



Source: Own work

¹⁹ 3.5.1 Toward a model of affect in change readiness development

²⁰ 3 Affect-as-information in the process of individual’s change readiness development

3.4.1 The role of affect in change readiness process - The affect-cognition interplay

Change readiness is a fluid concept. We receive information (explicit and implicit) all the time that influence our attitude toward change. We borrow Liu and Perrewe's (2005) nomenclature to describe the phases of change readiness – the primary, and secondary appraisal phase, and the coping stage. We describe each phase with its emphasis in more detail below.

Figure 9 illustrates how the focus shifts from the source of information being affect to cognition and vice versa in the process of change and illustrates at what stages of organizational change affect is of special importance.

3.4.1.1 *The primary appraisal stage*

Our research shows that in the beginning of the change readiness process affect seems to be extremely important. The information about the change is usually scarce in the beginning, and oftentimes reaches employees even as a rumour or informal information.

This creates doubt and triggers uncertainty in employees making them seek for more information themselves to resolve the inner discomfort that such situation has created.

Although research shows that rumours are harmful to the process of change implementation because people create their own interpretation of what is happening, which is usually much more negative than what is actually going on (Duck, 1993), and should be prevented at all times, quite a few participants in our research reported it.

Employees seek for more information by inquiring with co-workers and superiors.

However, being unsuccessful, they seek for information within themselves. Since the information about what exactly will change (the change content) is often missing at the beginning of the change process we try to collect information about it from elsewhere. For example: Did we learn about the expected change through rumour? How was the change announced? The absence of communication; What was the time gap between the announcement and implementation? People tend to use this information to interpret what this change means and which valence to attribute to it.

»At first, you're not dealing with the change itself, but with how it was done, and you're not dealing with the content of the change at all. « (Interviewee No.1)

one of our interviewees explained. Thus, the information about the process is used to collect information about the change content.

Objectively, the lack of communication from management for example does not give any information about what will the change be about and whether it will be positive or negative

for an individual employee. It rather implies the management's ignorance of how to run the process of the change implementation properly. But as one of our interviewees sees it:

»No one talked to us, so it must be something bad« (Interviewee No.18).

The truth is affective realism kicks in in this situation. Our perception and interpretation of the objective world is influenced by our feelings (Barrett, 2017). Being held in uncertainty evokes negative feelings. We might think that what we see and hear influences what we feel but in this early phase of the change process it is mostly the other way around. "Affect is in the driver's seat and rationality is a passenger" (Barrett, 2017, p. 80). In essence, affect is interoception, prediction and past experiences combined. The state of our body budget is a basis for every perception and thought that we have.

When information about something is too complex to be processed through an analytically – rational process or we do not possess the information at all, we like to use the so called "gut feeling" or in other words, affect to instruct our decisions. This is why our initial change readiness for a specific change is especially prone to use affect as information in the primary appraisal stage of the change implementation process. Another participant explained:

»"Ruminating", how it will be, because you know that things will change and you question what does that mean, how will it be. It seems to me that there is a lot of dealing with oneself, internally.« (Interviewee No.9)

The primary appraisal stage is permeated with uncertainty. Uncertainty and affect are »fundamental and interrelated aspects of human condition« (Anderson et al., 2019) and affect is used as information in this stage, since not much other information is available.

3.4.1.2 The secondary appraisal stage

In **the secondary appraisal stage** new explicit information starts to come in, and the focus starts to shift from affect to cognition, employing more effortful processing strategies. This happens when sufficient amount of information about change specifics is available for the employee to start making more sense of the situation and thinking about what exactly will be different at his job and in which ways he or she will need to change the usual ways of doing things.

Oftentimes this happens when change implementation begins and we can weigh pros and cons of a specific change to form an updated attitude towards that change. Let us emphasize that despite the cognitive component takes foreground, the affective one still works in the background and as we know today, all our decisions are made through affect-coloured glasses (Seo et al., 2010).

A respondent nicely captured the essence of each of the two phases as »dealing with oneself« and »dealing with what will change«:

»If there is good explanation it [the dealing with oneself] ends quicker, and then you can start to deal with what exactly will change and how to adapt to the new situation /.../ So it seems to me that with this "top-down" change it depends on how you convey things, how long this period of dealing with oneself lasts« (Interviewee No.9).

Why is this change needed, or why this change makes sense often comes to us in more than less self-oriented ways, despite organizations usually invest greatest efforts in explaining why is the change beneficial for the organization. The organization-oriented drive that change is needed because “our organization needs this” creates much less momentum (from the perspective of an individual) for the proposed change compared with self-oriented drives (such as the benefits for the employees, openness to new experiences, change-lover identity). Because whilst employees understand the change is needed because the organization needs this change, we find that the rationale is not reinforced by affect as much as it is with self-oriented drive.

3.4.1.3 The coping stage

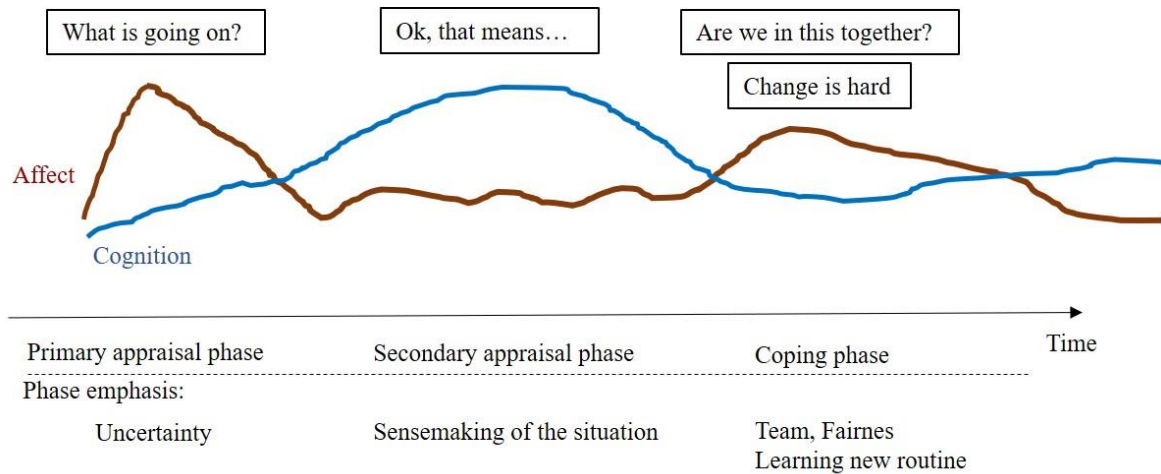
When the implementation is in full swing and people have processed all the pros and cons that require a rational - cognitive approach, they realize adapting to change is not easy and takes a lot of effort – especially when it concerns changing their routines. The tasks performed in a new way require more cognitive resources than the old ways of doing things. This is where the affective aspect comes to the forefront once again, and negative emotions can surface.

At this point of the change process, employees need to be motivated to go on with the change and the effort performed by others gives them the drive to endure and help to diminish negative emotions. The importance of feeling a part of a team was found to play an especially important part in shaping affective change readiness. We explicate the role of the team spirit and important functions it serves in the change readiness process in the subchapter »The team spirit«.

Figure 9 summarizes our general findings on the process of individual change readiness process, and depicts the interplay of affect and cognition. In the primary appraisal phase, affect is the primary focus. The individual wonders, "What is going on?" because the level of uncertainty is high. In the secondary appraisal phase, cognition becomes more involved and takes over. The individual begins to make more sense of the situation as more information about the change becomes available. In the coping phase, the individual begins to learn the new routine. In this phase, the supportive role of fairness and the team is especially important as they help the individual persevere through the change and

successfully manage it. The individual asks themselves, "Are we in this together?" and wants to ensure that the other team members are also committed to the change process.

Figure 9: The affect-cognition interplay in the process of change



Source: Own work

3.4.2 The source of feelings in the change readiness process

The sources of feelings towards organizational change can have diverse specifics for each individual employee. However, we find two to be universal and salient in the change readiness process. The first major source is uncertainty, and the second we call the team spirit.

3.4.2.1 Uncertainty

Uncertainty represents a major source of feelings in the process of change readiness in general and in the primary appraisal stage in particular. Uncertainty – »an individual's inability to predict something accurately« (Milliken, 1987, p.136) is inevitable when we speak of organizational change and is one of the most commonly reported psychological states associated with organizational change (Bordia et al., 2004). It appears due to the lack of information concerning an event that pertains the future, and complexity of the process (with unknown unknowns). However, in the eyes of employees, a top-down change is seen as a planned event (with unknown knowns), and thus the main source of uncertainty represents **insufficient communication from management**. Before the implementation begins, the discomfort pertaining uncertainty is at its peak and one questions oneself:

»What does this mean for you because you can't imagine things. But then once things start to be implemented, in this case it turned out to be positive, then it's easier.«
(Interviewee No.9)

Uncertainty, in essence, is the conscious awareness of the lack of knowledge (Anderson et al., 2019), creating discomfort. People tend to manage the uncertainty by resolving the knowledge void. As already mentioned, the void in knowledge can be filled with affect being used as information. While this is a process that happens subconsciously, and mostly interprets negative feelings, explicit information provided by management was reported as an important means to (consciously) navigate employees' attitudes toward change to become more positive. People want to know what to expect.

Managing expectations turned out as an *in vivo* code in our analysis and a concept that can importantly affect employees change readiness through addressing the uncertainty. By managing employees' expectations, we enlighten them what to expect, and help diminish the discomfort created by uncertainty. »An event inconsistent with one's expectations is perceived as unlikely in the future« (Fiske & Taylor, 2021, p. 406). Drawing on the norm theory (Kahneman & Miller, 1986), the events that people find surprising are emotion producing. Many possible alternatives make the actual events surprising – with managing employees' expectations we need to aim at making constant change the norm. Therefore, the intensity of the initial (often negative) emotions will be reduced. One of our respondents explained the importance of managing expectations as follows:

»Changes that come unannounced or you don't prepare people for it, that is, they are unexpected, cause a lot of resentment - they can also be positive, but time will tell.« (Interviewee No.1)

Another tactic that as well draws on the norm theory is practicing change as often as possible. Several of our respondents reported this helped them to not just better cope with change, but to like change more. On one hand experiencing change often, makes it the norm – and what happens often is to be expected to happen again (managing expectations), on the other hand, experiencing change often, can boost individual's self-efficacy, a dimension of change readiness concept.

When managing expectations through communication, communication should be sufficient, timely and constant, not present just in the initial stages, explaining why, to diminish discomfort. Moreover, our respondents emphasized it should be transparent. When they know what to expect, they can accommodate their minds to it, and it makes it easier for them, even if they perceive the change as negative. Thus, the negative aspects of a specific change should also be presented. A respondent whose attitude toward change is usually positive, explained how a negative response to change appeared that resulted from a mismatch of expectations and reality due to non-transparency:

»We have been told the whole time that positive changes are coming, so I had high expectations. And then, they were actually quite negative. If change is communicated and announced as something really great and you expect it as such...then it doesn't meet your expectations and your reaction will be negative.« (Interviewee No.8)

The management did not communicate a lot about the specifics of change before the actual change implementation, just the positive valence of the upcoming change. The feelings that she felt when the change was explained in more detail describes as »*shock, despair and frustration*«.

Being transparent addresses not only employees' expectations, but pertains to the element of fairness. We found fairness to be extremely important throughout the change process, especially from the emotion-producing aspect. Fairness can be seen as a bridge between the two prominent sources of feelings – uncertainty and the team spirit.

3.4.2.2 *The team spirit*

Despite the focus of our research is the concept of *individual's* change readiness the process of achieving it is found to be very much a *group* process. When searching for the right concept to capture the essence of first-order categories: perceived support from superiors, having an in-team mate to discuss issues, the perceived importance of the change from other employees, and perceived fairness of everyone putting effort into the process, several concepts have been considered. Consulting the literature, the abstract one of the team spirit we believe is the right one.

In the literature, the concept of the team spirit is built around two perspectives. The first sees team spirit as immanent to the team and focuses on how *groups* build a collective ethos, where members share a common goal-oriented intentionality (Silva et al., 2014). In this perspective, the team spirit overlaps to some extent with related concepts such as team cohesion (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), group potency (Lester et al., 2002), and group drive (Stogdill, 1972; Werner & Lester, 2001). The second perspective views the team spirit as a result of individual contributions to the team, and “evaluates individual feelings of fellowship within the team” (Silva et al., 2014, p. 288). The debate on perspectives is however not as relevant for our case as are the conceptions of what team spirit is and its features important to the change readiness process.

The second perspective that defines the team spirit as “the extent to which *individuals* feel a sense of group togetherness (Jaworski & Kholi, 1993) and participate in the group dynamics” (Silva et al., 2014, p. 288) largely overlaps with our perception of the team spirit. First, it ascribes this hard to define phenomenon a property of a feeling. Second, it includes action – participation in group dynamics. Our respondents talked about the importance of effort that everyone needs to put in the change process to enhance individual's change readiness.

Abell (1996) based his discussion of a team spirit on the notion of helping and trusting others. Respondents talked about the importance of help they received by other group members in the change process. The help could come from superiors or other co-workers, and is not necessarily instrumental in nature, but can be psychological. “*They ask me how can our*

director help...I don't know, it is not his job, but it is good to know that he is there for me»
(Interviewee No.3).

3.4.2.2.1 Functions of the team spirit in the change readiness process

We identify three key functions the team spirit serves in the change readiness process: 1) the first is self-efficacy, derived from received help. Being part of a team, one receives support from other team members, which boosts the belief that one is able to make the change.

2) the second is social reality. How other team members perceive the proposed change influences the perception of the individual and constructs social reality about change.

3) The third is interactional justice that relates to the quality of interpersonal treatment one perceives.

The literature says this type of justice includes informational justice (the information one is provided with) and interpersonal justice (the respect one is treated with) (Colquitt et al., 2001). We find as especially important the perception related to interactional fairness that everyone puts effort into the change process and that the management considers employees opinions. The fairness moment pertains all the phases of change, however we emphasize it in the phase of coping, since we find its impact as especially important, since the cognitive resources are usually quite depleted in the coping stage and we see it as an important source of affect in the coping stage. Fairness judgements are conceptualized as cognitive comparisons (Folger, 1986) that entail affective consequences (Bies, 1987). According to the theory of uncertainty management (Lind & van den Bos, 2002) the perception of fairness is of great importance also in the beginning of the change process, since information about fairness serves as a substitute for other kinds of information that is usually unavailable in uncertain situations. Perception of fair treatment »makes the possibility of loss less anxiety-provoking« and gives the employees »confidence that they will receive good outcomes« (Lind & van den Bos, 2002, pp.196-197).

3.4.2.2.2 Communication and the team spirit

The importance of communication featured prominently in in the responses of almost all interviewees. The general perception was that improper communication spurred negative responses toward change and is to be crowned the main culprit. Sufficient amount of information, constancy, and transparency can diminish negative responses to change. The communication aspect of the change process plays different roles in formation of change-related attitude. The first, and the most obvious is explaining the »why« of the change. Communicating the necessity of the change and rationale behind it is vital to gain employee's buy in. But that's not always an easy task. A head of division that usually finds himself in the role of a change agent explained:

»If objective data or perhaps even the level of objective information is the basis for change, then of course such changes are quite simple. And they're also pretty easy to process in a company because it's not a change because I'm a director and I want something, but there are actually some explainable facts behind it. For changes that are softer in nature, however, this is a little different. Sometimes it's also a feeling or an intuition. Therefore, management is not a recipe. /.../ why we decided something, what was the basis, it is not always explainable. /.../ Why do we have good and bad managers, or good and bad chefs? The cookbooks are the same, aren't they? The recipes are the same. Just how you put the ingredients together and with what feeling, however, is different.« (Interviewee No.7)

Explaining the legitimacy of the prospective change might be more of a slippery terrain than management might think, because in the minds of employees the *why* are we doing this? insufficiently explained, can be quite smoothly converted into *who* are we doing this *for*?

The »just because the management says so« issue is extremely important for creating change readiness because it does not mean just not understanding the need for change, but illuminates the importance of a team spirit. Management should put effort into explaining the reasons and the effort should be recognized by employees to create a team spirit. An engineer working in sports equipment production explained how the *»Because the market says so«* explanation does not suffice.

»That is easy to say, everyone can say that, it is vague. Why do you expect me to change and you cannot put effort into your job./.../ In such cases, you feel [...] you go into the change, but with a lump in your throat. Has he (the manager) done everything he could or he just pushed the problem he should have solved to the next level.« (Interviewee No.3)

A two-way communication that primarily serves exchanging information creates a sense of »we are in this together« and having an in-team member to talk to creates calmness, and a sense of security and self-efficacy. On the other hand, providing just reasons for the change pertains to informational justice (Colquitt et al., 2001).

3.5 Discussion

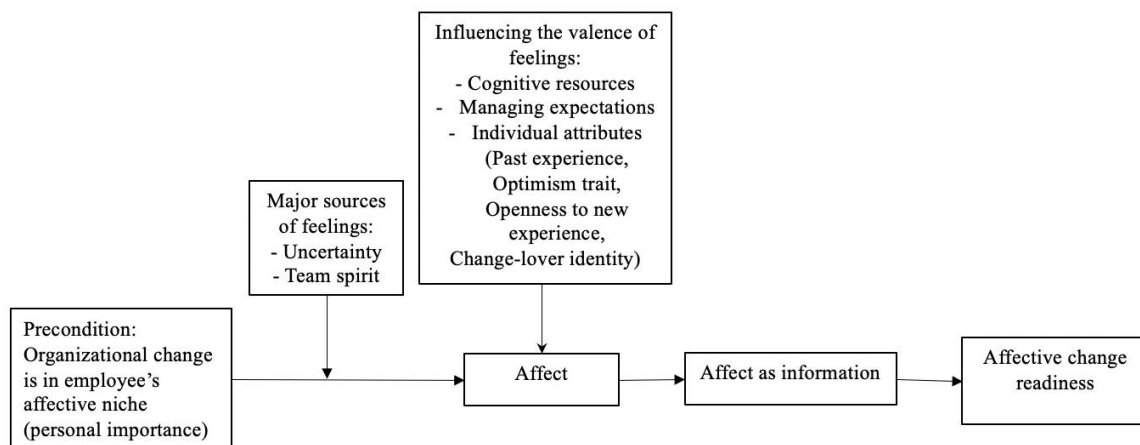
Our research draws upon novel neuroscientific research that puts affect in the center of origins of our thoughts, judgements, and actions. The workings of affect cannot be by any means isolated from cognition, however we move beyond early works of Lazarus (year) that had a strong influence on research of emotion in organizational literature, positing emotions as a reaction to cognition. We see the process of individual's change readiness as fluid, consistent with Stevens's (2013) conceptualization, with recurring cognitive and affective evaluation, by receiving new information about a specific change. Whereas information about specific change given through explicit communication by superiors undoubtedly play

an important part in shaping our change readiness, affect itself can provide information that importantly shape our attitude toward a specific change.

3.5.1 Toward a model of affect in change readiness development

We propose a model of affective change readiness and draw on feelings-as-information theory that postulates our subjective experiences such as emotions, moods, metacognitive experiences, and bodily sensations, influence judgement.

Figure 10: The model of affective change readiness – the employee perspective



Source: Own work

A fundamental function of feelings is to appraise the features of the environment that are significant for one's survival and well-being (Moors et al, 2013). As such, feelings are adaptive mechanisms that signal if the situation is »benign« or »problematic« (Schwarz, 2012). Organizational change that creates psychological arousal (i.e., is in the affective niche of an individual) will usually provoke negative feelings, because change pertains the unknown future and creates uncertainty. According to the fear of the unknown theory (Carleton, 2012, 2016) fear of the unknown is a fundamental fear of human beings, and a large body of theoretical, logical, and empirical evidence supports that (Anderson et al. 2019). Intolerance of uncertainty is defined as »an individual's dispositional incapacity to endure the aversive response triggered by the perceived absence of salient, key, or sufficient information, and sustained by the associated perception of uncertainty« (Carleton, 2016, p.31). Uncertainty is seen as a deficit in knowledge (Anderson et al., 2019). Our model proposes that organizational change creates uncertainty that elicits affect. Usually the feelings are negative, such as fear, anxiety, etc.. However, organizational change can as well arise positive feelings in employees such as hope and anticipation to change something for the better. Moreover, employees often experience ambivalent attitudes toward change.

To manage the uncertainty, organizations use explicit communication to influence employees' affect about the focal change initiative. However, employees try to figure it out themselves as well and make sense of what the focal change is about. In the process they use other types of information to interpret the situation, such as feelings felt in that moment. People usually experience their feelings as being »about« that specific change, however they can as well be incidental, deriving from one's current mood or bodily sensation (Schwarz, 2012).

We posit that the state of one's cognitive resources or the »body-balance« is an important incidental source of affect that influences individual's change readiness. When one feels tired he or she will form a less change ready attitude than when well rested. Feeling-as-information theory postulates that feelings elicited by the target of judgement (e.g. specific change) will provide valid information, whereas feelings that are due to an unrelated influence can deceive us (Schwarz, 2012). However, in the context of change, our cognitive resources determine our ability to cope with change. Given the fact that the main aim of measuring change readiness is in predicting whether one will successfully adopt the change, the cognitive resources, despite being labelled as an incidental source of affect according to Schwarz's theory (2012), are indeed not that incidental. We propose that the state of one's cognitive resources creates an accurate signal and does not lead astray in the context of change readiness. The perceived success at prediction and subsequently control will facilitate perceptions of self-efficacy and agency, that can reduce fear of the unknown (Carleton, 2016).

We see building one's self-efficacy and thus managing uncertainty, as well through the feeling of a »team spirit«, because the team members support each other and work together for a mutual goal – successful change adoption. The »team spirit« factor serves in addition other functions important to change readiness creation such as construction of social reality, and interactional justice, described in more detail above. The uncertainty management theory by Lind and Van Den Bos (2002) suggests that perhaps *the* key function of fairness is to provide people with a way to cope with uncertainty.

3.5.2 It is all about cognitive resources

In the change process the beginnings that are usually emotionally charged are – well, just the beginnings – of our cognitive resource consumption in the process of change. We need resources left to deal with the change when it arrives, to adapt to it and change our habits if required. It takes continuous effort, and employee's cognitive resources may hold a missed key piece to a puzzle of why so many change implementations fail.

Self-regulation in sense of emotion regulation takes effort and that means it drains our cognitive resources that could be spent elsewhere (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). Vohs and Heatherton (2000) showed through a series of experiments that people who were

emotionally taxed by self-regulation, performed more poorly on subsequent tasks. They gave up sooner and failed to resist new temptations.

From the aspect of change turbulence too much change turbulence will negatively affect one's change readiness, because our cognitive resources will be exhausted. Perhaps an exhausted employee will not have the energy to resist the change and raise opposition. To prevent change resistance is commonly a primary goal in organizations when introducing change, however this condition will be misleading, because such an employee will neither have the resources to successfully adopt a change, resulting in unsuccessful change implementation.

3.5.3 Theoretical implications and contributions

We contribute to the change readiness literature by explaining the role of affect in the change readiness process and how it influences individual change readiness. We explicate at what stages of organizational change affect is of special importance, and propose a model of affective change readiness. By building the knowledge on the affective dimension of change readiness we address the gap, and deficiency in the change readiness literature, as the focus has been primarily on cognitions.

3.5.4 Practical implications

Beside our existing knowledge that management can through communication deliver »the message« and clarify the legitimacy of the change initiative, our research shows importancy of explicit communication to manage expectations. By explaining what employees can expect, organizations can lessen the intensity of (often negative) emotional arousal when the change arrives. Explicit information however, is only one type of information employees use to interpret what is happening and to manage uncertainty. Organizations need to realize the extreme importancy of »how« things are done, because affect is used as information to interpret what to expect and what attitude to hold towards a certain change initiative.

Special attention should be given given to the phase after initial announcement of the change or informal leakage of information that change is about to happen. This initial stage is charged with uncertainty and employees are most prone to use affect as information. Management needs to prepare a plan how to keep the uncertainty period minimal as possible, however employees need some time to accommodate their minds to the change announced and unannounced change that was taken straight to action yielded wery negative responses. Future research should address the specifics of optimal timing and duration of each phase of the change readiness process.

A second focus we urge organizations to have when implementing change is the team spirit. Feeling part of the team first and foremost creates a feeling of “we are in this together”, that we find to serve several functions relevant to change readiness.

Management can focus on tactics to reduce uncertainty, such as give prompt and detailed information about the change event. However, one may have detailed information, or even all the information that is currently available, yet may still feel uncertain. Because feeling uncertainty is primarily a self-perception, and lacking knowledge is somewhat independent of the own assessment about our state of knowledge (Brashers, 2001). Some researchers of uncertainty management argue that »the field's historic focus on uncertainty reduction is both a cause and symptom of underdeveloped ideas about uncertainty and methods of managing it (also see Bradac, 2001; Goldsmith, 2001)« (Brashers, 2001, p. 478).

Constant change gives us the reason to seek for strategies to manage uncertainty differently than just aiming to reduce it. Accepting uncertainty as an adaptive mechanism (Mishel, 1990) in adapting to chronic uncertainty has been mainly researched in the domain of chronic illness and less in organizational contexts. »Mumby and Putnam (1992) for example described a form of bounded emotionality in organizations which includes tolerance for ambiguity.« (Brashers, 2001, p. 484). A manager with rich experience in change implementations exposed an interesting avenue that may be the answer:

» It's not even so much tied to changes, but mainly to our emotional perception of things /.../ the Western world, who already have too much of everything, of course, always wants to feel good. But, it doesn't work that way. It is necessary to accept that life goes up and down. /.../ I also know a lot about Japanese and Chinese culture, and this obsession with always being great, fit and feeling good is a very Western phenomenon. /.../ The perception that life is a curve, that if a change happens, you might feel bad.« (Interviewee No.7)

The solution might thus be in managing the way we feel, by learning to accept negative feelings as well, not trying to prevent it. A tool that would allow organizations to do that could be practicing mindfulness. The concept of mindfulness received increased attention in the field of organizational psychology and organizational behavior in recent years (Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016). Mindfulness is a state of conscious awareness »monitoring one's present-moment experience with acceptance« (Creswell & Lindsay, 2014, p. 402). When one experiences negative feelings, through mindfulness, he or she learns to nonjudgmentally accept it (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Individual mindfulness has been found to foster emotion regulation that reduces emotional exhaustion (Hülshager et al., 2013). It has also been shown to help people maintain cognitive flexibility (Moore, & Malinowski, 2009), and help them to overcome rigid patterns of thinking (Greenberg, Reiner, & Meiran, 2012); to reduce people's tendency to emphasize negative information over positive information (Kiken, & Shook, 2011); and be positively associated with sleep quality among working professionals (Hülshager et al., 2014). All of

these associations signal the tool of mindfulness could be promising in the field of organizational change and employee change readiness as well and opens interesting avenues for future research. The tool of mindfulness is increasingly gaining attention in different arenas of organizational life, with a primary focus on well-being. We propose it could be an interesting avenue for future research in organizational change from the perspective of managing one's cognitive resources and managing affect. Individual mindfulness research finds that mindfulness fosters emotion regulation that reduces emotional exhaustion (Hülshager et al., 2013).

Our body and mind are deeply interconnected. Neuroscience suggests that »the most basic thing you can do to master your emotions, in fact, is to keep your body budget in good shape« (Barrett, 2017, p. 176). Many employers overly exhaust their employees' cognitive resources with practices such as long working hours and feeling of always being on call, lack of social support, unfair treatment (Moss, 2021). The unfortunate truth is that the modern culture in general is designed in that way. The 2019 Covid pandemic added its toll and studies increasingly report the phenomena of burnout, emotional exhaustion and change exhaustion on the rise (e.g., McKinsey, 2022, Gartner, 2020, Abramson, 2022) . Organizations should not leave individuals to cope these challenges alone and treat it as a personal problem. They need to take part in helping to resolve the situation, especially because research shows systemic organizational imbalances across job demands and job resources are the most powerful drives of burnout (McKinsey, 2022). We encourage organizations to take on practices such as six-hour work day, »mail on holiday« e-mail policy (Daimler), or ban of out-of-hours emails (The Guardian, 2021) to help their employees manage cognitive resources and restore balance, and thus give them the tool for change readiness.

3.6 Conclusion

Communication, undoubtedly, is an important means of navigating employees' change readiness, and numerous studies prove that. Through communication we convey "the message" why change needs to happen, what exactly it will involve etc. The "message" however, addresses primarily, and to a large proportion, the cognitive dimension of individuals' change readiness. Employees can comprehend the "message", yet still struggle with change readiness. Despite the literature on change management best practices is vast and largely noncontroversial, numerous change initiatives fail to meet its goal, and the literature recognizes change readiness as a key factor. We call a shift in focus from cognition to affect is finally needed – from operationalization of individual change readiness to organizational practices.

To manage emotions through better communication with change recipients (e.g. see Liu & Perrewe, 2005) is only one piece of the puzzle. Based on contemporary neuroscientific knowledge about the workings of the brain and emotion, we should not stay fixated on the obvious and easy reachable tools like explicit communication. Our study draws on affect-

as-information theory and suggests affect itself conveys information that importantly shapes individuals' change readiness. To build affective change readiness our study implies organizations should put special focus on managing employees' cognitive resources, creating the team spirit among employees, and minimizing uncertainty, paying attention to *how* things are done.

4 USING ENTREPRENEURIAL COGNITION TO UNDERSTAND CHANGE READINESS AND SUCCESSFUL COPING WITH CHANGE

Entrepreneurship is associated with environment characterized by information overload, high uncertainty, and time pressure (Forbes, 2005). Entrepreneurs thus seem to be the perfect focus group to reveal some answers related to the challenge of successful coping with change and change readiness sources, because they need to master change well to survive and flourish in that type of environment. Aiming to understand why are some individuals more change ready and able to cope with change, we will seek the answers by digging into characteristic of entrepreneurial cognition. Cognition concerns an individual's perceptions, thinking, and memory (Estes, 1975) and helps us to explain the thought processes that take place in individuals as they interact with others and the environment (Mitchell et al., 2002). One of the research questions of this study is RQ1: *How do entrepreneurs attain change readiness?* By doing so, our intention is to identify the types of coping strategies used in the change process, seeking for the possible pattern specific for entrepreneurs. We as well identify other factors with entrepreneurs that work in favour of attaining change readiness.

As our resources to cope with change are limited there are two important issues that we would like to point out. The first one is the processing strategy we use to cope with perceived change turbulence and make decisions. Research shows that entrepreneurs use heuristics more extensively than managers in large organizations in this vein (Baron, 1998; Busenitz & Barney, 1997). Managerial cognition is more systematic, factually oriented, building on proven information, with the rationale for a new opportunity progressing in a logical manner (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). The heuristic type of processing, argued to be lined to entrepreneurial cognition, on the other hand, allows for preservation of more cognitive resources compared to substantial processing. However, we do not intend to focus on the information-processing strategy solely. As mentioned, the purpose of our empirical qualitative research is to identify other tactics in relation to entrepreneurial cognition that entrepreneurs use to attain change readiness, and better cope with change.

As we never possess all the information about future events to make a completely rational decision, using heuristics might be ecologically more rational than using substantive analytical processing (cf. Bettis, 2017). Preserving our resources in the phase of getting ready for change is especially important, since it is followed by the act of change and adaptability, that denotes the success of change implementation.

This brings us to the second important issue to consider, the allocation of cognitive resources. We propose the allocation of cognitive resources between change readiness (the *thinking, getting ready* phase) and undertaking change (the *doing, adapting* phase) as essential for successful coping with change. Discussing resources in the framework of Conservation of resources theory (COR), Halbesleben and colleagues (2014) note it is not necessarily the sum of resources that determines the one who will thrive, but the allocation of resources allowing to maximize the fit of the individual with environment (Hobfoll, 1988). The differentiation between threat (e.g., threat of job loss, that is reflected in the phase of *thinking, getting ready*) and loss (e.g., actual job loss, that possibly denotes the phase of *doing, adapting*) has been under investigated, yet both can lead to strain (Halbesleben et al., 2014), affecting employees' cognitive resources. Therefore, our next research question is *RQ2: What is the role of allocation of cognitive resources between getting ready and actual adapting to change in coping with change?* This question is important for two reasons. First, because individual's cognitive resources are limited. Second, the process of change is ongoing and throughout its duration depletes one's resources. Thus, it is important to consider the optimal distribution, that would allow for successful change implementation.

The aim of our study is to answer the two research questions posed above, and ultimately, to learn from entrepreneurs in order to offer advice to individuals less successful with attaining change readiness and coping change.

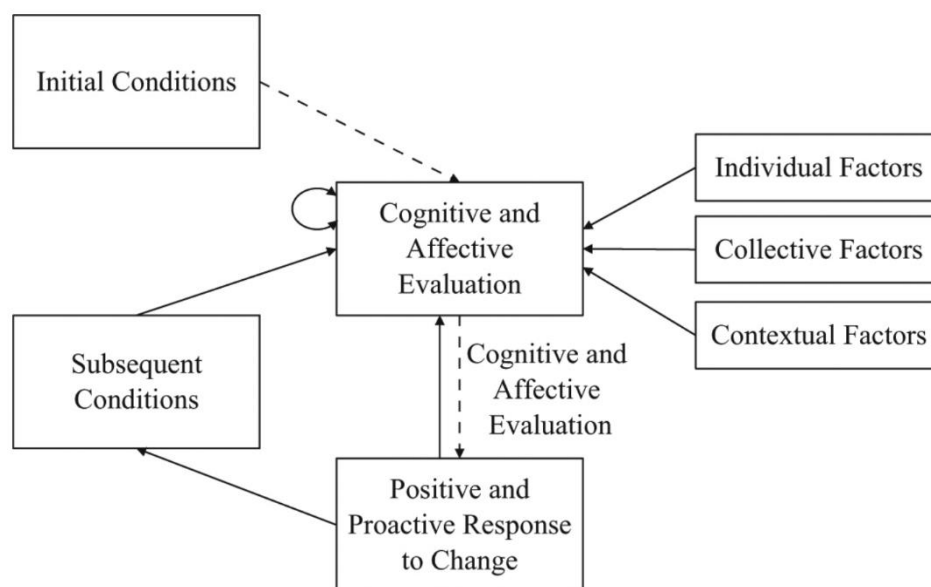
The Conservation of resources theory (COR theory) presents the conceptual basis that we draw on, emphasizing a key feature of the change readiness process, a necessary condition to enable successful change implementation on the individual level – the cognitive resources needed in the change process, and individual's tendency to preserve cognitive resources and prevent their losses. The goal of this chapter is to specify the mechanisms entrepreneurs use to preserve their cognitive resources in the change readiness process. In other words, we explain how conservation of cognitive resources happens in the process of change.

4.1 Change readiness and coping with change through the lens of Conservation of resources theory

For the discussion of change readiness through the lens of the Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) it is first important to consolidate change readiness as a process, rather as a one-time state to be achieved before change implementation begins (e.g. Armenakis et al., 1999). We adopt Stevens' (2013) conceptualization of change readiness, that acknowledges the dynamic nature of change readiness which updates with new information received throughout the change process. Figure 11 depicts a process-based model of change readiness proposed by Stevens (2013). His model describes change readiness as »a positive and proactive response to change over time as a function of contextualized affective and cognitive evaluations.« (Stevens, 2013, p. 346). The dashed lines illustrate the traditional assumptions that change readiness, formed in response to a set

of initial conditions, is a sufficient buffer to subsequent conditions of the change process. As such, change readiness would become irrelevant once a certain threshold is achieved. Stevens (2013) adds individual, collective, and contextual factors, and subsequent conditions that iteratively influence a re-evaluation and response. With every new information, or every time the situation or the change context within which change occurs changes, change readiness can change as well. The source of information can be external (e.g., the details on the change communicated by management) or internal (coming from within individual, such as feelings). Change readiness is thus not present just in the pre-change stage, but continues as the change implementation begins as well. Important for our research, change readiness thus consumes one's cognitive resources throughout the change process.

Figure 11: A process-based model of change readiness



Source: Stevens (2013)

While Stevens (2013, p. 346) sees change readiness on a more general level, as a *response*, not differentiating between attitude, intention, and behavior, saying that »differences in these approaches are merely reflective of assumptions about the change context« (i.e. the change being in earlier stages of announcement vs. more mature stages of implementation), we posit differentiating between the concepts of attitude, intention, and behavior is important, as it helps us differentiate change readiness from similar concepts²¹ (such as commitment to change or coping with change). However, we agree that, seeing change readiness as a continuous process throughout the change, the whole change process needs to be considered, and change readiness is not to be put solely into a pre-change stage before implementation begins. Despite the temptation present with processual view of expanding the conceptualization of change readiness on other similar concepts, by including behavior for

²¹ See Section 1.2 Clarifying the concepts

example, we believe that would only contribute to the proliferation of change readiness definitions and its conceptual confusion.

Consistent with our review and clarification of change readiness concept²² we define change readiness as an *attitude*, excluding behavior. We find Steven's (2013) definition to be sound, except for the simplification seeing it as a response (that could include behavior). We see behavior as a possible outcome of change readiness attitude. Coping with change, on the other hand, – “a person's cognitive and intentional/behavioral efforts to manage (reduce, minimize or tolerate) the internal or external demands of the person-environment transaction when it is appraised as taxing or exceeding a person's resources” Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis (1986, p. 572)—differs from change readiness by involving behavioral effort to manage change. Despite it overlaps to some degree with the concept of change readiness, coping with change importantly differentiates itself from change readiness by including behavior. The effective application of coping allows the individual to “resolve problems, relieve emotional distress, and achieve their goals” (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005, p. 792). Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping proposes that individuals go through a cognitive–emotional process in which they attempt to make sense of a change, struggle with their emotional reactions to change, and cope with change. Research suggests that employees frequently report intense negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, or anger, when confronted with organizational change events (Fugate, Kinicki, & Prussia, 2008; Huy, 1999; Liu & Perrewe, 2005).

Coping researchers often distinguish strategies by type as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, social support, and meaning-making (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004). Problem-focused coping or instrumental action encompasses cognitions and behaviors aimed at solving the problem. With this type of coping, individuals engage in strategies such as seeking information, taking direct action, or »chunking«, being the process of breaking down the problem into smaller, more manageable pieces (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004), generating options to solve the problem, evaluating the pros and cons of different options, and implementing steps to solve the problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Emotion-focused coping is directed toward managing one's emotional response to the problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To reduce or manage the emotional distress that results from the situation one can use strategies such as expressing emotion or venting, distancing, avoidance, denial, positive reappraisal, or seeking out social support. Emotion-focused coping is often invoked when one feels that the situation will endure, and cannot be changed. In contrast, problem-focused strategies are typically used when a person perceives a constructive action can be taken. People who »use active coping strategies typically view themselves as in control, hold positive self-views, and adopt a proactive, optimistic and self-reliant approach to managing stressors«. (Carr & Pudrovska, 2007, p. 181). As problem-focused coping includes those strategies that involve acting on the environment, and

²² Presented in Chapter 1

emotion-focused coping includes those strategies that involve regulating one's emotions, and thus oneself, we see a parallel with our categorization of change readiness process presented in chapter 2.3.2, consisting of two dimensions of getting ready for a specific change at the individual level – getting ready psychologically, and operationally. Getting ready psychologically, means one is dealing with oneself, one's own feelings and concerns regarding change (parallel to emotion-focused coping). Getting ready operationally means dealing with change, and is task focused (parallel to problem-focused coping).

Social support as a separate type of coping strategy involves seeking both emotional and concrete aid from others (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004). When social support represents emotional aid, it can also be understood as a subtype of the emotion-coping strategy. When one searches for concrete aid or advice it could also be assigned to problem-coping type of strategy. Lastly, we mention the least researched meaning-making type of strategy. With this strategy, one aims to see the positive or meaningful aspects of the situation. This strategy is sometimes referred to as »cognitive reappraisal«, and has been mostly researched with severe or chronic stressors, and traumatic experiences (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004).

Now that we have explained the concepts of change readiness and coping, the emphasis is in place that for the discussion of change readiness through the prism of the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) it is important to consider both concepts, change readiness, as well as coping with change, as they both consume individual's cognitive resources throughout the process of change, and determine the success of change implementation. In the sense of change implementation's success or change adoption, the two focal concepts of our study are interdependent. If one spends too much of one's limited cognitive resources on attaining change readiness, too little may be left for coping with change. The key to change implementation's success is thus not only in the sum of resources, but in their allocation between readiness and coping along the change process. Moreover, the interdependency between change readiness and coping with change exists as well in terms of a loop, where change readiness, as an attitude, can itself be understood as a resource and input to coping, yet at the same time the success of coping with change represents a feedback information that can influence change readiness.

Deriving from the fact that our cognitive resources are limited, we draw on Conservation of resources (COR) theory which postulates that people are motivated to protect their current resources and acquire new ones (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, 2001; Lazarus, 2001; Hobfoll, 2011; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2016; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). For the purpose of our study, we define resources in terms of cognitive resources. Two principles and four corollaries follow from this basic tenet of the theory. **The first principle** describes the primacy of resource loss, and says that »it is psychologically more harmful for individuals to lose resources than it is helpful for them to gain the resources that they lost« (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1335). From the organizational change perspective, this principle has important implications, as the losses that the change brings will have greater impact on employees than similarly valued gains. Within cognitive

psychology loss salience is a well-established idea (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), and the bias in favor of loss has been shown in several experiments. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) for example found, that people expended more resources to prevent the loss of a cup that they have received at the beginning of the experiment, than they have to gain the same cup. Studies of organizational behavior found that when employees lose resources at work, they are more likely to experience strain (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Hobfoll, 2001). While the actual resource loss has been well researched, fear of resource loss has received less attention, and yet both can lead to strain (Halbesleben et al., 2014). From the perspective of our study, the fear of resource loss is more salient as change readiness attitude typically starts to form before change actually happens.

The second principle is resource investment, saying that individuals invest resources in order to recover from resource loss, to gain resources, and protect against resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001a). Coping with change involves investment of resources to protect from future resource loss (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018).

The first corollary following from the basic tenet of the COR theory says that people with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss, and better positioned for resource gains. Conversely, people with fewer resources, are more vulnerable to resource loss, and poorer positioned for resource gains. We propose entrepreneurs are individuals with greater personal and cognitive resources in the change contexts. We show justification for this notion in the chapter *Entrepreneurs and change*, reviewing relevant literature.

The second and third corollary concern the resource loss spiral, and resource gain spiral. Resource loss spiral says that with each resource loss, investment becomes more difficult, and future resource losses will follow. With each iteration of the resource loss, the spiral gains momentum, as well as magnitude. The spirals hold for resource gains as well, except the gain spirals tend to be weaker, and slower than loss spirals, as resource loss is more powerful than resource gain (first principle) (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018).

Last but not least, the **fourth corollary** says that the loss of resources makes people become more defensive in how they invest future resources (Hobfoll, 2001), and will take steps to protect their remaining resources. (e.g. Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). As people have learned from experience that organizational change usually means a loss of cognitive resources, they will tend to avoid the changes, and protect their remaining resources. We propose the situation concerning organizational change will be a bit different for entrepreneurs, as they do not find change as threatening as other people usually do.

4.2 Entrepreneurs and change

Change is a common theme linking the environments within which entrepreneurs function, and exploitation of change is firmly rooted in innovation (Yarzebinski, 1992). »Entrepreneurs see change as the norm and as healthy.«. The entrepreneur and entrepreneurship is defined by the entrepreneur always searching for change, responding to it, and exploiting it as an opportunity (Drucker, 1985, p. 28). Having the resources to be able to do so is key, and not many people realize the critical nature of resources and resource loss like entrepreneurs. Different resources are needed in the entrepreneurship process, and resource loss is inherent in all stages of value creation. However, fortunately, research suggest that entrepreneurs cope with resource loss, or potential resource loss (i.e., risk), better than others (Baron, Hmieleski, & Henry, 2012; Uy, Foo, & Song, 2012).

For our discussion of why and how are entrepreneurs so successful in dealing with change or different from the general population that is typically inclined to resist change, a review of the literature that aims to differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs and characteristics typical of entrepreneurs is in place. We herein review some of the characteristics that could help entrepreneurs cope with change successfully.

As uncertainty is inherent to change, we begin our review with research showing that entrepreneurs find uncertainty and novelty motivating. Butler (2017) compared the psychological-testing results of some 1800 business leaders, non-entrepreneurs, and more than 4000 successful entrepreneurs to understand what makes entrepreneurs special. He identified the *ability to thrive in uncertainty* as one of the distinguishing characteristics²³. Openness to new experience, and feeling comfortable with risk are the main components that enable entrepreneurs to perform well in unpredictable environments.

While entrepreneurs are not prone to risk, and try to minimize it, they realize some risk is usually needed to achieve desired goals. In risky situations they feel more comfortable than non-entrepreneurs do, and manage anxiety and stress that could hinder necessary action, better (Butler, 2017). One would assume that entrepreneurs experience more stress, due to the dynamic and uncertain environments within they operate. However, research shows they experience equal or lower levels of stress than individuals in other occupations or careers (Baron, Franklin, & Hmielski, 2016). The entrepreneurs' relatively high capacity to tolerate and effectively manage stress results from joint effects of selection and psychological capital. Individuals first self-select into entrepreneurial careers if they perceive their capabilities to match with the requirements of such a career. The entrepreneurial

²³ Timothy Butler (2017) aimed to give a clear conclusion to the vast literature on entrepreneurs' personality traits, that did not give a clear answer what differentiates entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. He found that many of the traits commonly associated with entrepreneurs didn't apply, and yet identified three distinguishing characteristics in total, based on skill assessments, personality traits, and life interests data. The three characteristics are ability to thrive in uncertainty, a passionate desire to author and own projects, and the skill of persuasiveness.

environment can further select the individuals who have what it takes for an entrepreneurial career by making them exit.

The psychological capital being the combination of high self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), offers the answer to what specific skills enable entrepreneurs to withstand high levels of work-related stress. Psychological capital was found to be negatively related to perceived stress (Baron et al., 2016) or its perceived symptoms (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009), and positively related to entrepreneurs' subjective well-being (Baron et al., 2016). Individuals high in self-efficacy believe that they can achieve whatever they set out to accomplish—that they can, in essence, “get the job done.” This may help to reduce experienced stress, which often involves cognitions of being unable to cope or being overwhelmed (Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997). Similarly, those high in optimism believe that they will experience positive outcomes in almost any situation (Hmieleski & Baron, 2009), and this, too, may help to mitigate stress. Persons high in hope have the ability to imagine multiple pathways through which they can overcome challenges, thus reducing the likelihood of becoming overwhelmed by work-related stressors (Snyder, Sympton, & Ybasco, 1996). Finally, persons high in resilience have faced difficult situations in the past and, based on their experience, believe they can overcome similar obstacles in the present and future without feeling helpless and becoming stressed (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004).

The fact that entrepreneurs feel more comfortable in risky situations can also be explained by the individual's perception of a situation. Research shows that entrepreneurs often perceive a certain situation as less risky than it really is, and as less risky as managers in large companies would perceive it for example (Busenitz and Barney, 1997). The perception of the riskiness of the situation and the consequent experience of stress is influenced by a specific characteristic of entrepreneurial cognition – the illusion of control, that lessens the perception of risk (Keh, Foo, & Lim, 2002). The illusion of control is one of the many biases typical of entrepreneurial cognition. The entrepreneur's perception and decision-making in various areas are influenced by different biases and heuristics, which represent a typical feature of the cognition of entrepreneurs (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). In recent years entrepreneurial cognition became the focus of researchers who try to differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs, as the focus on personality traits failed to give a clear answer (Shepherd, Williams and Patzelt, 2015).

Some cognitive positions are resources in their own right (Dewald & Bowen, 2010; Hobfoll, 2011, Lanivich, 2015) and illusion of control could be one of them in the process of change. Some other biases from entrepreneurship literature that we find relevant are overconfidence bias, overoptimism, and representativeness. Overconfidence means perceiving one's subjective certainty over objective accuracy (Busenitz, 1999; Gudmundsson & Lechner, 2013). Increased self-confidence or overconfidence helps entrepreneurs to better cope with challenges, being emotional, cognitive, social or financial. As change brings these kind of challenges, we find the overconfidence bias as a relevant resource for coping change. In

Hayward et al.'s (2010) view the benefits of overconfidence may outweigh the negative consequences of overconfidence in entrepreneurs, such as poorer quality of strategic decision making (Mehrabi & Kolabi, 2012). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy often appears alongside overconfidence (Zhang & Cueto, 2017). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy however differs from overconfidence to some extent, being the strength of belief in one's capabilities relevant *specifically* for the entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial decisions) (Chen, Greene, & Crick, 1998; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). The next bias, overoptimism, refers to people's overestimation of the likelihood of positive events and underestimating the likelihood of negative events (Sharot, 2011). This perception is important from the aspect of what the change will bring, and especially relevant because change pertains the unknown future. (Overly)optimistic people will anticipate more positive outcomes of change than less optimistic people.

The overconfidence, as well as overoptimism biases are most relevant for our discussion on change readiness and successful coping with change, because they produce a critical by-product, positive affective benefits. They reduce anxiety and depression, and increase action (Sharot, 2011), and could thus lead to better well-being and performance outcomes (Puri & Robinson, 2007). Positive affect signals an individual, that the situation concerning change is not problematic and needs attention in terms of self-preservation activities (Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994).

Another bias we find relevant is representativeness. Compared to overoptimism and overconfidence, the mechanism underlying this bias is primarily cognitive and do not carry as much affective and motivational implications (Zhang & Cueto, 2017). With representativeness, one uses a familiar situation as a cognitive shortcut for making decisions (Wadason, 2006). People who have found themselves in a similar change situation before, will use this past experience to make decisions in the current change situation they have found themselves in. De Carolis and Saporito (2006) proposed a conceptual model which has been later partly tested and confirmed, saying that representativeness and illusion of control decrease risk perception, and consequently lead to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Zhang & Cueto, 2017).

Heuristics and biases are a set of tools for fast and economical decision-making that eases the cognitive effort of making decisions through mental shortcuts (Niedenthal, Krauth-Gruber & Ric, 2006). In terms of the change process they can serve as a strategy for conservation of cognitive resources. So, the use of heuristics and biases can represent a resource in its own right in the process of change. In the context of coping change and change readiness, biases do not constitute as systematic errors in decision making, as they were originally defined (Kahneman & Tversky, 1996), but rather a resource in itself, enabling individuals to preserve their cognitive resources in the change process. Biases permeate decisions in entrepreneurship, and enable entrepreneurs to be more comfortable under uncertain, ambiguous, or complex decision contexts (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011).

Cognitive biases and heuristics thus serve an important role from the conservation of resources perspective in the change process, and must be noted. However, they are cognitive predispositions built within individuals and as such, not a tool that can be transferred to other individuals to cope with change more successfully. The aim of our empirical investigation among entrepreneurs is to target other aspects of entrepreneurs' cognitions, to uncover some of their cognitive positions that could serve as advice for other individuals when in the change process.

4.3 Method

This is a qualitative study, whereby we first review the literature identified as holding the possible answer to our research question (chapter Entrepreneurs and change). We then continue with presenting the results of our qualitative research based on in-depth interviews. Thereby, we posit this chapter as a blend of conceptual and qualitative method approach. We conducted in-depth interviews with experienced entrepreneurs to better understand how they think about change and change readiness, and how their cognitive positions address conservation of cognitive resources, and thus the success of the change implementation process.

4.3.1 Sample and data collection

Our sample consists of 11 entrepreneurs, 8 males and 3 females. We followed four conditions recruiting the participants of our study. First was the ownership share of the company, second was the element of the innovation in business, and third was fast company growth. Forth was the experience of the entrepreneur. We aimed for a sample of expert entrepreneurs, as they are the most successful and experienced entrepreneurs, whose cognition differs from novice, and non-expert entrepreneurs (Zimmerman, 2006). Expert entrepreneurs are able to learn from negative as well as positive experience and adjust their cognitions and emotions accordingly (Ucbasaran et al., 2011). By carefully reflecting on their experience they are capable of realistically evaluating their performance. Also, they are able to control their emotions, avoiding demotivation and discouragement, as well as overconfidence and hubris (Hiller & Hambrick, 2005). Furthermore, experts avoid cognitive fixation by constantly questioning whether previously acquired heuristics and routines still fit novel contexts or adaptations are necessary, showing the ability to "reflect in action" (Schön, 1983).

The interviews were conducted between December 2022, and March 2023, and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. 4 interviews were made in person, while 7 were made via videoconference. All the interviews were conducted by the same interviewer, audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Right after each interview the interviewer made notes of the most insightful thoughts, and comments that helped subsequent interviewing. Additional (sub)questions were posed to explore revelatory thoughts raised by interviewees. We asked

for examples and clarification to ensure that we comprehended the message they wanted to convey (see Maxwell, 2012). We made sure to cover all the topics from the interview guide (see Appendix 6), however we allowed for digressions where relevant.

Table 7: Interview participants

Interviewee	Industry	Entrepreneurship experience (years)	Gender
No.1	Builders' joinery manufacturing	24	M
No.2	Developer and manufacturer in Tech industry	19	M
No.3	Retail	15	F
No.4	Computer science and informatics	16	M
No.5	Computer science and informatics	16	M
No.6	Computer science and informatics	24	M
No.7	Marketing and communications	18	F
No.8	Marketing and communications	12	M
No.9	Wellbeing	8	F
No.10	Financial services	12	M
No.11	Marketing and advertising	12	M

Source: Own work

4.3.2 Data analysis

Our first step was to code the interviews using an open-coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We then identified quotes relevant to each of our research questions. We subsequently compared the codes and developed them into more abstract themes (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

The process of analysis was iterative (Miles & Huberman, 1994), whereby we repeatedly switched between relevant literature and empirical themes (Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008). In our analysis, we first focused on RQ1: *How do entrepreneurs attain change readiness?* An opening question to this topic in the interviews was the entrepreneur's personal definition of change readiness, to first clarify what change readiness is for an

individual interviewee, which set the ground for answering RQ1. At this point, we turned to the change readiness literature and the different traditions in which change readiness has been conceptualized. This helped us to adopt a process-approach to change readiness (Stevens, 2013). Focusing on entrepreneurs' definitions of change readiness served as a precursor to answering how they attain change readiness. Discussing with our respondents about their thinking processes when encountered with change, at the same time highlighted the importance of the coping with change, as entrepreneurs' minds were very much solution-oriented. That directed us to consult the change coping literature (cf. Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The entrepreneurs focus to problem-solving when confronted with a major change event on one hand illuminates their strong tendency towards action, and on the other the importance of emotion regulation. The answer to RQ1 solidified around five themes: being ahead of change, making scenarios, emotion regulation, practicing change, and fostering network.

When attentive to entrepreneurs' allocation of resources in the change process (RQ2) we created two phases for the ease of our discussion – pre-change phase (before the change happens) and change implementation stage (when change happens onwards). We analyzed how the respondents allocate cognitive resources between these two phases and how the five themes intersect with RQ2.

To ensure the robustness of results, two independent researchers coded the transcripts. In several meetings we discussed the differences, and the reported results are based on the reconciled coding. Interrater agreement was high. Our sample size reflects the rule of theoretical saturation.

We used the NVivo tool to code the transcripts, write memos, and help with the data analysis.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Mental model (definition) of change readiness

At the beginning of our conversations with entrepreneurs on how they get ready for change and attain change readiness, we were first interested how they define change readiness, and what change readiness represents to them.

Sometimes entrepreneurs needed to pause a bit and think about how to answer this question. The reason why, is that change readiness seems not to be something that entrepreneurs think about per se. It is not something that is discrete, but continuous and engraved within the entrepreneurship process. One of our respondents explained:

» I don't see it as some special activity for which it is necessary to devote time to change. However, it is necessary to incorporate this into all processes in the company. In short, we have a whole bunch of mechanisms that try to capture or

ensure that the reaction time to changes is minimal./.../ It's a kind of agility, readiness for response and change.» (Interviewee No. 5)

Short reaction time to changes is in essence enabled by predicting upfront what is coming.

»Changes are constant./.../ I try to focus less on how it used to be and how it is now, and I try to focus a lot on how it will be tomorrow. /.../ For me, readiness for change means constantly preparing resources according to what we see in the crystal ball.« (Interviewee No. 8)

As change is constant, change readiness takes a form of an ongoing flexibility of entrepreneur's mind. Interviewee No. 8 exemplified:

» When the COVID-19 crisis started, we changed our habit immediately - we started filling our warehouses as much as we could, putting in all the money we had at our disposal - we put it all in stocks, something that made completely no sense to us before the crisis.«

Another entrepreneur self-reflected, broadening the scope of flexibility:

» I'm in one business today, why shouldn't I be in another tomorrow? That doesn't work, but what if we do this and that...You have a fluid attitude towards identity, self-perception. You may even recognize yourself as someone who would do something differently every now and then. It is a kind of modus operandi by which you function and it is interesting to others./.../ Okay, you have a bit different emotional setup [than others - people who don't function that way], a different personality structure, you value relationships differently, you have a blindside regarding relationships, an overestimation of your own capacity.« (Interviewee No. 6)

4.4.2 Attaining change readiness

We identified five themes that constitute what change readiness is for entrepreneurs and at the same time answer the research question *RQ1: How entrepreneurs attain change readiness?* Change readiness is attained by: being ahead of change, making scenarios, being able to regulate emotions, fostering network, and practicing change.

4.4.2.1 Being ahead of change

We put the respondents into position to discuss with us a recent or still ongoing change that they did not initiate themselves. A change they were faced with and needed to cope with it - the kind of situations that usually in large companies encounter the most resistance from employees. This however, seems not to be the problematic change for entrepreneurs.

»When change is necessary, it is easy to pursue it. It is more difficult, when it is not necessary. But that often just means that someone does not see [in advance enough]. Or that someone sees three years ahead and knows that if we start the change process today, it will be more effective«. (Interviewee No. 2)

When change is a fact, there is no doubt that action is needed, so there is no dilemma. Most of the time, however, change is not a fact, but it is optional. The key is to know if and when to act.

» First [change readiness is], to accept and understand the situation, and the data that are coming from the environment, and not to turn a blind eye to what is happening. /.../ Most of the time the situation is ambiguous. You see the wave coming and you start to put together a picture – what will happen in the future in the market, with competition, etc. It is not clear when the thing transforms from some mosaic of data into a clear picture. /.../ Change readiness is not to turn a blind eye for too long, yet at the same time not every signal is a prophesy. The signals are endless and you can quickly pick up clues, where there aren't any. You wrongly recognize that something is happening when there isn't. One of the things is to know when something needs attention.« (Interviewee No. 4)

Referring to when to act, a respondent further explained through the COVID-19 example:

»It is always the least risky to change something little by little. /.../ However, even this can lead to a problematic situation, when you have to say ok, we need a radical move, even before it is obvious that it is necessary. The COVID-19 pandemic was the most obvious example. No one wanted to believe that those curves were really exponential, and the time you have when the numbers go above a certain number, is minimal, so you have to act at very weak indices. Readiness is basically about wavering between patches and change of direction, and the later is usually much more painful, more risky, and less comprehensible at the beginning.« (Interviewee No. 4)

To be ready for change thus means to be ahead of change just enough to assess correctly which steps to take. So the timing needs to be right in a sense that one has sufficient and the right information based on which the decisions are made. The signals based on which the entrepreneur makes decisions can as well be false, so flexibility is needed.

»And it is very difficult to be able to recognize if the first signal of something will lead to a big thing or to something negligible.« (Interviewee No. 11) *»A lot of what you see ends up not having any effect - neither good nor bad. It's actually noise. You have to be willing to change your plans.«* (Interviewee No. 4)

Changing plans can also be an emotional challenge, as one of our respondents explained:

»It is also a challenge emotionally, because I personally like to be consistent with myself, so if I say that I will do something, I like it to turn out that way. So you can say you were right. There is also some ego side to it. These changes sometimes put you in a situation where you have to admit; look, I misjudged the situation.« (Interviewee No. 4)

Not to misjudge the situation, entrepreneurs constantly gather information that would help them gain foresight. A respondent referred to sensing turnover.

»I address this by trying to have as good an overview as possible of what is happening with my colleagues, which means that I constantly talk to them, checking where we stand in terms of employee satisfaction.« (Interviewee No. 11)

As sufficient external information about the future is rarely available, entrepreneurs often rely on their intuition when assessing the signals.

»Because I've been in this business for a while and looking back, we've always been successful and I've always relied on my intuition. I am emboldened by the past. You are often not rational and you work according to intuition, because you know it will go in the right direction. I mostly succeed, but sometimes something needs to be corrected. I won't say there aren't any point-blank shots either.« (Interviewee No. 1)

»Feeling usually comes first. [commenting on his colleague, co-founder] James has a wonderful intuition. He often has a good feeling that we need to do something, but he doesn't know why. It takes me months because there are so many steps to understand myself, and then months to explain to people. « (Interviewee No. 2)

4.4.2.2 Making scenarios

When entrepreneurs think about what the future might bring, they do not have all the information they would like to have, and they would need for their predictions to be one hundred percent accurate. For that reason, to be prepared as best as possible, they create different scenarios that could play out in the future.

»If someone says something to me or I hear about something, I put it in my head and start thinking. I have to grind really well - I'm an analytical type. The first stage is the analysis, when I start in my head, occasionally I draw something, I write; I'm trying to do an analysis. However, this does not mean that this is a plan that we are going to go with.« (Interviewee No. 5)

»Change readiness is kind of two-level. One is the level of awareness, so that I am aware that change can happen. So, when it happens, I'm not surprised. It seems to me that there is this level of awareness, and there is the next level of what do we do from here on, having this awareness. This second level are then some action plans.

So on one hand I have awareness, and on the other I have action or some plans A, B, C, or it can be a pessimistic plan, optimistic plan...so basically when the change happens I am not surprised and I have a plan.» (Interviewee No. 11)

Despite the optimism bias and optimistic personality trait are typical for entrepreneurs, they kind of *»hope for the best, prepare for the worst«* (Interviewee No. 11), because it would be foolish not to:

»A saying goes "A wise man knows how much he does not know. " And you have to be aware of that. The bigger problem is if you think that. There is a problem if you think that things will stay as they are. It's like with fears – you manage them by facing them. And it's similar here - it is necessary to deal with dangers, even if only in a way of thinking, that this can happen. This already is some preparation. (Interviewee No. 8)

Creating scenarios in advance also has important positive stress-related implications, as indicated in the quote above. An entrepreneur working in financial trading business was more explicit:

»In order to manage stress, a defined process is needed, so that there is as little decision-making as possible at that moment [when the change arrives]. The decisions that are made are analyzed beforehand, and when the event occurs, you already have a prepared scenario that you now implement. When things unfold according to one of the pre-defined scenarios with negative outcome, you say okay, it's negative...maybe we didn't prepare good enough, maybe it's just a phase because you can't always define everything. We finish that story and go to new analyses. This defined process helps a lot.« (Interviewee No. 10)

4.4.2.3 Emotion regulation

Being prepared in advance can thus serve as a buffer for negative feelings deriving from surprise of not anticipating the specific change. There are additional ways in which entrepreneurs foster emotion regulation.

Although the business and private spheres of life are very intertwined with entrepreneurs, and sometimes *»the entrepreneurial story represents an extension of your personality«* (Interviewee No. 6), they seem to be able to hold a specific distance and foster a *»it's just business«* philosophy, that enables them to hold an emotional distance.

»There's a specific...attitude. Where, on one hand, you are willing to invest 5-10 years [of your life] in a story that may or may not be successful – you make an enormous investment, you invest everything. But you hold a certain safety distance, so that if you need to make a cut, it is relatively painless.« (Interviewee No. 6)

This safety distance usually has a solid ground, to be able to foster it, besides deriving from some personal traits or cognitive biases. Entrepreneurs trust themselves, that they will be able to turn a negative event into opportunity or at least not to let them sink completely, and bounce back after failure.

»In the business sphere, basically, even if something doesn't work out, you don't start from scratch. You have the knowledge, the foundation, as you had before.«
(Interviewee No. 10)

»When you are transitioning between different stories, and acting upon different scenarios you are not worried. /.../ You have confidence in yourself. Because you know that you have the skills - that have been tested enough times - that have helped you to make something from scratch in so many cases.« He also remembered his early career when the stakes were higher: *»During the most turbulent stages of entrepreneurship, you fall asleep like a child; for decades.«* (Interviewee No. 6)

This safety distance is needed, not only because *»In business life you don't hold all the strings /.../there is a number of parameters, especially if you are a small company, that are not up to you.«* but also because *»the boundaries are not so clear and learnable«* (Interviewee No. 8).

»You walk the line all the time. On one hand this is something that drives you, and on the other it's like a vaccine that makes you insensitive to all these things that frighten most other people.« (Interviewee No. 6)

One of our respondents described being in a state of constant anxiety that he is able to endure.

»I think that I'm in a state of constant anxiety, that is, I'm in a state of constant minor nervousness, knowing that some troublesome situation might come, and I can't see it yet, and it would be good to see it. /.../ There comes a period when there is abnormal pressure. Here, however, I think that it is up to some personality traits, that you are still capable of handling it. I would like to say that I have a special recipe, but I do not. I find sports very important, to have a physically fit body that enables me to endure the physical part of these efforts. /.../ I talk to other entrepreneurs to see how they address this issues, and most of the time you find out we all roughly have the same issues.« (Interviewee No. 11)

Affect, depends of course, also on the concrete situation. What is important, is that entrepreneurs know how to listen to their emotions, and yet not be become overwhelmed by it. We could say it is a part of their metacognition. An entrepreneur explained:

»It can be [change] to the better, and you can see right away that it will get better. Or on the contrary, you see that many things that you've been building will collapse. Emotions are always there, there are emotions in every decision. Emotions show you

something, you have to take them into account in the sense that you realize - I'm sad because it's like that, it makes me angry. To know why. But in the end, you have to get over it or if your emotions are telling you something, you listen and pay more attention. When making a decision, you also have to take into account that you are in an emotional state. Self-awareness - I'm in such an emotional state that you realize you are and maybe wait a day or so. You need some self-awareness.» (Interviewee No. 5)

The self-awareness helps entrepreneurs to foster emotional distance. *»Many things are difficult and tiring«* (Interviewee No. 5). A thing that could help overcome the obstacles and manage negative emotions is also holding focus on your vision and the end goal you want to achieve, while staying flexible to achieve it.

»If you know what you are doing, what your vision is, and you are not so focused on individual steps or fixed plans, but rather focus on the end result and believe in it, then this helps significantly. Faith in this vision.« When there is an obstacle, he says to himself: *» "Ok, fine, but we will get there, maybe it's better this way and the road will be less bumpy". It's a mindset, I don't know where it came from, but I think I'm very open. These are constant changes that you have to make and you can't have fixed plans.«* (Interviewee No. 5)

It is harder to regulate emotions when the enterprise represents *»an extension of your personality«*, as one of our respondents expressed himself. And we identified one type of change specifically, that makes it harder for entrepreneurs to hold the emotional distance. Business is just business, until it isn't. Relationships within the entrepreneurial team or with employees bear high power to break the emotional distance.

»You take an integrated view [when the enterprise is an extension of your personality]. Every risk and shock, the negative outcomes - I processed it very personally. When the first people started quitting, it was like being dumped by a partner. It was like they rejected me as a person because I embodied the project and everything they believed in...until they didn't anymore. These were powerful things and I experienced them catastrophically.« (Interviewee No. 6)

This experience, however, pertained to the beginnings of interviewee' No. 6 entrepreneurial path. With accumulation of experience, it gets easier from the point of view of managing emotions.

»What I have learned through the years about emotions is that – the more problems you experience, the tougher your skin gets. /.../ When some very critical change happens to you, for example, a senior employee resigns. The first time it happens to you, you don't sleep for three days. It's an unknown, it's your first time with this situation - how will we manage without him? It's impossible! In the end, you get through it somehow, you move on to the next situation and solve it. The second time

this situation happens to you, you don't sleep for a day. The third time it happens to you, you say okay, I've seen this before, this is what it's going to look like; it will be difficult, we will have such and such challenges. But I know that in three months, half a year, a year, we know that we won't have any more problems. You have a lot of emotions, but you also have this rational experience of knowing that you had the same emotions and you were okay. And because it happened to you twice, and you were okay, even if it was different than you imagined, it reduces your stress when you find yourself in such situation the third time. The stress is never zero, but it decreases.» (Interviewee No. 4)

4.4.2.4 Practicing change

The accumulation of experience with change has multiple effects in relation to change readiness. Being put in a similar situation before enables you to learn. Consequently, on one hand influences how one deals with emotions, on the other it helps create the scenarios that could happen, and make better use of one's intuition. As explicated above, experience can also build entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

»You have to see it [a situation] a few times to be able to say: ok, if it didn't succeed this time, it will next time; or something else will work out. Very few things are life or death, or are so critical that they mean the end of the business. Yes, failure is always painful. It's not like the pain never goes away. On one side you mature emotionally and on the other side you are - I don't know if I would call it maturation, you are simply stronger - because you have gone through tough situations; you are able to alienate yourself from the problem and move on and you don't go back. One of the things, of course, is that you have to analyze, you have to do a retrospective, but at some point you have to disconnect from what didn't go right, but also from what went right. So that you don't think about "what if?"« (Interviewee No. 4)

One of our respondents made a parallel with sports, saying: *»If you go train under certain circumstances, you will grow in those circumstances«* and you learn to be *»comfortable being uncomfortable«*. (Interviewee No. 8)

The accumulation of experience with change help entrepreneurs to make better use of their intuition.

“Now I rely a lot on my intuition. That means I'm a little old, I'm 50 years old. Now you simply know that you have already seen so many things and that [processing] goes out of the conscious cognitive system and you automatically react to some things – in such cases you can rely on intuition. So, in areas where you already have some experience from before and you can rely on it. That helps. I quite frequently rely on my intuition now, and in fact I often receive feedback that I should rely on it even more. /.../ I really have a feeling for certain things. If I have experience, I rely on

intuition. When it comes to decisions, you get things done faster; "look, it will surely be so and so. Let's do it like that." It can also sometimes shorten some cycle. /.../ In areas where I am not sure, I am different; I am more careful, I listen to others.« (Interviewee No. 5)

Intuition that results from experience builds entrepreneurs' metacognition and burn fewer cognitive resources compared to substantive analytical processing of information. It does not only affect cognitive resources, but can have wider positive effects, as for example shortening of cycles in entrepreneurial process - if the intuition is correct, of course.

4.4.2.5 *Fostering social network*

We identify fostering network as important to attaining entrepreneurs' change readiness. The role of the network serves three general functions – to help interpret the reality, to distribute the psychological burden, and as a resource. The types of resources that are drawn from entrepreneur's social network usually differ throughout the lifespan of entrepreneurial career.

The first function the social network can serve is the creation of »shared reality« or social reality. The interpretation of reality happens in discussions with members of the entrepreneurial team or close co-workers. Secondly, this network serves for distribution of psychological burden. The psychological burden is lowered primarily by knowing that one is not alone on the entrepreneurial path (members of the entrepreneurial team share that burden), and secondly by discussing matters that are usually emotionally draining.

»A corporate disaster was happening. We never went through these stories so that everything was on me, there was always at least one other person around, and everything that happened, this interpretation of reality was a little more lenient. We knew how to forgive each other and react to the worst possible things. /.../ it's something shared, like a shared reality.« (Interviewee No. 6)

And last but not least, the network represents a source of advice, knowledge, and other resources relevant in the situation at hand that enable greater business success.

»I try to talk to people, preferably to the ones smarter than me. It helps to have someone to grind your thoughts with. It is most valuable when you have such people. If you are a director, this circle is limited for you, but it helps me to have a couple of people here with whom you can relate and move to a more rational side. Maybe someone sheds some light on something you're (not) seeing at the moment, especially if the situation is emotional.« (Interviewee No. 5)

Referring to »walking the line« mentioned earlier, entrepreneur can rely on his social network, when the business is endangered, and bankruptcy could happen:

»Perhaps the most important is knowing the importance of your network. If I am gone tomorrow [business-wise], I have ten people I can call, to get me involved in some project within a week, so I can continue to maintain the material status that I've grown accustomed to, and might find it harder to give up in this period of my life [compared to more earlier periods of his entrepreneurial career].« (Interviewee No. 6)

While in earlier periods of our interlocutor's entrepreneurial life the material status was not as important, the role of one's social network is always important, just the resources that you draw from it change along the lifespan of the business.

»The network is always generational. When we started, the importance of the network in that generation was more related to searching for co-workers - we practically started as students, and at that time we had access to students of our age, but they had a different view of risks, of what they were willing to risk...they made excellent colleagues in some other companies. Today it is related to development. Not even business development, but a different kind of cooperation. You used to look for colleagues, now investors, other entrepreneurs who help you with your business or otherwise.« (Interviewee No. 6)

4.4.3 Allocation of entrepreneur's cognitive resources in the process of change

We payed attention to how entrepreneurs allocate their cognitive resources, between the two phases of the change process – the first phase being before change happens, and the second when change happens onwards.

Commenting on our findings respective of two types of change readiness presented in Section 2.3.2 – the psychological, and the operational readiness, - we can say the following. The first finding regarding entrepreneurs' cognitive resources in the process of change is that they do not have a problem with change in sense of psychological change readiness – they know change is needed, they do not perceive it negatively, they are psychologically change ready. The question is not whether or not to change, but rather what is the right direction, what kind of change will serve them best when the unknown future arrives.

»What I find most important is that you are responsible for making changes happen, even if it is not obvious to others that these changes are necessary. And this is the hardest part, you have to convince others that changes are necessary. You have to give them context. That's really the main part [that consumes energy]. (Interviewee No. 4)

Instead of spending cognitive resources on psychological change readiness, entrepreneurs spend it on operational change readiness, making different scenarios and action plans (see Section 4.4.2.2 Making scenarios). This is where the majority of cognitive resources are

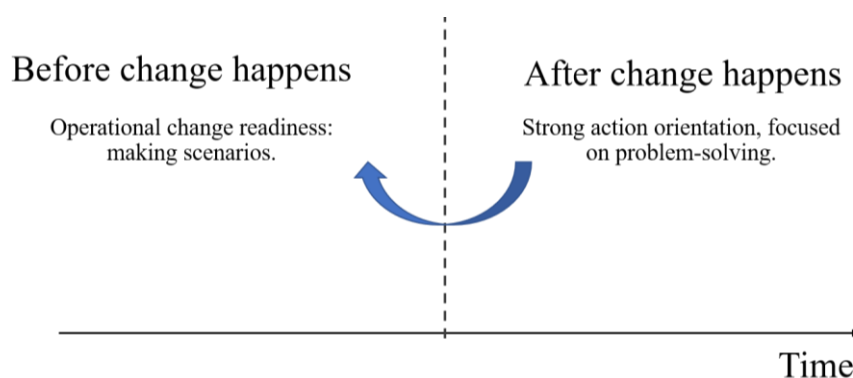
spent before the change arrives. When change arrives, entrepreneurs are very action oriented. They are focused on solving the problem, however this focus is present also when making scenarios, where they try to anticipate what the problem will be. Figure 12 presents the emphasis of cognitive resources consumption in each of the two phases.

Entrepreneurs constantly aim to act ahead of change. One of the respondents explained:

»There is no room for feelings, you just have to [do it/change]. If not, you're in trouble. We were in trouble when we didn't have the material. There were bad feelings. You feel worst in a situation when you are powerless, unable to influence. This was definitely the case with this material, because the suppliers did not have the material. You don't have the material, you can't get it, you can't work. It is precisely this helplessness - this is what we are afraid of. That's why we have to look ahead and introduce changes, think ahead so that we are surprised as little as possible. It always surprises us, but we aim to be surprised as few times as possible.«
(Interviewee No. 1)

The virtue is to predict correctly what will happen in the future, for the actions executed before change to be useful. As mentioned one of our respondents, this could be extremely hard when indices are weak. If the prediction was false acting in advance could mean just spending resources. As time passes new information about the upcoming future are revealed. The entrepreneur's dilemma is basically *Do I have enough information to act?* as acting correctly before competition, brings competitive advantage.

Figure 12: Consumption of cognitive resources before and after change happens



Note. The blue arrow denotes entrepreneurs' tendency to act before change happens.

Source: Own work

As entrepreneurs start to act, a fair share of efforts, and thus resources, is spent on *»convincing others that changes are necessary«* (Interviewee No. 4). In the process of change, the implementation represents an important resource-burner.

The importance and urgency are two key factors to be considered. Importance means if an entrepreneur can detect which change is important – *»what is in the crystal ball«*

(Interviewee No. 8). Urgency could mean that an entrepreneur wrongly detected which change was important. When an entrepreneur correctly foresees the future, he can identify what is important, act ahead of change, and prevent urgent situations. When something is urgently necessary actually means that he or she did not anticipate correctly.

»/.../ how much time you really have to make a decision. Do we have to make a decision right away - today, tomorrow and let's move on, whatever happens - or do we have time; we know it will have to be done, but we have one week, one month; we can take a few more steps. This awareness of how urgent the matter is. One is importance, the other is urgency. How urgent is the matter? To be aware of both; maybe something is urgent, but it's not that important, but since it's urgent, you have to do it right away. But the thing may be important, but not so urgent, maybe it's okay; you have one week; you think about this time horizon. That helps too. Once you're in one situation and you have to react, all these things get a little blurry.«
(Interviewee No. 5)

We can differentiate between a situation when entrepreneur has more time on his hands versus a situation that offers him less time. In a situation where the entrepreneur has more time, and is well ahead of change, one of our respondents explained:

»There isn't always a sharp dividing line between preparation and planning and implementation. Often the solution lies in erasing this border. I think a lot - if I see something I put it in my head; I have fifty things open in my head until I close them. If someone tells me something or I hear about something, I put it in my head and start thinking. /.../ let's try it, some prototype, I personally have to try it – what if? How would it be? I try to do some simulation; I call my colleagues, we say we will try, we make a prototype, the designer will make some changes; there are many methods you can use to get feedback. You can test, if it's a matter that concerns customers, you bring them in for testing. In short, you try it with those people who will be affected by this change. Only after you get feedback you move on to implementation. /.../ You get to a certain point, you have a certain result, and then in two weeks you look again, you check everything again. Then in the next point you already take into account all the changes that have taken place.« (Interviewee No. 5)

When entrepreneur has more time on his hands the process of change is usually not linear in terms of steps taken, because of possible constant corrections depending on how events unfold. As we have already mentioned, flexibility is a must, and this applies to allocation of entrepreneur's cognitive resources as well.

In a scenario when there is less time, and change is necessary, entrepreneurs' action tendency is profound. Our respondents explained:

»When change is needed, we think it needs to be done slowly. This is often a mistake. If the situation changes by 50% or 100%, you have to, too [change for 50 % or 100%]. Immediately. There has to be a lot of communication, seeing what it means. But you have to go as fast as possible, if possible to measure it in days. If you are fast, you have a significant competitive advantage over others who need more time. That's how we managed to do a lot of things. By quickly reacting to changes. /.../ When you immediately react to change, you have a crazy amount of competitive advantage.« (Interviewee No. 5)

»In this VUCA world, as the expression is nowadays for this high volatility world, you don't have that time, because basically you are constantly under the fly, you make decisions. All these scenarios rarely exist on paper - they are in your head. You get up and go put out the fire. While we are talking, colleagues are writing to me - you are constantly putting some fire out. You don't have time to do some preparation, to think, because it's happening too fast.« (Interviewee No. 11)

»In this kind of situation, you only have two options - fight or flight. I'm more inclined to fight. Let's see what the options are, what we can do, what I can do, what the others [work colleagues] can do. /.../ [You are] preparing a plan of what can be done and putting it into action as soon as possible.« (Interviewee No. 11)

To »fight« it is good to be empowered by a pre-prepared scenario. Despite we update the pre-prepared scenarios with new information, analyses made in advance serve as an important resource, as we do not have time to think when the matter is urgent.

4.5 Discussion

Entrepreneurs are individuals who need to cope with change well, to thrive in the nowadays volatile business environment. Despite change is immanent to the entrepreneurial processes, the entrepreneurship literature has not yet dealt with how and why entrepreneurs attain change readiness, and why are they able to cope with change so well. While the change readiness concept strongly permeates the change management and organizational behavior literature, it has been absent from the entrepreneurship literature. The reason probably lies in the fact that change readiness is not a problem for entrepreneurs, they are change ready per-se. However, knowing the reasons why this is the case, and how they attain change readiness can serve as an important contribution of knowledge to the change management literature, and can have useful implications for scholars in other disciplines. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to learn from entrepreneurs, and contribute to the change management literature, that still struggles with the issue of how to attain employee change readiness.

Second, our research contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurship process by exploring cognitive resources in terms of their allocation in the process of coping with

change. Addressing the call expressed in the discussion on COR theory on the importance of the allocation of cognitive resources and the loss of resources created by threat and actual loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014), we contribute to the understanding of a change coping process as a whole and to research on change readiness outcomes that have been “perhaps the least theorized and least studied aspects of organizational change” (Weiner, 2009, p.71).

Throughout our study we focused on entrepreneurial cognition - on how entrepreneurs attain change readiness (RQ1), and how they allocate their cognitive resources in the process of change (RQ2).

Our findings show that in the process of change, entrepreneurs channel their cognitive resources directly to problem solving, as they already are psychologically change ready. In other words, they do not have to deal with the change »message« of why change is needed, and the negative emotions people often experience with ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding change.

An individual that needs to deal with emotional distress resulting from a change event is undoubtedly in a disadvantaged position compared to someone who is not distracted by the emotional distress, and can thus focus on instrumental action that will result in embracing the change and its successful implementation. Such an individual can deplete its cognitive resources on emotional coping, being left with too little resources to put into problem solving, and successful change adaptation.

Entrepreneurs perceive change as a norm, and as a challenge that in the first place, needs attention and action to be addressed, rather than something that elicits emotional distress. The entrepreneurs' perception of change depends on some personal and cognitive characteristics typical for entrepreneurs that influences the perception of risk, and positive lookout into the future, such as illusion of control, overoptimism, and overconfidence bias. These are dispositional features, that help them not only to foster more positive attitude toward change, but also preserve their cognitive resources, as they are mental shortcuts. The answer to the questions *why* and *how* are entrepreneurs able to cope with change and channel their energy directly to problem-solving in part depends on cognitive dispositions that we cannot easily influence. Such features of cognition are deeply engraved, and cannot be transferred to other individuals so they could cope with change (as successfully) as entrepreneurs do.

In our empirical research we sought for tactics that could serve as advice to other individuals to better preserve their cognitive resources in the change process, and thus cope with change more successfully, while experiencing less stress along the way. Several lessons can be learned from entrepreneurs' cognitive positions concerning the change process. The answer to the question *how entrepreneurs attain change readiness* starts with the notion that as entrepreneurs' psychological change readiness is basically dispositional, their change readiness primarily revolves around operational change readiness.

4.5.1 Making scenarios and being ahead of change

Entrepreneurs enact on being operationally change ready by making scenarios of what might happen in the future. In the literature, this is described as one of the key cognitive processes of entrepreneurial cognition, called *off-line evaluation*, which means to evaluate the information and alternatives without implementing these alternatives (Ucbasaran, 2004). These scenarios are happening in their minds, as they require to be updated with new information constantly due to fast changing, volatile entrepreneurial environment. In this phase we are speaking about change readiness.

However, entrepreneurs tend to be ahead of change and create the future, to gain competitive advantage. Which means, they start to implement the scenario that they think will serve them best for what is coming. In this case, change readiness turns into coping, as entrepreneurs adopt certain behaviors to be better prepared for the upcoming changes. This tactic for coping change brings together both, the resource investment and conservation principles of COR theory. When making changes in advance entrepreneurs spend their resources in order to preserve resources in the future – when everyone else will be spending them as the change will arrive. It is an investment for the future. It as well answers the question of how entrepreneurs allocate their cognitive resources. When the investments of resources – that are at the same time expenditures – are more evenly distributed along the change process it is easier to cover resource losses. If an entrepreneur loses a large amount of cognitive resources at one point in time, that has more detrimental or even fatal effects. Not to mention, there is usually a high turbulence of changes happening and an entrepreneur needs to invest his or her resources in multiple changes at once. For that reason, enough cognitive resources need to be at his or her disposal. It is relevant to refer to the second and third corollary of the COR theory – the resource loss spiral, and resource gain spiral. If we correctly predict and act ahead of change this means competitive advantage and leads to resource gain spiral, while if we wrongly predict or (do not) act we are in a disadvantaged position that leads to a loss spiral.

As our respondents mentioned, incremental is better than radical change from the resource point of view. However, when incremental is no longer possible, radical change needs to take place. In terms of adaptability and change, being forced to make a radical change in essence means that entrepreneur has failed to assess the importance of the upcoming change early enough.

The key knowledge to effectively allocate resources, is to know if and when to act. The more we are ahead of change, the harder it is to predict, and act correctly. The closer we are to the change, more information is revealed, and easier it is to predict, and act correctly. As time reveals unknowns, this information is available to our competition as well, so the competitive advantage is not as big as if we predict correctly and act accordingly well ahead of change. The timing is thus crucial. Experience can help to address the issue of if and when to act.

4.5.2 Practicing change

With accumulation of experience with change, entrepreneurs build their expertise concerning coping change. An important product of experience that can help decide how and when to act concerning change is intuition. Intuition has proven to be an effective heuristic in identifying opportunities and finding ideas (Kickul and Gundry, 2011). An entrepreneur can, with the help of intuition (following signals in the crowd of unorganized information that is processed in a holistic way (Olson, 1985)) recognize an opportunity that others have overlooked (Sadler-Smith, 2010), and made faster and more efficient decisions (Allinson, Chell & Hayes, 2000).

Intuition can serve as expertise, or foresight (Sinclair, 2011). *Intuitive foresight* uses a wide spectre of information, that include expertise, experience, and fleeting exposure, to predict what is coming. *Intuitive expertise* is based on rapid recognition of patterns, that have formed with experience through time. Decisions that »have once demanded conscious, deliberate, and explicit thought, do not demand it any more. What once demanded a lot of thinking and planning, not becomes obvious« (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 526). We find entrepreneurs often rely on intuition when deciding which signals concerning change are important and which scenario to go with. In this case intuition serves as both, expertise, and foresight. From the perspective of COR theory, relying on intuitive expertise, and intuitive foresight importantly preserves our cognitive resources in the change process. It concerns the question of allocation of resources as well, as the entrepreneur uses the resources that have accumulated through his entrepreneurial career (experiences) to be able to spend less cognitive in a moment when he copes with change. Having encountered a similar situation before is as well an antecedent to the representativeness bias. One cannot create a cognitive shortcut for making decisions in relation to a specific change, if he or she hasn't found himself or herself in a situation similar to the focal change before. Thus, with the amount of change experienced we increase the possibility to make use of the representativeness bias. Zacharakis and Shepherd (2001) proposed a positive correlation between experience and overconfidence bias. Corollary 3 states that as individuals gain resources, they are in a better position to invest and gain additional resources. Intuition of expert entrepreneurs that is built with experience, and biases that are based on experience, apply to this corollary.

Intuition as expertise and foresight is one aspect of why »practice makes perfect« when it comes to coping change. Another aspect is minimization of negative feelings deriving from not expecting change. By experiencing change often, change becomes the norm and is expected to happen again. Entrepreneurs do not have a problem with the element of surprise and aim to foresee change. However, this is more relevant for non-entrepreneurs that have a problem with change. Experiencing it often minimizes the surprise, and also, as mentioned, accumulates experiences, building knowledge of how to react to change. But sometimes, even when one is not surprised by change, change can still elicit negative emotions.

4.5.3 Emotion regulation

Entrepreneurship is an emotional experience, because of the extent of personal consequences tied up in the fate of the enterprise, the passion that drives entrepreneurs to pursue their goals, the time pressures under which decisions need to be made, and general uncertainty of the entrepreneurial environment (Baron, 2008; Cardon et al., 2012; Mueller et al., 2017). We can witness an emerging body of work on affect in entrepreneurship field, dealing with the role of affect in entrepreneurial judgements and behaviors (e.g. Cardon et al., 2005, 2009, 2012; Drnovsek et al., 2016; Williamson, Drencheva, & Wolfe, 2022). Research shows that emotions can have positive effects on entrepreneurial outcomes, while extreme emotions, poorly-timed emotions, and large fluctuations in emotions harm entrepreneurial outcomes (Baron, 2007; Uy et al., 2017) and suggest entrepreneurs should regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation is the application of strategies that increase, maintain, or decrease the intensity, duration, and/or quality of an emotion (Gyurak et al., 2011). Surprisingly, the research on entrepreneurs' emotion regulation is scarce. It mainly focuses on emotions after the entrepreneurial endeavour has ended (Foo et al., 2014; Fang He et al., 2018; Shepherd, 2003; Shepherd et al., 2011). Our study illuminates how emotion regulation influences coping with change which is essential to entrepreneurial process.

To date, emotion regulation strategies have been largely grouped into three different classes: (1) attentional control, (2) cognitive reappraisal, and (3) response modulation (Webb et al., 2012). Attentional control involves focusing one's attention away from an emotion-eliciting stimulus (e.g. thinking of something else than what negative consequences change might bring), and response modulation involves altering emotion expressive behavior (e.g. not showing disappointment as one sees a negative change event will happen). We found neither of the two strategies to be used by our respondents or could serve well when it comes to change readiness and coping with change. We found that expert entrepreneurs understand their emotions well, and due to the metacognition, they do not have to suppress their emotions. In fact, that would be wrong, as emotions signal whether the situation is problematic or benign. Moreover, entrepreneurs being dispositionally optimistic, perceiving something as negative probably bears stronger signal, compared to if a pessimist perceives something as negative. Also, intuition can only be used by listening to one's feelings. Entrepreneurs' goal is to think of all possible negative scenarios that might happen, instead of turning their attention away from these negative emotion-eliciting stimuli. Their virtue is not to be stressed by it.

Our results show that entrepreneurs practice cognitive reappraisal to cope change. Specifically, they perform emotional distancing, that represents a type of reappraisal – detached reappraisal. Detached reappraisal entails removing oneself from the emotional context presented and reframing the presented stimuli to reduce its potency. It necessitates a degree of separation from the emotional event, which is cognitively effortful. (Gurera & Isaacowitz, 2019). Entrepreneurs thus spend cognitive resources on emotion regulation to

prevent greater losses. Meaning, to be overwhelmed by emotions would represent a greater resource loss, disabling the entrepreneur to fully focus on problem-solving.

We could say we are facing a paradox: on one-hand entrepreneurs are prone to cognitive biases such as overconfidence and overoptimism that produce positive emotions, and influence a formation of positive expectations about the future. Yet on the other hand »everything is a crisis«, and the possible scenarios and solutions to the alternatives that the future might bring resemble a crisis management approach. An amended saying »hope for the best, prepare for what's coming, even if it is the worst« stands for entrepreneurs when it comes to change readiness and coping with change. But on a closer look, the two outlooks go hand in hand. We can think of dispositions of entrepreneurs such as overoptimism bias and overconfidence bias, and the elements of psychological capital – optimism, hope, self-efficacy, and resilience, as producing positive affect, that enables entrepreneurs to focus on the problem, and seek for the solutions to solve the problem, instead of dealing with themselves, and their negative emotions.

4.5.4 Fostering social support network

We identify fostering social network as the last strategy to foster change readiness, and improve coping with change. As explained in the Results section, social network serves three functions. First, to help interpret the reality, that mostly happens in discussions with members of the entrepreneurial team or close co-workers. Second, to distribute the psychological burden, that enacts by knowing that one is not alone on the entrepreneurial path (members of the entrepreneurial team share that burden), and secondly by discussing matters that are usually emotionally draining. The third function is as a resource of knowledge and advice, and non-emotional support. Nevertheless, social networks theory even predicts that entrepreneurs will be successful to the extent that they obtain adequate and timely resources through their social networks (Woodward, 1988). While building social network makes a tax on cognitive resources, at the same time represents an important source of resources, and enables gaining back short-term resources, that could help slow additional resource losses.

Research shows that entrepreneurs' social networks matter also for biases (Zhang & Cueto, 2017). For example, De Carolis et al. (2009) theorized and empirically confirmed that the extent of an entrepreneur's social network and personal capital would enhance shared attitudes and mental models, which in turn would increase illusion of control. De Carolis and Saporito (2006) proposed that the structural holes of social network could predict illusion of control and that the strength of network ties could predict representativeness bias.

All in all, fostering social network is an important factor for change readiness, and coping with change. As with experience, entrepreneur invest his resources throughout his career to build the social network, to draw resources from it when the opportunity or need arises. In

terms of allocation of cognitive resources, the investments are quite evenly distributed, and the greater the accumulation, the bigger the withdrawals can be, to better cope with change.

4.5.5 Limitations and future research opportunities

Although we have carefully conducted our data collection and analysis, our research has some limitations. Despite we discussed recent and not distant change events, the respondents' answers might have been compromised with recall bias. To mitigate the effects of possible recall bias, future research could employ in methods such as experience sampling method for participants to be able to report on their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and environmental context in real-time.

Qualitative research is also subject to limited generalizability. Our sample consists of successful entrepreneurs, who own innovative companies that experienced fast growth of their company. Based on their profile and cognitions, they are characterized as expert entrepreneurs. The literature distinguishes between different types of entrepreneurs, dependent of experiences, knowledge structures and entrepreneurial cognitive processes. Since novice and non-expert entrepreneurs (Zimmerman, 2006) differ from expert entrepreneurs in usually having fewer entrepreneurial experience, and possess less complex knowledge structures (Winkler, Fust & Jenert, 2016), they could differ in how they think about change, how they attain change readiness, and how they cope change.

We urged the entrepreneurs to bring to mind a recent negative event, despite they generally rarely assign the connotation to change events, and rather see them as challenges that need to be solved and will be solved. They did however pose additional questions of what type of change and explained some of their typology of changes. From this perspective we propose future research to further explore different types of changes in terms of changes that primarily involve people, and changes that primarily involve objects, as the former seems to have a higher emotional component and entrepreneurs might differ in their coping strategy with such changes.

In our research we theorize about how different biases typical for entrepreneurs such as overconfidence, overoptimism, and locus of control bias could affect the process of change readiness, and enable entrepreneurs to cope with change successfully. The aspect of biases and heuristics is important in the context of entrepreneurs' change readiness and coping. While we were able to touch the role of entrepreneurs' intuition as a heuristic in the change process, we were not able to explore cognitive biases through in-depth interviews. Despite the empirical exploration of cognitive biases was out of scope of our research, and nevertheless beyond the ultimate goal of our research, to offer some advice for non-entrepreneurs to cope with change more successfully, experimental research on cognitive biases in relation to change would contribute to the body of knowledge on the relationships between cognitive biases and change readiness and/or coping.

4.6 Conclusion

Our research examined entrepreneurs' ability to successfully deal with change, through the lens of entrepreneurial cognition. Specifically, we explored how they attain change readiness, and which strategies they employ to cope with change. Ultimately, we see the success of managing change to be the question of cognitive resources. First the sum of cognitive resources, and second the allocation of cognitive resources along the change process. Referring to the sum of cognitive resources, entrepreneurs typically possess some cognitive pre-dispositions in form of cognitive biases, such as optimism bias, or locus of control bias, that are in the perspective of change readiness not flaws, but resources. They enable entrepreneurs to perceive to be more change ready, as if they would not possess these biases, and second, they are mental shortcuts that preserve cognitive resources. Entrepreneurs are dispositionally psychologically change ready, not being distracted by the possible negative feelings that the negative change evokes, and they focus on problem-solving, and action. They channel their cognitive resources into operational change readiness, whereby they engage in forethought, making scenarios of what could happen. While some dispositional cognitive resources such as biases are hard to influence, we propose employees should learn the skill of self-regulation, practicing change, and fostering social network, to better cope with change. Drawing on COR theory, entrepreneurs create resource gain spirals, where initial cognitive positions enable them to gain more cognitive resources, and make them better equipped to fight resource losses that change brings.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Employee change readiness insists to be a challenging endeavour for practitioners, despite vast and largely noncontroversial literature on change management. This summoned us to further explore this interesting phenomenon, that has been qualitatively underexplored.

Because change readiness literature suffers from proliferation of concepts regarding change-related attitudes and conceptual confusion, we first conducted a review of our focal concept – change readiness - to establish firm ground for further theorizing. Individual change readiness is a positive and proactive attitude toward change, and a complex *process*, that iteratively updates through *cognitive* and *affective* evaluations, and can evolve throughout the timeline of change. It is not a *pre-change* attitude solely, as has been traditionally assumed (e.g. Armenakis et al., 2007; Bouckennooghe, Devos, & Van Den Broeck, 2009), but insists and can change during the change process. The framework that guided our research and is widely used in the literature is that of Holt, Armenakis, Feild, and Harris (2007). According to this framework, individual's change readiness is shaped by change content, context, process, and individual differences. We take all four elements of the framework to the individual level, and define them as follows. Change context is the perceived change turbulence (i.e. the perceived amount of other changes happening at the same time as the focal change). Change content is defined with three characteristics of a particular change initiative - the perceived impact the change has on one's job, the perceived relevance for an individual, and the perceived valence of the focal change. Change process is defined in terms of the process within an individual, where we find two dimensions – psychological and operational readiness. Individual differences are individuals' attributes that make some individuals more inclined to favor organizational changes than others. In our study, we deal with optimism personality trait, openness to new experience, past experience, and change identity.

One of our hunches (Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021) was that change readiness remains a key issue in praxis, because practitioners do not apply what vast and largely noncontroversial literature on change management, and specifically on change readiness, advocates. Our research suggests this could be the case. Organizations still do not communicate the change »message« properly. Consequently, employees seek for additional sources of information to help them in the process of sensemaking. Beside inquiring with co-workers and picking up rumours, one's affect can serve as an important source of information.

Affect matters

Affect is usually the first information humans receive, because we are evolutionary built that way. We draw on affect-as-information model (Clore & Storbeck, 2006; Schwarz & Clore, 2007, Schwarz, 2012) which posits that affect is embodied information about valence and importance. Negative affect signals a problematic situation, whereas positive or neutral affect signals a benign situation. Affect is an integral part of change readiness attitude that

has been largely absent in change readiness research. For change readiness to form toward a specific change, it must first appear in the affective niche of an individual, or in other words the individual must care for the change – this is the relevance (importance) element of change content, and presents the beginning of change readiness process.

Our research finds that the change readiness process is comprised of psychological change readiness, and operational change readiness. Affect presents the main body of psychological change readiness. Psychological change readiness, as well as operational change readiness, both consume individuals' cognitive resources. In essence, the individual's success of coping with change and attaining change readiness depends on his or her cognitive resources. Conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) presents the main theory that we draw on.

Compared to non-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs significantly save their cognitive resources on psychological change readiness. Specific cognitive dispositions, and biases typical of entrepreneurial cognition, such as overoptimism, and overconfidence bias work in favor of attaining their psychological change readiness, because they produce an important by-product - positive affect. Valence and activation theories posit that affect carries directive properties which influence cognition. Negative affect leads to narrowing of attention to self-preservation (Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994), while positive affect relates to the broadening of psychological processes, such as divergent thinking (Fredrickson, 2001), or in our case of entrepreneurs, off-line evaluation of different possible scenarios. »Make-happy« type of biases such as overoptimism, and overconfidence (Zhang & Cueto, 2017) reduce anxiety and depression, and increase action (Sharot, 2011). Taken altogether, these biases contribute to entrepreneurs to be able to put their focus on change, and problem-solving, instead of on themselves.

Parallel to overoptimism bias, our study finds that realists contemplate more than optimists, spending more cognitive resources on becoming psychologically change ready, and focusing on the self, instead of on change, and are less prone to action.

From the perspective of COR theory, these biases that produce positive affect are not cognitive flaws (systematic errors in decision making; Kahneman & Tversky, 1996), but rather resources that preserve change recipient's cognitive resources, and enable individuals to allocate one's resources in operational change readiness, and action. Moreover, these affective benefits could lead to better well-being and performance outcomes (Puri & Robinson, 2007).

A sense of control

Entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs both employ in sensemaking, dealing with the question "what this now means?" and "why/is change needed?". Employees make sense about what management is preparing, while entrepreneurs think about what the external environment "is preparing" – what to expect. Entrepreneurs forethink about scenarios on how to act, working

on operational change readiness. Employees also think about how to prepare in an operational sense, but the choices they have are far more limited compared to the ones of entrepreneurs, who hold the scissors and canvas in their hands on how they are going to address the change. Comparing the results of study 2 and 3, we find that entrepreneurs, as well as employees in large companies take the proposed change as a fact, and realize that there is no point in resisting it. The sense of control they have over the situation however, is significantly higher in entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs' sense of control partly comes from the illusion of control bias typical for entrepreneurial cognition, but also from high self-efficacy, that is with expert entrepreneurs supported by extant experience in the entrepreneurship domain, that entails numerous changes of different types. While one part of entrepreneurs' sense of control derives from subjective perceptions, on the other hand they indeed have more choices at their disposal on which steps to take to address the change situation. So, they objectively have more control over the situation, in terms of action choices. Making scenarios gives entrepreneurs a stronger feeling of control. In that sense, a defined change process further helps entrepreneurs to gain control. When the individual has a sense of control, that influences affect. Uncertainty, as we find, produces negative affect, while control over the situation produces positive affect.

Entrepreneurs see change as imposed on them by the environment, and employees see it as being imposed by management. This is an important difference. We find that the affective component of change-related attitude is emphasized, when relationships are involved. If there is to be one type of change that can throw entrepreneurs off-balance in an emotional sense, it is the change that involves relationships with people close to them (e.g. close members of the work team). Thus, in the case of employees (Study 2), changes imposed on them are automatically conditioned by human relationships, so this context presents an important source of affect. And affect, is used as information in the change process.

The lesson deriving from these findings would be that relationships among employees are of extreme importance and signal that good relationships among employees are a basis for making organizational changes because of their high power to elicit affective reactions.

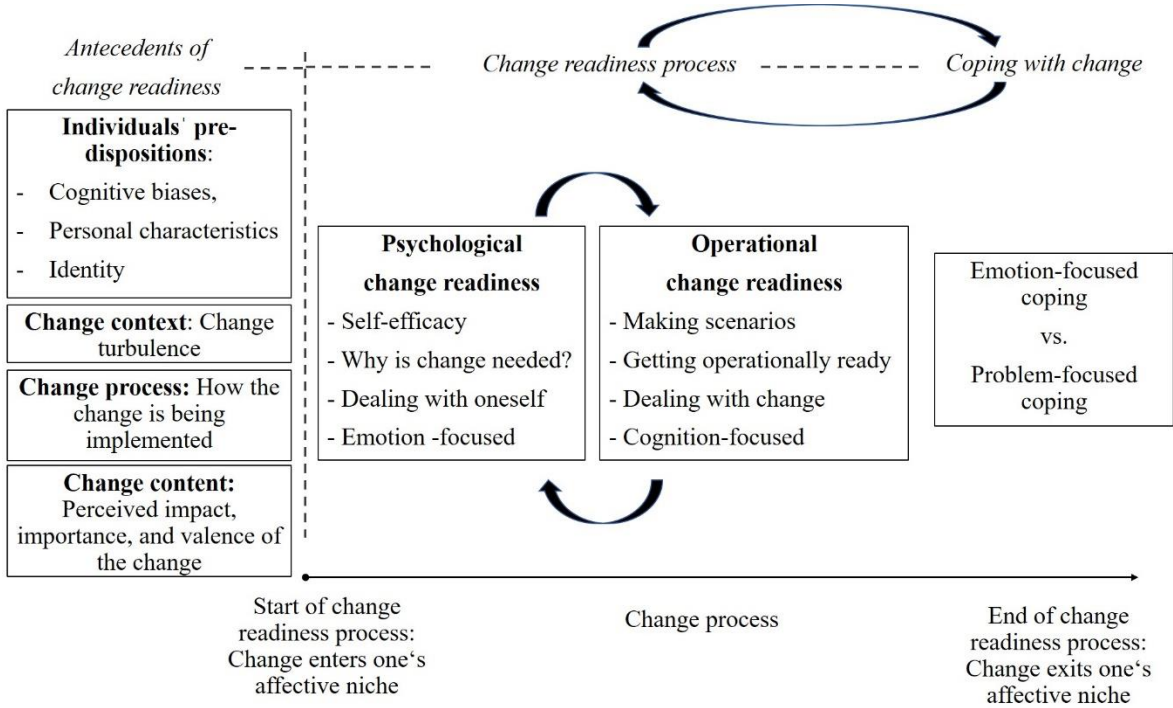
Metacognition and self-regulation

Oftentimes entrepreneurs encounter negative situations that elicit negative feelings. What is important, is that entrepreneurs know how to listen to their emotions, and yet not become overwhelmed by it. We could say it is a part of their metacognition. Feelings provide important information, and having developed higher-level cognition, expert entrepreneurs can exploit the benefits of their intuition. At the same time, however, entrepreneurs are able to distance themselves from their feelings and view the situation from a third-person perspective.

Not being able to create emotional distance, they could not perform the off-line evaluations of possible scenarios as effectively as they do, because it is important to think of different negative scenarios, and emotions must not get in the way. The question is how to foster the ability to create emotional distance and rationalize the change-coping process. One needs to be »good with their feelings«, even if they are negative, and process them so that they are not a burden. Individuals can lean on their social network or team members to process their feelings and distribute the emotional burden. In relation to creating emotional distance, entrepreneurs have repeatedly highlighted the role of experience. Experience give the chance to build metacognition and to learn how to self-regulate. Figure 13 is a synthesis of our work and depicts a framework of individual change readiness and coping with change.

For the understanding of why entrepreneurs are so successful in dealing with change the categorization of change readiness process into psychological and operational change readiness and understanding the interactions between them is vital. Entrepreneurs are dispositionally psychologically change ready, not being distracted by the possible negative feelings, thus they can focus on attaining operational readiness, that in turn reinforces their psychological readiness. Since individuals must first resolve their psychological readiness to be able to effectively channel their cognitive resources to becoming operationally ready, the question is how can we help people to become more psychologically change ready. We propose employees should learn the skill of self-regulation, practicing change, and fostering social network, to better cope with change.

Figure 13: Individual change readiness, and coping with change framework

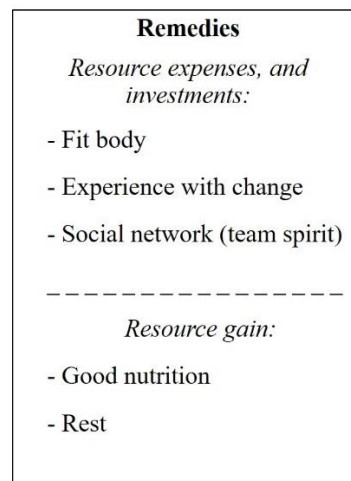


Source: Own work

Keeping fit

To be able to withstand the efforts to cope with change, one's physical fitness is of utmost importance. The body-mind connection has long been known in neuroscience (Barrett, 2017). Sustaining a fit body, good nutrition, and taking proper rest represent extremely important supporting factors to coping change and change readiness. It affects emotion regulation and also the feeling of control. If we feel weak, we will certainly not be ready for new change challenges. Figure 14 summarizes remedies individuals can employ into, to cope with change more successfully. All the remedies we propose target individual's ability to regulate emotions. From the COR theory perspective good nutrition and rest present cognitive resource gains, while fit body, experience with change, and building and sustaining social support network or team spirit are at the same time resource expenses, and also investments to spend less cognitive resources in future change endeavours.

Figure 14: Remedies to cope with change successfully



Source: Own work

The coping strategy

People employ in different strategies when coping with change. In fact, we could say that there are as many strategies as there are people. However, we find the typology based on transactional model of Lazarus & Folkman (1984) to be most useful for our study. This typology groups coping strategies into problem-focused, and emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping is directed at problem solving, thus targeting the source of the stress, while emotion-focused coping is directed at managing the stress that was triggered by the situation.

We find that entrepreneurs, compared to non-entrepreneurs that participated in our study employ in problem-solving coping strategy, and minimize the emotion-coping strategy approach. The entrepreneurs' problem-solving strategy directed toward action originates

from the strength of belief that they are capable to cope with change, and possible negative outcomes. The self-efficacy is connected with the sense of control they have over the situation. The cognitive biases we discuss in this dissertation work in favor to pursue this strategy.

Whether the problem-focused strategy would be the right strategy of coping with change must always be put in context. When the negative consequences of the change are imminent and the employee does not have a chance to influence the situation to change, emotion-focused strategies such as positive reappraisal might be more beneficial than problem-focused coping. In such situations, when a loss is irrevocable, and the situation or condition permanent, emotion-focused strategies, such as positive reappraisal are associated with enhanced mental health (Carr & Pudrovskaja, 2007). The goal, and a key to employ in problem-focused coping is not to be burdened by negative emotions. And for many people, this means an emotion-focused strategy needs to be used before proceeding with the problem-focused strategy.

We conclude change readiness and successful coping to be about cognitive resources and how one is able to manage one's cognitive resources. Self-regulation plays an important part as our study among expert entrepreneurs finds.

Theoretical and practical contributions

We make several contributions. Our research makes contributions to change management literature, change readiness literature, and entrepreneurship literature.

We contribute to the change readiness literature and resistance to change literature by providing the first review that juxtaposes the two concepts that have been used simultaneously in past literature, depending on which valence was more appropriate – change readiness for positive, and resistance for negative. We analyze their dimensions that are commonly the source of ambiguity about the concepts meaning, review their evolution, and compare them to similar concepts. We clarify the concepts, and provide the answer to the question whether they represent two opposite poles of the same continuum, as past research assumed. This will help further research to use the concepts appropriately, as their meanings have been resolved. Also, our findings bear insights for future research on the integration of these two concepts.

Our contribution also lies in proposing the building blocks for future measurement development. Past research has not been able to grasp the affective dimension of change readiness, because the existing measures focus only on the cognitive dimension – the beliefs one has about the focal change. This might be the reason that change readiness did not have the power to predict subsequent change-related behaviors and the success of change implementation. In that sense, the practitioners were not even well-equipped to properly measure employees' change readiness attitudes. Another flaw of the existing measures is they are bipolar, and as such not able to measure ambivalence. Ambivalence needs to be

considered, as change is one of the major triggers of ambivalence (Piderit, 1999), as also our study among employees detected. The orientations of change readiness attitude dimensions are often not aligned (the cognition and affect dimension), or the misalignment can happen within the cognitive dimension, or within the affective dimension. We propose the future measure to combine change readiness and resistance to change as simultaneously present, orthogonal concepts, that happen when change triggers psychological arousal. Behavior should be excluded from the focal concepts and treated as a probable outcome. To be able to navigate employees' change readiness in the desired direction, we first need an appropriate measure that will correctly reflect the attitude we aim to measure. Because change readiness is a process - and an attitude that can change throughout the course of a change, - organizations must realize the need to measure and navigate employees' change readiness accordingly, rather than paying attention to it only at the beginning of the change process.

We contribute to the change management literature by applying the COR theory (Schwarz, 2012), to better understand the success in the change process, on the individual level. Ultimately, the success of the change process on the individual level is a question of cognitive resources. First, the sum of cognitive resources, and second the allocation of the sum of resources among different phases of the change process. Whereby our ability to regulate cognitive resources is inextricably linked to affect.

We address the call from Rafferty and colleagues (2013) to fill the void in change readiness literature by exploring the affective dimension of change readiness. We contribute to the change readiness literature by explaining the role of affect, and how it relates to change readiness framework – change content, process, context, and individual differences, and how it influences change readiness process. Affect presents the source of change readiness attitude, and is originally not a consequence of one's cognitive positions toward change. Understanding this role of affect in change readiness is important because it changes the perspective on how we should treat employees to achieve their change readiness. Current literature and practices focus on communicating properly "the message" – targeting five beliefs employees hold about a specific change. Getting "the message" undoubtedly works in favour of change readiness, but as praxis shows, it is not enough. Organizations continue to struggle to achieve employees change readiness. We believe affect is the missing piece of this puzzle, and organizations should start to target employees' change readiness by targeting their affect, not just beliefs. Therefore, we propose as remedies to cope with change more successfully the ones that target emotion regulation, such as having a fit body, social support network, and experience with change which enable to build metacognition and emotional distance. We show empirical support for a process-based change readiness model proposed by Stevens (2013), who sees change readiness as a function of contextualized iterative affective and cognitive evaluations, forming under the influence of individual, collective, and contextual factors.

We contribute to the entrepreneurship literature by introducing the concept of change readiness. Despite attaining change readiness is not an issue for entrepreneurs which is probably the reason it has not been given attention in the entrepreneurship literature so far, the process of coping with change is immanent to other processes that are subject of the entrepreneurship literature (e.g. exploration of opportunities, dealing with failure, entrepreneurial persistence). We help explain the process of entrepreneurship in terms of allocation of cognitive resources. The question of allocation of cognitive resources is important as the entrepreneurial process is arduous (Liao & Welsch, 2004) and requires a continuation of effort to overcome obstacles (Cardon et al., 2009).

Limitations and future research opportunities

Our study has some limitations. Beside the issues that can be typically assigned to qualitative research, the two qualitative studies that we compare have different timing. The study among employees in large companies was conducted before COVID-19 pandemic, while the study among entrepreneurs was made after the pandemic era. The Covid pandemic was a major event that influenced organizational lives and could change the expectations of people about change. As our study finds managing expectations is an important factor affecting change readiness, this presents a limitation of our study, and it would be interesting to repeat the study number 2 among employees after the Covid era, to observe if there are any differences and be able to compare both studies – among employees in large companies, and entrepreneurs – after Covid.

Our findings also open up alleys for future research. Ambivalence represents one such alley. Change is one of the major sources of ambivalence. Ambivalence creates a tension within the individual, that needs to be resolved. Future research should focus how to best address employee ambivalence to transform it into change readiness. First however, we suggest the ability to measure ambivalent attitude toward change as one of the building blocks of a potential new measurement that would allow quantitative research to capture ambivalence.

Identification presents another fruitful area for future research. The literature offers mixed results regarding organizational identification in relation to change readiness. Our study implies a detached attitude is better in ensuring emotional detachment. Further research is needed to resolve the dilemma, especially because organizational citizenship behavior that entails identification of employees with their organization is widely and strongly encouraged in organizations. Not only organizational identification, but one's identity in relation to change per se, should be further explored. Our research shows entrepreneurs' flexible or fluid identities can importantly help them cope with change.

Affect itself presents a wide and interesting alley for future research. Future studies should examine change readiness not only as cognitive phenomenon but also as affective one. Our research scratched the surface on how affect relates to change readiness, and how affect as information can influence employee change readiness. We aimed to create a shift in focus

of the change readiness literature from cognitive dimension of change readiness to affective dimension. Because affect might be the missing piece we were looking for to change readiness truly reflect one's capability to adopt the change. Affect serves as information in the change process, and is usually the first information one receives. In this vein it would be interesting to explore the primacy effect, and anchoring effect.

New methods that include gadgets to understand the workings of the human brain and can be used in real-time on participants present great potential to be used on tracking change readiness, especially in relation to cognitive resources and the affective dimension. As change readiness is a process it is best to be measured continuously, thus studies such as longitudinal qualitative studies and studies using experience sampling method would help us to better understand change readiness.

Expert entrepreneurs differ from other types of entrepreneurs in terms of entrepreneurial cognition. It would be interesting for future research to explore the learning effects in relation to coping with change by examining and comparing novice, experienced, and expert entrepreneurs.

Our research involved top-down changes imposed on employees. The process could be different with bottom-up changes. In terms of types of changes the difference between top-down and bottom-up is not the only alley interesting for future research. Our research implies that changes that primarily involve people elicit higher emotional component, compared to changes that primarily involve objects. Consistent with this, we find the role of the team spirit to be an important source of feelings, and of special importance in the process of individual's change readiness and coping with change. In this vein, research from Chênevert, Kilroy, and Bosak (2019) identified colleague support as a coping mechanism to mitigate the harmful effects of role stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload). They found colleague support moderates the relationship between role stressors and individual change readiness.

In relation to our research, their study is interesting because it also draws on Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and our findings about college support, our in our case fostering social support network, converge and find this factor to be instrumental for achieving individual change readiness. Prior research on social support as a direct precursor to change readiness has found a very weak association (Cunningham et al., 2002). However, it is difficult to isolate the particular source of support and a call for more precision in this regard has been raised (Lawrence & Callan, 2011). Our qualitative study was able to provide more precision and indicates that social support is a promising direction for future research.

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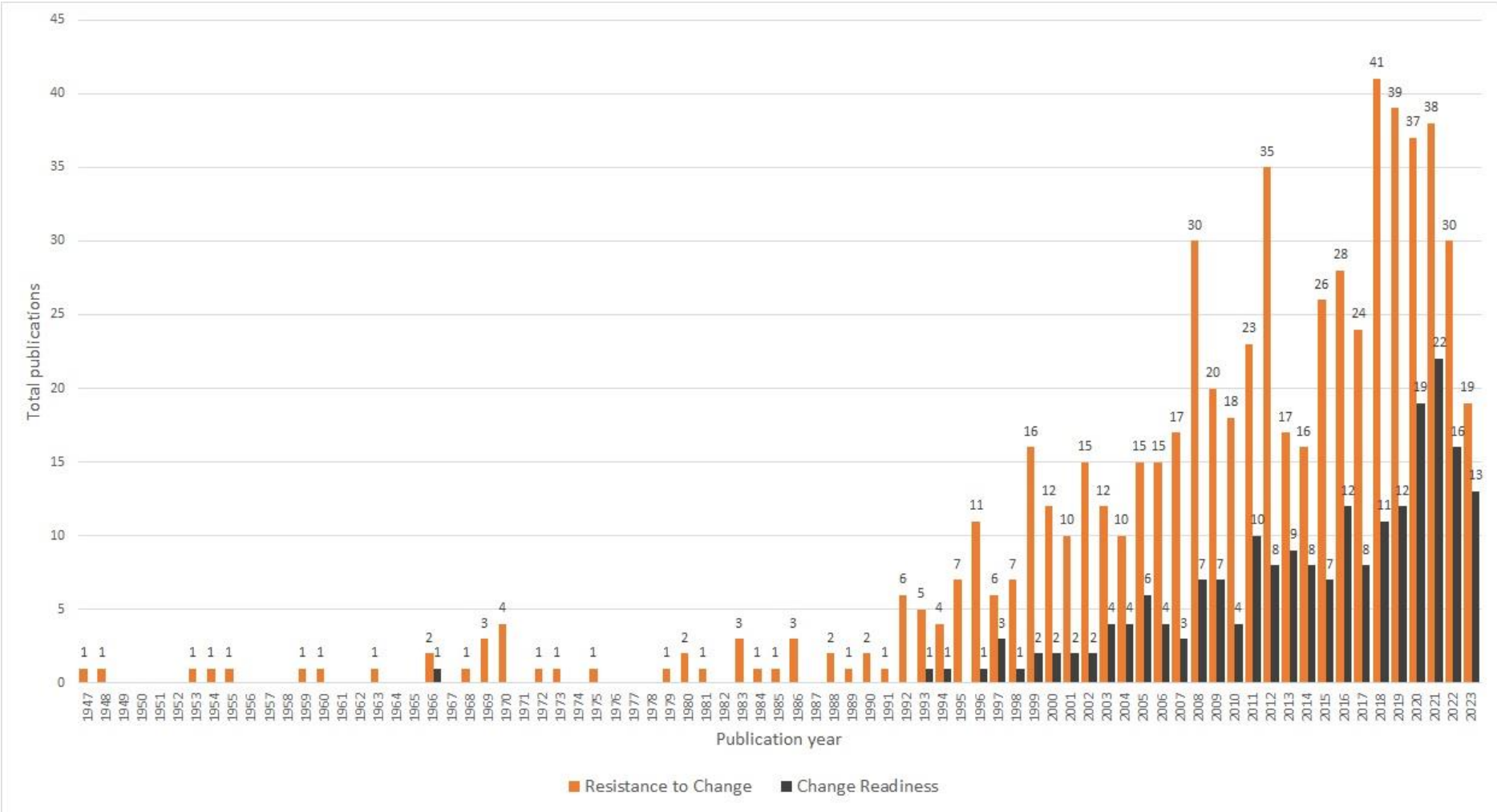
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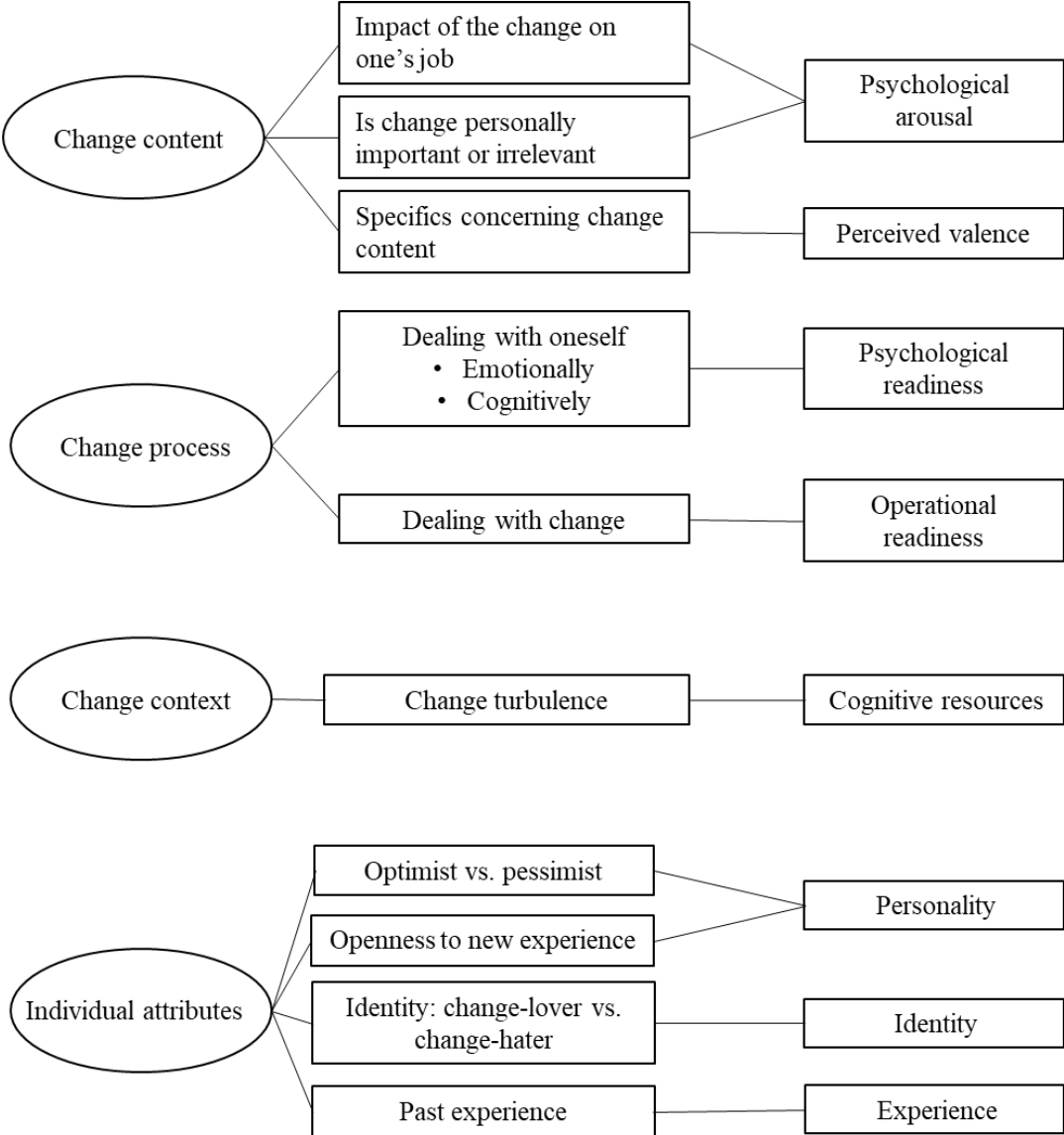
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Total publications per year on resistance to change and change readiness



Appendix 2: Data structure



Appendix 3: List of first associations concerning »change«

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Innovation	Uncertainty	Change of status quo
Motivation	Resistance	People
Progress	Uh, what now?	Work on oneself
Excitement	Fear	Out of the comfort zone
A step forward	Problems	Unknown
Improvement	Stress	Out of balance
Change to the better	Discomfort	Something new
	Chaos	
	Tension	
	Necessity	
	Challenges	

Appendix 4: Representative data of first-order categories

Third-order theme: Managing uncertainty	
Second-order concept: Explicit information	
First-order category:	Illustrative example
Managing expectations – communication	<p>»If it's very sudden, and someone says: "Now something will change", without any preparation in advance, I think that the first question is "Why is this now needed?", and then this period of "Why is this necessary?" depends on the information given. If it is better explained, it can be reduced quickly, and then you start to deal with what you will have to do differently and how you will adapt to the change. It seems to me that with this "top-down" change, it depends on how you convey things, how long this period lasts for you when you deal with yourself, to find out that now things are different.« (Interviewee No.9)</p> <p>»Presentation of the change is most crucial. To clearly define why are we doing it, maybe even where it will hurt. Where it can hurt. This transparency is very important. /.../ To say it clearly -what will we do, why will we do it, who will do it, and what will this bring us? That's really the key thing. /.../ With this change, the transparency of how we are going to do things</p>

To be continued

Appendix 4: Representative data of first-order categories (cont.)

First-order category:	Illustrative example
Managing expectations – communication	was not very good, and it took us a long time to fix this issue.« (Interviewee No.13)
Second-order concept: Affect as information	
First-order category:	Illustrative example
The process and context of information communicated (or not communicated)	»No one talked to us so it must be something bad« (Interviewee No.18) »The things that are delegated with authority are problematic, because first you question whether they are good or not, and second, they bear that attitude »Don't be smart, I am your boss«.(Interviewee No.1)
Third-order theme: The team spirit	
Second-order concept: Self-efficacy	
First-order category:	Illustrative example
Perceived support from superiors	»At the end of the day, if you talk to someone, if you can debate about it, it gives you a certain certainty that you will be able to do it, as it supposed to be done. to a large extent, the way it is meant to be./.../ that somehow calms you down.« (Interviewee No.3) »...they [the superiors] knew how to listen and consider the proposal and, if it was good, it was accepted. There were always so many questions. Are you still missing something? What else do you need? Would you change anything else? Do you have any other suggestions? It seems to me that they actively involved us in this, and allowed us to make our own suggestions as well. So that we basically felt responsible for the things that were happening. I really liked that. They made a special board, if someone didn't want to say the proposal out loud, they could write it down. This was also really good, as far as that was concerned, a lot was arranged« (Interviewee No.14)

To be continued

Appendix 4: Representative data of first-order categories (cont.)

First-order category:	Illustrative example
Having an in-team mate to discuss arising issues	<p>»They ask me how can our director help...I don't know, it is not his job, but it is good to know that he is there for me« (Interviewee No.3).</p> <p>»Look, stop creating fears in advance, because we'll see, it won't be so bad, and I think that if you influence people in a positive way, all of this is much easier.« (Interviewee No.14)</p> <p>»We talked a lot with our colleagues, especially where they presented us with how the premises will look. There were a lot of those questions, concerns, debates, oh, what will we do now? How will we function? /.../ There were a lot of questions and debates. So at the end the conclusion was that things will surely be arranged in such a way that it will be right.« (Interviewee No.14)</p>
Second-order concept: Social reality	
First-order category:	Illustrative example
The perceived importance of the change from other employees	<p>»Everyone must then stand behind it. It has happened many times that some change was being implemented, and, I don't want to be offensive, but let's say that the older generation does not accept it, and then you end up with two ways. Some work the old way, and some work the new way.« (Interviewee No. 2)</p> <p>»Well, we and my two co-workers were looking at each other, "wtf", what's the point, and what is wrong [with the current situation]. That was the first and the only reaction. Then you start talking about it, you hear something here and there« (Interviewee No. 4)</p>
Second-order concept: Interactional justice	
First-order category:	Illustrative example
Perceived fairness: everyone puts effort into the process	<p>»Why do you expect me to change and you cannot put effort into your job.« (Interviewee No.3)</p> <p>»These things [the changes] are not well managed, and we do not handle it well. Now if it is a smaller change it is not so bad whether we followed that change or not.../.../...but in the case of the specific change in connection with the product we just</p>

To be continued

Appendix 4: Representative data of first-order categories (cont.)

First-order category:	Illustrative example
Perceived fairness: everyone puts effort into the process	discussed... it was a big change and a big mistake was made, but nobody paid attention /.../ and the product was placed on the market. I raised the issue /.../Now the head of development committed to change something about this [managing change], but until now I haven't seen him do anything about it« (Interviewee No.6)

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview guide with guideline questions (Study 1: Exploring change readiness among employees in large companies)

1. Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the interviewer and objective of the interview • Confidentiality and anonymity • Permission to audio-record the interview
2. Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of interviewee (position, tenure, function) • Please shortly describe your work (work duties, level of routine and creativity, co-worker co-dependency, multitasking;) • How does your typical work day look like?
3. Implicit general attitude toward change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your first association when you hear the word »change«?
4. Explicit general attitude toward change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the process of deciding whether a change is good or not? • Do you like change and why? • What is your experience with change in general? • What do you think is key, for employees to adopt a change? • How would you define change readiness, and how much is it important to you? • What would you advise to people who have difficulty accepting change?

To be continued

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview guide with guideline questions (Study 1: Exploring change readiness among employees in large companies) (cont.)

<p>5. Specific organizational change (change content)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please bring to mind an organizational change that happened recently or is still ongoing, and was not initiated by you (it was imposed on you). This change needs to be important to you and had an impact on your work. • Please shortly describe what was the change about.
<p>5a. Attitude toward a specific change and the process of getting change ready (change process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your attitude toward this change? Why? • Were you ready for this change? Why? (How did you get change ready?) • What were you thinking when the change arrived? How did you process this change?
<p>5b. Affect (change process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel about this change? Why?
<p>5c. Change turbulence, and stress (change context)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any other significant changes that were going on at the same time as this specific change? If so, how did you handle multiple changes? (How did you distribute your energy and cognitive resources?) • What exhausts you the most? How do you recharge your energy?
<p>6. Dispositional affect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where on the optimist – pessimist continuum would you position yourself?
<p>7. Last comments and ending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we missed an important aspect in our discussion? • Do you have any additional comments about what we discussed? • Thank you

Appendix 6: Interview guideline questions (Study 2: Exploring change readiness among entrepreneurs)

1. How would you define change readiness? What is change readiness for you?
2. How much being change ready means to you?
3. How do you become change ready?
4. How much of your time and energy do you devote to becoming change ready? (allocation between before change arrives, and when change arrives)
5. If we look at psychological change readiness (emotional, cognitive), would you say you are psychologically change ready?
6. How do you feel about change (the role of emotions)
7. Please bring to mind an organizational change that happened recently or is still ongoing, and was not initiated by you (e.g., you were forced into this change by the environment)
 - 7a. Please shortly describe what was the change about.
 - 7b. How did you react? What were you thinking? How did you feel? And Why?

Appendix 7: Raziskovanje pripravljenosti na spremembe med podjetniki (*daljši povzetek v slovenskem jeziku*)

Doktorska disertacija raziskuje posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembe – koncept, ki močno prežema literaturo o organizacijskih spremembah, saj je prepoznan kot ključni in kritični dejavnik za uspešno izvedbo načrtovanih organizacijskih sprememb. Čeprav je literatura menedžmenta sprememb in pripravljenosti na spremembe obsežna, skladna, ter večinoma dosega konsenz o dobrih praksah, se organizacije še vedno precej neuspešno trudijo doseči pripravljenost zaposlenih na spremembe. Naša splošna motivacija je bila raziskati možne razloge in podati predloge, ki bi pripomogli k doseganju pripravljenosti zaposlenih na spremembe ter posledično uspešnosti izvedbe organizacijskih sprememb. Ker so podjetniki posamezniki, ki morajo biti pripravljeni na spremembe in jih dobro obvladati, da preživijo in uspevajo v hitro spreminjajočih se, turbulentnih okoljih, se obračamo na podjetnike, da nam pomagajo odkriti, kako doseči pripravljenost na spremembe in se s spremembami uspešno spopasti.

Zaradi konceptualne dvoumnosti v zvezi s konceptom posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembe, začnemo naše raziskovanje s pregledom literature našega osrednjega koncepta, da pojasnimo njegov pomen ter vzpostavimo trdno podlago za nadaljnje empirično raziskovanje in teoretiziranje.

Naše prvo poglavje je kvalitativni pregled dveh konceptov – posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembe in odpora do sprememb. Predpostavlja se, da posameznikova pripravljenost na spremembe in odpor do sprememb predstavljata isti pojav z nasprotnih perspektiv. V prvem poglavju pregledamo uporabo teh dveh konceptov, razjasnimo njune konceptualne

podlage in obravnavamo predpostavko, da gre za nasprotna pola istega kontinuuma. Koncepta primerjamo in analiziramo njune dimenzije, ki običajno predstavljajo vir dvoumnosti o njunem pomenu, pregledamo njuno evolucijo ter ju primerjamo s podobnimi koncepti, s katerimi ju običajno zamenjujemo. Ugotavljamo, da odpor do sprememb obravnava dva pomembna vidika: odpor kot vedenje in odpor kot odnos. Ker sta tako odpor do sprememb, kot pripravljenost na spremembe izvorno odnos, ju je treba obravnavati skupaj – ne v smislu bipolarnega kontinuuma, pač pa kot so-obstoječi ortogonalni dimenziji, – da bi razumeli celotno kompleksnost odnosa do sprememb. Razpravljamo o implikacijah in ponudimo smernice za prihodnje raziskave, pri čemer predlagamo gradnike za potencialni nov merilni instrument. Tabela 1 zajema hiter pregled gradnikov, ki jih predlagamo.

Tabela 1: Gradniki kot usmeritev za potencialni nov merilni instrument

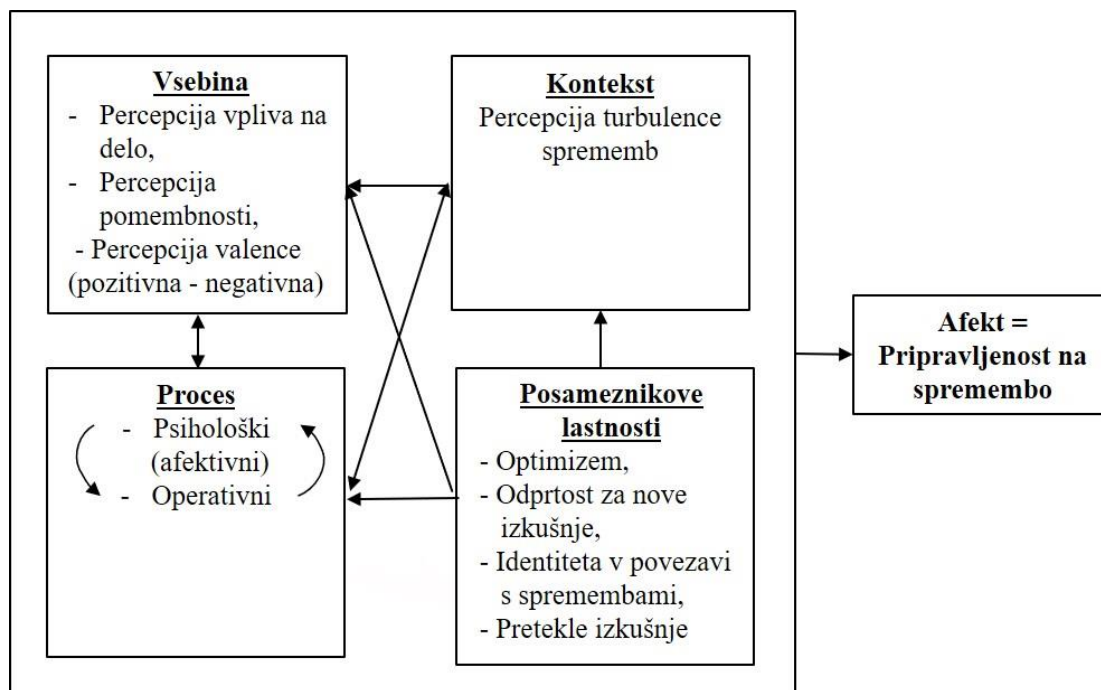
Gradnik	Opis
Ambivalentnost in nianse v odnosu do spremembe	Nov merilni instrument naj hkrati meri odpor do spremembe, kot tudi pripravljenost na spremembo (v smislu so-obstoječih, ortogonalnih dimenzij), saj trenutne mere ne omogočajo zajema ambivalentnega odnosa do spremembe.
Dogovor glede konativne komponente v odnosu do spremembe	Potrebno je doseči dogovor o vključitvi ali izključitvi konativne komponente v odnosu do spremembe, da bi lahko odpor do spremembe in pripravljenost na spremembe obravnavali kot so-obstoječi, ortogonalni dimenziji.
Ločitev vedenjske dimenzije od konceptualizacije odpora do spremembe kot odnosa	Vedenjska dimenzija naj se izključi iz koncepta odpora do sprememb (v smislu odnosa) in naj bo vedenje v smislu odpora do spremembe obravnavano kot možen rezultat odpora do spremembe v smislu odnosa. S tem bi bil vzpostavljen tudi pogoj za ortogonalnost konceptov odpora do spremembe in pripravljenosti na spremembo.
Psihološka aktivacija	O odporu do spremembe in pripravljenosti na spremembo govorimo, ko sprememba povzroči psihološko (kognitivno in/ali čustveno) aktivacijo in posameznik ni indiferenten do spremembe. Aktivacija v smislu vedenja, je možen rezultat omenjenih dveh konceptov.
Kontinuirano merjenje	Odpor do spremembe in pripravljenost na spremembo sta situacijska. Ker se kontekst v katerem sprememba poteka nenehno spreminja, ju je treba razumeti in meriti kot proces. Enkratna meritev pred spremembo ne zadostuje.

Vir: Lastno delo

Pregled literature nas je vodil, da smo se v drugem poglavju osredotočili na afektivno dimenzijo pripravljenosti na spremembe. Raziskave o pripravljenosti na spremembe se osredotočajo na prepričanja, ki jih imajo zaposleni glede organizacijskih sprememb, (pre)malo pozornosti pa namenjajo vlogi afekta pri oblikovanju posameznikove

pripravljenosti na spremembo. Naša kvalitativna študija na primeru načrtovanih organizacijskih sprememb, preučuje vlogo afekta v okviru štirih dejavnikov, ki oblikujejo posameznikovo pripravljenost na organizacijsko spremembo – vsebine, konteksta in procesa spremembe ter izbranih posameznikovih lastnosti (Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007). Da bi boljše razumeli posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembo vse štiri dejavnike popeljemo na individualno raven in razložimo, zakaj je afekt še posebej pomemben za koncept pripravljenosti na spremembo. Skozi lečo afekta razpravljamo o medsebojni povezanosti teh štirih dejavnikov, ki predstavljajo okvir posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembo.

Slika 1: Pripravljenost na spremembe s poudarkom na afektu skozi prizmo vsebine, konteksta, in procesa spremembe ter individualnih razlik: individualna raven



Vir: Lastno delo

Z vidika posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembo je smiselno, da **vsebine** spremembe ne opredelimo glede na vrsto spremembe, temveč kot zaznan vpliv, ki ga ima sprememba na posameznikovo delo ter posameznikovo percepcijo pomembnosti in valence spremembe. Vpliv spremembe na delo in zaznana pomembnost definirata psihološko aktivacijo in tako predstavljata predispozicijo za oblikovanje kakršnega koli odnosa, vključno s pripravljenostjo na spremembo. Ljudje lahko namreč oblikujemo odnos le do entitet, ki nas psihološko aktivirajo. Stopnja psihološke aktivacije določa moč afekta in s tem moč odnosa do pripravljenosti na spremembe.

Ali bo posamezna sprememba povzročila psihološko aktivacijo posameznika deloma zavisi od **konteksta**, v katerem se sprememba dogaja. Ko je turbulenca sprememb velika,

posamezniki delijo svoje kognitivne vire med številne spremembe. Zaradi omejenih kognitivnih virov morajo določiti prednost, katera sprememba je dovolj pomembna, da ji bodo namenili svoje kognitivne vire. Kontekst spremembe (opredeljen kot turbulenca sprememb), zaradi posameznikovih omejenih kognitivnih virov, torej določa a) obstoj in b) stopnjo pripravljenosti na spremembo in posledično uspešnost sprejemanja sprememb.

Medtem ko kontekst spremembe delno določa dojetje zaposlenih o pomembnosti spremembe, lahko vpliva tudi na percepcijo valence spremembe. Izčrpan zaposleni ali zaposleni v slabem razpoloženju bi lahko bil nagnjen k temu, da pobudi za spremembo pripiše več negativne vrednosti. Poleg tega še ena sprememba predstavlja grožnjo našim izčrpanim kognitivnim virom in ker je afekt produkt predvidevanja (Barrett, 2017), bo to rezultiralo v bolj negativnih čustvih v povezavi s prihajajočo spremembo.

Proces pripravljenosti na spremembo lahko razdelimo v dve kategoriji – psihološko in operativno pripravljenost. Psihološka pripravljenost v ospredje postavlja afekt, saj se posameznik ukvarja z negotovostjo in neugodjem, ki ju prinaša sprememba. V procesu psihološke pripravljenosti se posameznik ukvarja sam s sabo, v smislu občutkov in spoznanj in išče odgovore na vprašanja kot je »Kakšni so moji občutki v zvezi s to spremembo?«. Operativna pripravljenost pa zadeva konkretne specifične spremembe, delovne naloge in nove rutine, ki jih sprememba prinaša. Odgovore na vprašanja kot npr. »Kaj se bo spremenilo? Kaj se pričakuje od mene? Katera orodja potrebujem? Na koga se obrniti po pomoč?« običajno posreduje vodstvo.

Zaposleni si najprej postavljajo vprašanja, ki zadevajo psihološko pripravljenost. Ko začnejo prejemati več informacij o spremembi s strani vodstva, jim to pomaga razrešiti psihološko pripravljenost. Z vidika procesa se posameznik – zaradi omejenih kognitivnih virov – ne more v popolnosti posvetiti spremembi, dokler ne razreši čustvene, psihološke pripravljenosti, saj psihološke (čustvene) napetosti odvrta pozornost od spopadanja s spremembo. Hkrati lahko razreševanje vprašanj v zvezi z operativno pripravljenostjo zmanjša negotovost, slednja pa ustvarja psihološko nepripravljenost. Obe vrsti pripravljenosti torej so-vplivata druga na drugo.

Posameznikove lastnosti, ki smo jih identificirali kot pomembne, z vidika posameznikove afektivne pripravljenosti na spremembo, so optimizem, odprtost za nove izkušnje, pretekle izkušnje s spremembami in spremembe kot del posameznikove identitete – tj. ali se posameznik identificira kot nekdo, ki ima rad spremembe ali ne. Te posameznikove lastnosti vplivajo na zaznane valence spremembe (npr. optimisti bodo nagnjeni k bolj pozitivnemu dojetju spremembe kot pesimisti) in hkrati tudi na proces (zaradi razlik v teh lastnostih bo trajanje obdobja ukvarjanja s samim seboj različno) in kontekst (npr. pesimisti več razmišljajo o spremembi, pri čemer bolj obremenijo svoje kognitivne vire v primerjavi z optimisti, kar lahko spremeni dojetje turbulence sprememb).

Medtem ko ugotovitve glede osebnostne lastnosti optimizma, odprtosti za nove izkušnje in preteklih izkušenj niso bile presenetljive, je zanimiv koncept, ki je izšel iz naših podatkov in odpira nove poti za prihodnje raziskave, identiteta. Če je sprememba del tega, kdo smo, jo običajno dojemamo kot pozitivno, da ohranimo pozitivno samopodobo. Ali z drugega pogleda, ker se spremembe in pripravljenost na spremembe dojemajo kot družbeno zaželeni, se radi identificiramo kot ljubitelji sprememb, da bi zgradili pozitivno samopodobo. Pristnost ljubitelja sprememb pa je redka. Anketiranci so poročali, da sprememba zahteva veliko energije in nelagodja. V skladu s teorijo ohranjanja virov (Hobfoll, 1989) so ljudje motivirani, da varujejo svoje vire in pridobivajo nove. Tako bodo motivirani, da se izogibajo spremembam. Večina naših intervjuvancev se ne identificira kot ljubitelji sprememb, pozitivno naravnano do sprememb dosegajo predvsem s kognitivnim naporom, ki temelji na dejstvu, da so spremembe neizogibna (in družbeno zaželena) realnost. Ljudje, ki niso ljubitelji sprememb, so a priori v slabšem položaju, ker so njihovi kognitivni viri bolj obremenjeni, saj morajo bolj regulirati čustva in jim ostane manj kognitivnih virov za nadaljevanje v procesu spremembe.

V tretjem poglavju se poglobimo v *proces* posameznikovega razvoja pripravljenosti na spremembo. To poglavje gradi na ugotovitvah v zvezi z dejavnikom procesa v okvirju pripravljenosti na spremembo, predstavljenim v drugem poglavju. Zdaj podrobneje obravnavamo proces spremembe pri posamezniku, pri čemer se opremo na teorijo občutkov kot informacije (Schwarz, 2012), da bi bolje razumeli vlogo afekta v procesu razvoja pripravljenosti na spremembo. Naša raziskava kaže, da organizacije še vedno ne komunicirajo ustrezno »sporočila« spremembe (angl. t.i. »*the message*«; Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Holt et al., 2007). Posledično zaposleni iščejo dodatne vire informacij, ki bi jim pomagali v procesu osmišljanja. Poleg poizvedovanja pri sodelavcih in govorici, posameznikova čustva lahko predstavljajo pomemben vir informacij.

V četrtem poglavju naša kvalitativna empirična raziskava proučuje sposobnost podjetnikov, da se uspešno spopadajo s spremembami. Na tematiko pogledamo skozi lečo podjetniške kognicije, pri čemer ima afekt pomembno vlogo. Na podlagi ugotovitev o tem, kako dosegajo pripravljenost na spremembe in katere strategije uporabljajo za spoprijemanje s spremembami, oblikujemo predloge za organizacije, da bi svojim zaposlenim pomagali premagati izziv spopadanja s spremembami. Na podlagi teorije ohranjanja virov (Hobfoll, 1989), vidimo uspeh obvladovanja sprememb v svojem bistvu kot vprašanje kognitivnih virov (ki sestojijo iz kognicije in afekta) posameznika. Prvič, kot vsoto kognitivnih virov in drugič, kot razporeditev kognitivnih virov v procesu spremembe.

Pomembnost afekta

Iz človekove evolucije izhaja, da je naš afekt običajno prva informacija, ki jo prejmemo. V raziskavi se opremo na model afekta kot informacije (Clore & Storbeck, 2006; Schwarz & Clore, 2007, Schwarz, 2012), ki trdi, da je afekt informacija o valenci in pomembnosti.

Negativni afekt signalizira problematično situacijo, medtem ko pozitiven ali nevtralen afekt signalizira benigno situacijo.

Kot že omenjeno, proces pripravljenosti na spremembo sestoji iz operativne in psihološke pripravljenosti, bistveni del slednje je afekt. Ko primerjamo ne-podjetnike s podjetniki, podjetniki porabijo bistveno manj svojih kognitivnih virov za doseg psihološke pripravljenosti. Specifične kognitivne dispozicije in pristranskosti, značilne za podjetniško kognicijo, kot sta prevelik optimizem in pretirana samozavest, delujejo v prid doseganju njihove psihološke pripravljenosti na spremembo, saj proizvajajo pomemben stranski produkt – pozitiven afekt. Teorije valence in aktivacije predpostavljajo, da afekt vpliva na kognicijo na način, da negativni afekt vodi v usmerjanje pozornosti k samoohranitvi (Clare, Schwarz in Conway, 1994), medtem ko pozitiven afekt vodi v širjenje psiholoških procesov, kot je npr. divergentno mišljenje (Fredrickson, 2001), ali v našem primeru podjetnikov, t.i. »off-line« vrednotenje različnih možnih scenarijev, ki bi se lahko pripetili v prihodnosti. »Osrečujoče« pristranskosti značilne za podjetnike, kot sta pretiran optimizem in pretirana samozavest (Zhang & Cueto, 2017), zmanjšajo anksioznost in depresijo ter spodbujajo k akciji (Sharot, 2011). Te pristranskosti podjetnikom pomagajo, da se lažje osredotočijo na spremembo in reševanje problemov, namesto da bi se ukvarjali sami s seboj in strahovi povezanimi s spremembo. Skladno s tem naša študija ugotavlja, da realisti več razmišljajo o spremembi kot optimisti in porabijo več kognitivnih virov za to, da postanejo psihološko pripravljeni na spremembe. Več se osredotočajo nase, v primerjavi z optimisti, namesto na spremembe, in so manj nagnjeni k ukrepanju.

Z vidika teorije ohranjanja virov (Hobfoll, 1989) omenjene pristranskosti, ki rezultirajo v pozitivnem afektu niso kognitivne napake (sistematične napake pri odločanju; Kahneman & Tversky, 1996), temveč viri, ki ohranjajo kognitivne vire prejemnika spremembe in posameznikom omogočajo, da razporedijo svoje vire v operativno pripravljenost na spremembo in akcijo.

Občutek nadzora

Občutek nadzora je pri spremembah izjemnega pomena, saj zmanjšuje negotovost in s tem negativni afekt, ki ga občutimo v povezavi s spremembo. Tako podjetniki kot ne-podjetniki morajo osmisliti situacijo in se ukvarjajo z vprašanjem "Kaj to zdaj pomeni?" in "Zakaj/ali je potrebna sprememba?". Zaposleni v procesu osmišljanja običajno iščejo odgovor na vprašanje »Kaj pripravlja vodstvo?«, medtem ko bi za podjetnike lahko dejali, da se ukvarjajo z vprašanjem »Kaj pripravlja zunanje okolje?«. Podjetniki vnaprej razmišljajo o možnih scenarijih in kako ukrepati, če se posamezni scenarij uresniči – pri tem torej usmerjajo svoje kognitivne vire v operativno pripravljenost na spremembo in ustvarjajo občutek nadzora nad situacijo. Ne-podjetniki imajo v primerjavi s podjetniki bistveno manj nadzora nad tem, kako bodo naslovili zahtevo po spremembi, saj je bila ta izbira že narejena s strani vodstva. Ko primerjamo rezultate študij 2 in 3 ugotavljamo, da tako podjetniki (študija 2) kot tudi zaposleni v velikih podjetjih (študija 3) jemljejo predlagano spremembo

kot dejstvo in se zavedajo, da se ji nima smisla upirati. Občutek nadzora nad situacijo pa je pri podjetnikih bistveno večji. Deloma izvira tudi iz pristranskosti njihove kognicije, t.i. iluzije nadzora (angl. *illusion of control bias*) ter visoke samoučinkovitosti (angl. *self-efficacy*), ki je pri podjetnikih ekspertih podprta z bogatimi izkušnjami na področju podjetništva, ki vključujejo izkušnje z različnimi spremembami. Občutek nadzora pri podjetnikih torej izhaja tako iz subjektivnih zaznav (npr. iluzije kontrole), kot tudi objektivnih okoliščin (v smislu izbire dejanj za naslovitev zahteve po spremembi).

Zaposleni vidijo spremembo kot dejstvo postavljeno s strani vodstva, medtem ko podjetniki obravnavajo spremembo kot dejstvo, pred katero jih je postavilo zunanje okolje. Z vidika afektivne pripravljenosti na spremembo je to pomembna razlika, ugotavlja naša študija. V primeru zaposlenih, torej ko je sprememba postavljena s strani vodstva, je a-priori postavljena v kontekst odnosov med ljudmi v organizaciji. Ugotavljamo, da je afektivna komponenta odnosa do spremembe poudarjena in posameznik dojema spremembo bistveno bolj čustveno, če sprememba zadeva medčloveške odnose. Če obstaja vrsta spremembe, ki lahko podjetnike spravi iz ravnotežja v čustvenem smislu, je to sprememba, ki vključuje odnose z ljudmi, ki so jim blizu (npr. ožji člani delovne ekipe). Nauk, ki izhaja iz teh ugotovitev je, da so odnosi med zaposlenimi izrednega pomena. Naši rezultati signalizirajo, da so dobri odnosi med zaposlenimi osnova za organizacijske spremembe zaradi njihove velike moči, da izzovejo čustvene reakcije. Čustva pa so, kot že omenjeno, pomembna informacija, ki vpliva na posameznikovo pripravljenost na spremembo.

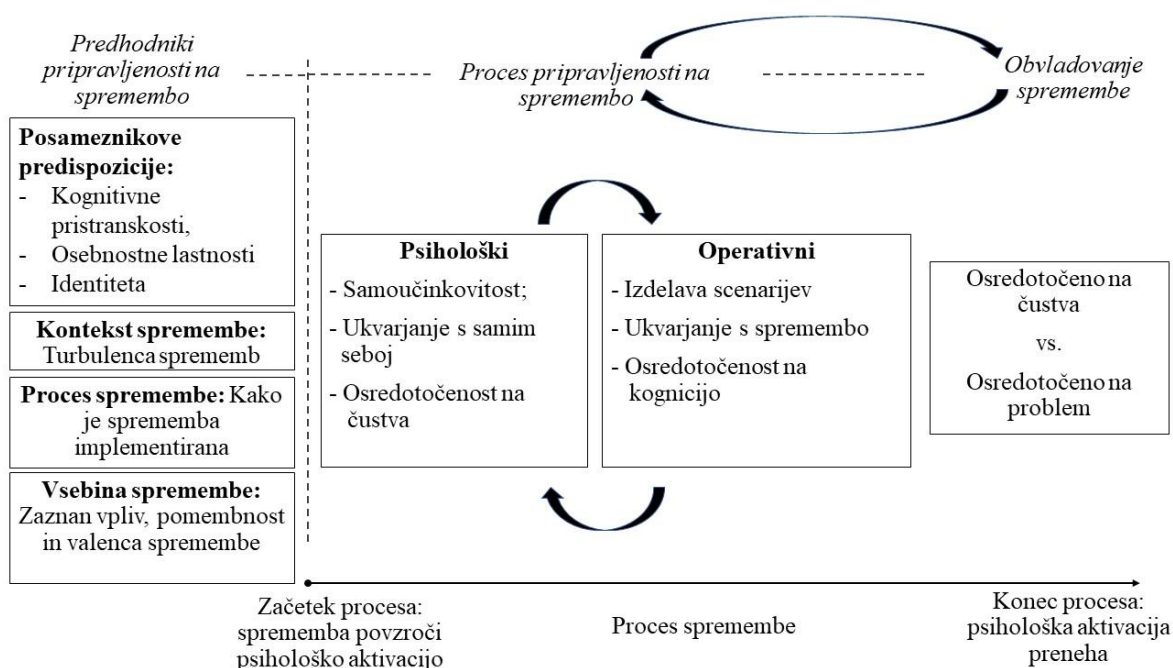
Metakognicija in samoregulacija

Podjetniki se pogosto srečujejo z negativnimi situacijami, ki vzbudijo negativna čustva. Pomembno pa je, da znajo podjetniki prisluhniti svojim čustvom, hkrati pa ne dovolijo, da bi jih čustva prevzela. Lahko bi rekli, da je to del njihove metakognicije. Občutki zagotavljajo pomembne informacije in z razvito metakognicijo lahko podjetniki eksperti izkoristijo prednosti svoje intuicije. Hkrati pa se podjetniki lahko distancirajo od svojih občutkov in na situacijo pogledajo iz tretjeosebne perspektive.

Če podjetniki ne bi znali ustvariti čustvene distance, ne bi mogli tako učinkovito preigravati (tudi negativnih) možnih scenarijev, ki se lahko pripetijo in bi bili na spremembe manj pripravljeni. Ključno vprašanje je torej, kako spodbuditi sposobnost ustvarjanja čustvene distance in racionalizirati proces obvladovanja sprememb. Negativne občutke je potrebno predelati na način, da ne predstavljajo več bremena. Posamezniki se lahko oprejo na svojo socialno mrežo ali člane ekipe, da predelajo svoja čustva in porazdelijo čustveno breme. V zvezi z ustvarjanjem čustvene distance so podjetniki večkrat izpostavili tudi vlogo izkušenj. Izkušnje dajejo priložnost za izgradnjo metakognicije in učenje samoregulacije.

Slika 2 je sinteza našega dela ter prikazuje okvir posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembo in obvladovanja spremembe.

Slika 2: Okvir posameznikove pripravljenosti na spremembo in obvladovanja spremembe



Vir: Lastno delo

Telesna pripravljenost

Telesna pripravljenost je izjemnega pomena, da lahko prenesemo napore obvladovanja sprememb. Povezava med telesom in umom je v nevroznanosti že dolgo znana (Barrett, 2017). Ohranjanje telesne kondicije, dobra prehrana in ustrezen počitek so izjemno pomembni podporni dejavniki za obvladovanje sprememb in pripravljenost na spremembe, saj vplivajo na uravnavanje čustev in tudi na občutek nadzora. Če se počutimo šibke, zagotovo ne bomo pripravljeni na nove izzive sprememb. Slika 3 povzema ukrepe, ki jih predlagamo, da bi bil posameznik sposoben bolje uravnavati svoja čustva. Ti so: skrb za dobro telesno kondicijo, ki vključuje dobro prehrano ter zadosten počitek; izpostavljenost spremembam, ki bogati izkušnje s spremembami; in gradnja socialne mreže za porazdelitev čustvenega bremena in predelavo čustev preko komunikacije s člani socialne mreže.

Z vidika teorije ohranjanja virov dobra prehrana in počitek predstavljata povečanje kognitivnih virov, medtem ko so telesna pripravljenost, izkušnje s spremembami ter izgradnja in ohranjanje socialne podporne mreže oziroma timskega duha hkrati izgube virov in tudi naložbe, za porabo manj kognitivnih virov za obvladovanje prihodnjih sprememb.

Slika 3: Ukrepi za posameznikovo uspešno spopadanje s spremembami

Ukrepi
<i>Izgube kognitivnih virov, ki so hkrati naložbe:</i>
- Telesna pripravljenost
- Izkušnje s spremembami
- Socialna podporna mreža (timski duh)

<i>Povečanje kognitivnih virov:</i>
- Dobra prehrana
- Počitek

Vir: Lastno delo

Strategija obvladovanja spremembe

Ljudje uporabljajo različne strategije, ko se soočajo s spremembami. Pravzaprav bi lahko rekli, da je toliko strategij, kolikor je ljudi. Vendar se nam zdi tipologija, ki temelji na transakcijskem modelu Lazarusa in Folkmana (1984), najbolj uporabna za našo študijo. Ta tipologija loči strategije obvladovanja na tiste, ki se usmerjene k reševanju problema in tiste, ki so usmerjene k čustvom. Na problem osredotočeno obvladovanje je usmerjeno v reševanje problema, s čimer ciljamo na vir stresa, medtem ko je na čustva osredotočeno obvladovanje usmerjeno v obvladovanje stresa, ki ga je sprožila situacija.

Ugotavljamo, da podjetniki v primerjavi z ne-podjetniki, ki so sodelovali v naši raziskavi, uporabljajo strategijo usmerjeno v reševanje problema in minimizirajo pristop strategije usmerjene k čustvom. Vendar pa to ne pomeni, da je to najboljša izbira za vse. Podjetnikom to omogoča visoka stopnja vere v samoučinkovitost in sposobnost premostiti ovire. Kognitivne pristranskosti, o katerih razpravljamo v tej disertaciji, delujejo v prid tej strategiji.

Ali bo strategija usmerjena k reševanju problema prava izbira, je potrebno vedno postaviti v kontekst. Kadar so negativne posledice spremembe neizbežne in zaposleni nima možnosti vplivati na spremembo situacije, so lahko strategije osredotočene na čustva, koristnejše od obvladovanja, osredotočene na problem. V situacijah, ko je izguba nepreklicna in stanje trajno, so na čustva osredotočene strategije, kot je pozitivna reevalvacija (angl. *positive reappraisal*), povezane z izboljšanim duševnim zdravjem (Carr & Pudrovska, 2007). Da lahko uspešno uporabimo strategijo spopadanja s spremembo, ki se osredotoča na razrešitev

problema, je potrebno najprej razrešiti čustva in se ne obremenjevati z negativnimi čustvi. Za mnoge ljudi to pomeni, da morajo najprej uporabiti strategijo, osredotočeno na čustva, preden nadaljujejo s strategijo, osredotočeno na problem.