FoWOP Response to the Covid-19 Crisis

The Movement for the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology FoWOP (www.futureofwop.com) is a collective of academics across the world in the field of work psychology who are actively contributing to a future of academic WOP that is sustainable, relevant to society, and protecting and promoting the integrity and dignity of individuals within and beyond the workplace. This also includes the well-being and equality of academics.

At the moment, the world is facing the Covid-19 crisis, which has caused countries to shut down, with a number of implications for work, people at work, and the psychology of work. Work psychologists have responded to the emerging crisis in a variety of ways. For instance, psychologists have been in the media to talk about Coronavirus anxiety (APA, 2020), the result of Corona for jobs and job loss (BBC, 2020a), and how to build emotional resilience during times of Corona (Washington Post, 2020). However, beyond anything, work psychologists have responded by advising how to remain productive while working from home (BBC, 2020b). As many people in the Western world are now forced to work from home, it is imperative for psychologists to help individuals with retaining one's sanity despite being locked up at home, and having to work and be productive at the same time. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with helping individuals to cope with the new situation of being locked up at home and having to work, we also have to bear in mind two essential things. First, as noted elsewhere as well (Jaffe, 2020), there is a strong tendency to think that the Corona pandemic is a temporary glitch in the system, and that we have to assume 'normalcy' during this situation, while we wait until the system and our society will return to normal again. Hence, the current state is implicitly perceived to be a temporary break from our normal patterns, and that as soon as the virus is controlled (e.g., as soon as there is a vaccine against Corona), we can return to our normal lives, and resume where we left off. Second, and also noted elsewhere, the focus on individual responsibility (e.g., in this case to be individually productive while working from home), 'functions as ideology the moment it serves to obfuscate the big question of how to change our entire economic and social system' (Žižek, 2020). Too often, work psychologists have been excellent in pointing to the role individuals can play in maintaining the system and protecting one's well-being (e.g., through mindfulness), while ignoring the role of society and social structures in determining our behaviour and well-being. However, in this Corona-crisis, we can no longer ignore the structures, as it is the structures provided by our governments which now literally define the space in which we can live and function.

Hence, we have to ask 2 questions to ourselves as work psychologists here: 1) what is our response as FoWOP community to the Corona-crisis? In the tradition of FoWOP, we are always *critical*, and focused on promotion of *health* and *equality*, while using the best *methods* to reach our conclusions. 2) What can we provide as FoWOP community to academics and practitioners in the field of WOP, as well as individuals, organizations and governments globally? We have to distinguish two axes here which are relevant to our thinking about Corona and work psychology. The first axis determines the individual vs. structural response. The second axis determines the immediate vs. medium/long-term response. This produces a fourfold response from FoWOP: what can we do now and in the medium/long-term to protect our individual sanity, and what can we do immediately and in the medium/long-term to address the structures underpinning the emergence and global spread, as well as the leadership responses and management of the Corona-crisis.

In sum, we will try to collect evidence and answers to the questions below. If you are interested in contributing to these debates, please do reach out to Zoe Sanderson (zoe.sanderson@bristol.ac.uk) or Gazi Islam (gazi.islam@grenoble-em.com).

Individuals in the Corona-crisis

What can we do as individuals in the long run?

What are the underlying structures that explain the Corona crisis from a psychological viewpoint?

What can we do to address those structures in the medium/long term?
What does this 'after the crisis' actually mean?