

**EGOS Hub at Vienna University of Economics and Business
Proposal for a Paper Development Workshop**

***Making Futures, Making Change: How Organizations Imagine, Shape,
and Navigate What Comes Next***

Description of the Topic

Organizations increasingly operate in environments marked by uncertainty, crises, and rapid technological and societal transformation (George et al., 2016; Ferraro et al., 2015). In this context, organizational change is not only a response to external pressures (Bartunek et al., 2011) but also a process through which actors actively imagine, shape, and navigate possible, imagined and desirable futures (Wenzel et al., 2020). This PDW explores how future-making underpins and relates to organizational change across levels, actors, and contexts.

Research and theorization of futures and future-making is increasingly gaining attention in recent OMT publications. These contributions stretch from empirically studying how futures are made (Pettit et al., 2023; Wenzel et al., 2025) or imagined (Rindova & Martins, 2022) in organizations to how we as scholars can mobilize theory to contribute to desirable futures (Gümüşay & Reinecke, 2024; Thompson & Byrne, 2022)). In this PDW, we want to link these conversations to those in organizational change, which explore the role of time and temporality (Kunisch et al., 2017; Huy, 2001), the means and modes of managing and preparing (for) future-oriented change (Sonenshein, 2010) and how to meaningfully theorize to inform practice (Stouten et al., 2018; Oreg & Berson, 2019).

Exemplary contributions to this PDW may engage with the following types of questions. These are indicative rather than exhaustive:

- 1. Power and Politics in Future-Making:** Whose futures become dominant in organizations, and whose visions are marginalized or silenced? How do power relations shape the creation, selection, and implementation of organizational futures? How do futures reproduce or challenge inequalities within and across organizations and society?
- 2. Future-Making in Leadership and Future-Oriented Change:** How do leaders incorporate imagined futures into the planning, implementation, and sustaining of change processes? What leadership practices help mobilize diverse stakeholders around long-term visions or strategic transformations (e.g., climate transitions, digitalization)? How do leaders use communication, symbolic actions, or digital tools to shape the futures employees find credible and compelling?
- 3. Employee Responses, Emotions and Sensemaking in Future-Making:** How do employees respond to future-oriented narratives, visions, or change programs? What is the role of emotionality (hope, fear, anticipation, anxiety) in how employees construct, contest, or commit to envisioned futures? How do employees make sense of envisioned futures of their organizations?
- 4. Critical Perspectives on Futures and Future-Making:** To what extent does the current interest in futures and future-making reflect a productive development versus a conceptual “hype”? How does it differ from related constructs such as foresight, sensemaking, anticipation, or imagination? What important blind spots or unexamined assumptions persist in contemporary theorizing about futures?

Preliminary Workshop Format

We hope to create a room for open discussion, consisting of a diverse set of scholars with varying backgrounds and at different career stages. Therefore, formats that are well-suited for discussions and dialogue will be the focus in this workshop:

- *Roundtables* where submitted works will be debated and authors are given feedback.
- *A Panel Discussion* at the end of the session, which allows us to draw conclusions from the submissions and most importantly, how we as OMT scholars can, explicitly at the intersection of futures and organizational change, encourage and engage in meaningful theorizing.

Convenor Team

Clarissa Schott, Rouven Kanitz, Renate Meyer

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Application Procedure

We invite submissions to be interdisciplinary and thought-provoking. Our *criteria for acceptance* are:

- Thematic Fit: Explicit engagement with futures and/ or organizational change. Empirical and conceptual papers welcome.
- Interdisciplinarity: We encourage and positively acknowledge papers that engage with both theoretical fields, futures & future-making and organizational change.
- Originality: Novelty and innovation of the argumentation, theory development and/or analytical lens.

We kindly ask potential participants to submit an extended abstract (approx. 1,000 words) by March 31st via the EGOS Website, and a revised version can be sent in by June 1st via e-mail to the convenors (details to follow amongst acceptance).

Support

If there are any questions regarding this PDW, please feel free to reach out to clarissa.ruth.marie.schott@wu.ac.at.

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