



# The story behind the numbers

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# What is the story behind the numbers?

1. How do different types of restructuring affect the well-being of employees?
2. What role do organisational and personal factors play in this relationship?
3. How do subgroups differ in how they cope with restructuring processes and adapting to the changing work situation?

# Interviews

- Interviews with members from organisations who were recently undergoing restructuring
- Elderly care in Denmark, Knowledge institute in The Netherlands, Paper factory in Finland and employees from several organisations in Poland
- Different types of restructuring, downsizing part of all cases

# The Danish case

- Two elderly care centers (homecare and residential elderly homes)
- 31 teams and 533 employees
- Nurses, canteen staff, physiotherapists
- Teamwork, downsizing, merging of elderly care centers



# The Dutch case

- Two business units of a knowledge institute
- Researchers, project/program managers
- Cutbacks in governmental support
- Downsizing of staff





# The Finnish case

- Paper factory
- Factory workers
- Downsizing



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"I'm sorry, Tom, we're downsizing and, well,  
you're the tallest."



# Poland

- Interviews with 30 respondents of the questionnaire study
- Employees from different companies (public and private sector)
- Stage and type of restructuring events (combination) differed



**Announcement of the change is made**



**Management**

**Leads the change = "marketing" the change, provides information, is available, faces the change and the reactions to it, makes it possible for employees to change**

**Change support group**

**Plans and carries out supporting tasks throughout the whole process**

**Those carrying out the decisions**

**Taking part in the training:** e.g.  
 - How to evaluate know-how  
 - How to announce the notices  
 - What are the "human consequences" in the team?

Superiors' decisions and information

Superiors' practical actions

**Evaluation**

**Information to employees:**

- Information from the management
- Department and morning meetings
- Talking about the support available (financial and other)
- Other support: OHS

**Those who will keep their job**

Reallocation of the work. Making sure that there is the know-how needed

**Those who will lose their jobs**

Supporting measures to get a new job

**OHS**

**Crisis support**

- How to stay well-support group
- Doctor, OHS nurse and psychologist appointments
- Going to the department

**Crisis support**

**Doctor, OHS nurse and psychologist appointments**

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# Supporting activities

## Danish case:

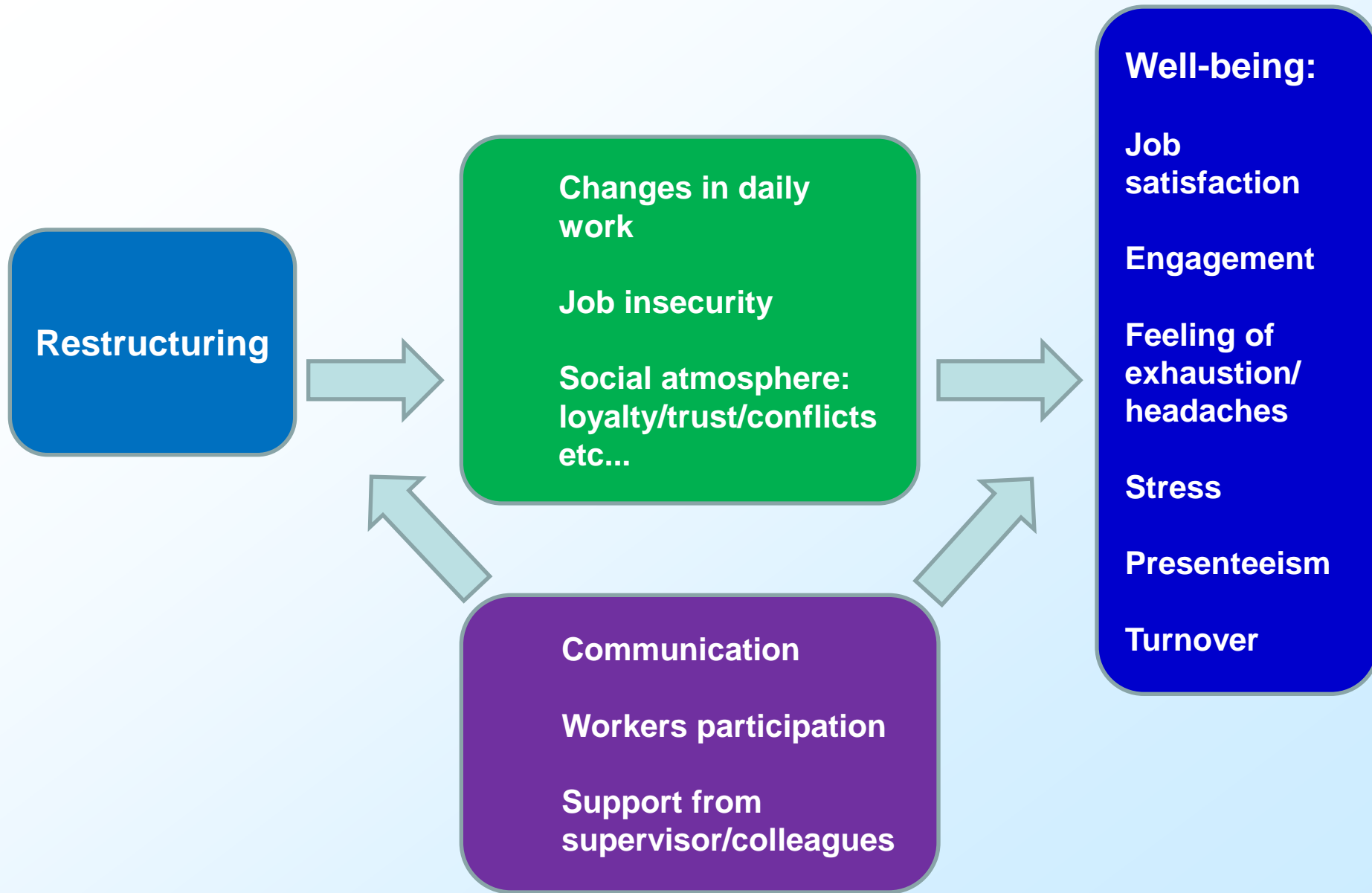
- Team implementation: teamwork consultant, meetings about implementation, booklet, training courses management and employees, up-dates via personnel magazine.
- Merger/downsizing: discussions in the Works Council and updates during team meetings.

## Dutch case:

- Information on the intranet, monthly meetings of management and employees at each site, messages from the Works Council, information from the direct supervisor, informal contacts, communication workgroup to guide the process.

# How do different types of restructuring affect the well-being of employees?

- Employees do often not experience one type of restructuring but a combination (over time)
- Impact of restructuring on employees' work explains the impact of the type of restructuring
- Changes related to increasing responsibilities (teamwork, decentralisation of tasks) have generally a positive impact on well-being
- Changes involving downsizing are generally valued negatively



Those affected by downsizing reported feeling exhausted by the amount of work they now had to do.....

“They appreciated the fact that due to changes they had started to specialise in their fields and they could see that they were good and valuable for the company.”

Employees came to work even though they should have reported in sick, because they were afraid that calling in sick would be interpreted as a weakness and would reduce their chances of keeping their job.

## Well-being



“I think it’s the cut backs. I have no flexibility because we’ve lost 97 hours. I have no time at all to do anything extra.”

In the new system, work groups were responsible for performing all the tasks related to their area, and an employee now has to be able to perform several tasks. This meant that some of the employees had to learn new skills.

*Overall, the amount of work was not well distributed after the restructuring. Some employees were overloaded, while others had very little work*

## Changes in daily work

“It feels as if someone can come in and fire me at any moment”.

“Why should I get involved in this project, when I’m not sure whether I’ll still be working here in two months’ time?”.

“Many (older employees) are worried about new things. You feel better about stability. They have difficulties seeing the advantages... They find it hard to let go of the safety of the old situation. When you want to introduce something new, they don’t think it is an advantage to them”.

“Why was I allowed to stay? Was I just lucky?”

## Job insecurity

For some employees the restructuring led to a serious depletion of their social network at work. They missed their former colleagues.

They felt sorry for their colleagues who were leaving and felt responsible for their care. They also felt guilty towards them about being busy with work and not being able to devote enough attention to them.

Downsizing was felt to be unfair in an organisation where there were difficulties recruiting new staff and they were constantly understaffed.

.....if the criteria for redundancy are not clear for employees, the atmosphere can be very individualistic and competitive. There is little co-worker support in these situations.

## Atmosphere

It was also important that the information was given to everybody at the same time, to prevent rumours.

*“They [the management] talked in strategic terms, but did not seem to realise that they were actually talking about the future of someone’s job”.*

....the supervisors seemed to be busy planning and coordinating the reorganisation. There was therefore little communication about the daily work activities

“It was very frustrating to have to attend a meeting and get no information at all.”

## Communication

*....employees reported frustration with the senior management. They felt they were victims with little say and felt that senior management had little respect for their work and their opinions.*

If employees were able to participate, they felt taken seriously and valued and consequently had much more faith in the decisions.

## Participation

Sharing your feelings with colleagues can be a way of coping with the changes, although it sometimes leads to a negative atmosphere.

.....a supervisor who talks to his or her employees about the restructuring, providing scope for questions and reflections. But it is also a supervisor who participates in the decision making and the implementation of changes, and communicates about this.....

**In order to deal with lack of information, workers started to organise informal informational meetings themselves.**

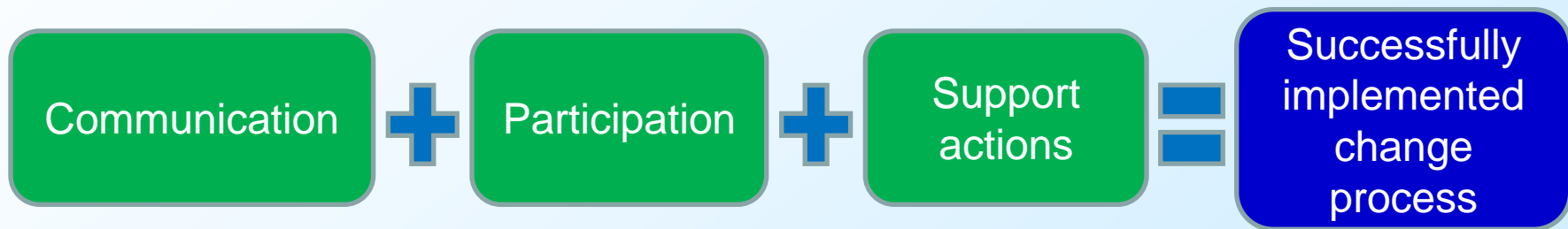
Support



# How do subgroups differ in how they cope with restructuring processes and adapting to the changing work situation?

- Results are mixed concerning age
- Possible differences are related to tenure, employability and flexibility

# What have we learned?





# Thank you for your attention!

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