

## Thought Leaders Episode 6 - New Work and Purpose.mp3

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:00:00] New work and purpose, what is the purpose of work and how can we actually empower people to be change makers?

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:00:06] In the New Work scene we have to take it to the next level and speak with the politicians and have to bring it on a societal level.

**Voiceover:** [00:00:15] Welcome to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders, your invitation to learn with us on the go.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:00:21] Welcome to a special Thought Leaders episode with Professor Dr. Laura Marie Edinger-Schons and Manuel Kreitmeir, in which we discuss and further explore the topic of New Work and Purpose, which was the theme of their recent openSAP course. I'm your host, Elisabeth Riemann, and I'm thrilled to welcome Laura and Manuel back to openSAP Invites. When course production started at the end of 2019, our working environments and routines were shifting due to digitalization and we were asking ourselves, what does work mean to us? How do we want to work in the future and what is the purpose of business? Nobody could have foreseen the dramatic and accelerated changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. So today we invite you to join us in a timely discussion with Laura and Manuel as we all begin to reflect, evaluate, and reconsider our future of work. Laura Marie Edinger-Schons, is a professor of corporate social responsibility at the University of Mannheim, Germany. In her research, she focused on how any kind of organization can contribute to sustainable development as defined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Laura's work has been published in many academic journals, including the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology and Journal of Business Ethics Manual. Manuel Kreitmeir is the chairman of Social Entrepreneurship Baden-Wuerttemberg and co-founder of the Digital Social Innovation Lab at the University of Mannheim, Germany. Manuel is an advisor for social entrepreneurship to the United Nations at the Diplomatic Council and works at the European Commission to facilitate the social economy. He is a social entrepreneur and co-founder of Ohana Social Enterprise, a B2B platform for coffee and tea farmers. Let's say hello.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:02:22] Hi Laura. Hi Manuel. Welcome both of you to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders.

**Manuel Kreitmeir** [00:02:29] Thank you for having us.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:02:30] Hi, Lizzie. Thank you for inviting us.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:02:32] You're very welcome.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:02:33] And it's great to have you both with us here today to talk about New Work and Purpose and your recent openSAP Thought Leader course at the same name. Now, New Work and Purpose is a truly fascinating topic that's relevant. First of all, not only our working environments evolving due to digitization, of course, but we're experiencing radical and accelerated change through the COVID-19 pandemic, too. So, I'm really grateful that we have the chance to discuss this with both of you here today. And to start our conversation, I'd like to focus on purpose and meaning and Laura, can I ask you first, what does meaningful work mean to you and maybe what's the hardest, or most challenging job you've ever done and why?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:03:15] That's a very good question I had to think about it for a little bit. So in our course, we actually refer to Fritjof Bergmann to talk about New Work, who is the initiator of the New Work movement and who said we should actually think about work as something that we really, really want instead of just enduring it like a mild sickness. Right. And saying, OK, the weekend is coming soon.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:03:37] If we look at the academic literature, meaningful work is usually understood as work that feels significant in some way and in the way that it contributes to something greater, like improving the lives of other people. And if you look at statistics of what people say are the most and least meaningful jobs, you can really see this. So, jobs that contribute to human well-being, which involve a lot of human interaction, are usually perceived as more meaningful, and dull repetitive jobs and jobs, which do not involve human interaction, are usually seen as less meaningful.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:04:10] And I have to say, my hardest work experience was that I did an internship in the German automotive industry, in the

procurement department, and it was a six-month internship. And after two weeks I thought, OK, now I've learnt everything that I can learn here. And then it was just repetition and it was the hardest thing I ever had to do. And there was no freedom. Then I knew that I had to search for a job that is different,

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:04:35] But really good experience, right to know what's right for you and what gives you your own individual meaning. And Manuel if I can ask you.

**Manuel Kreitmair :** [00:04:41] So I'm from the social entrepreneurship scene, right? So, we are trying to use economic means to solve social challenges. So, purpose is like in the core of our DNA, of what we do. And I see the good side. I see how people are going to get motivated and being motivated. And Laura and I, we co-founded the Digital Social Innovation Lab at the Uni Mannerheim, where we enable students to form their own digital social enterprises to solve social challenges. The hardest job. And it's very, very not that easy because like I would say physically, the hardest job that I had was working at my dad's farm, my dad, he migrated to Sri Lanka 20 years ago. And we have a spice and tea farm. And when I graduated, when I was working there for two years, that was really very hard like watering the plants and, you know, having the litchis and everything. But then I said, well, when I had your answer Laura, I have to say that's that's physically hard, but it's kind of rewarding.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:05:43] Thank you both. So, let's now talk specifically about New Work and Purpose, and can you explain to us what it signifies in a nutshell? How would you summarize the topic of New Work and Purpose for us?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:05:53] Manuel and I have met a couple of years ago already, and we always worked on topics around new forms of organizations. Right. So, what are companies going to be like in the future and there is a lot of change around that topic at the moment, which also means that work is changing. And we also thought about the topic of the purpose of companies, which I do in my job a lot and the purpose of work. So where are we going with our energy? Right. And what can we contribute to this world? And we felt that we actually have to bring these two topics together. And there is a lot of talk about New Work and there is a lot of talk about purpose. But we felt that these two topics have not really been brought together and discussed together. So that was our mission. We wanted to go out and talk to a lot of people about the

intersection of these two topics. New work, meaning new forms of organizing work, new forms of organizations, new forms of individual organization of work. And then, on the other hand, the purpose of what we do and especially the purpose of what we do in business. So, what do we actually contribute to societies beyond profits? Right.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:07:02] Thank you. And it's really interesting to hear about how you brought those topics together and then produce this course. And I think it's an impressive collaboration, if I may say, between the University of Mannheim, between Social Entrepreneurship Baden-Württemberg, and Mannheim Business School. And you handpicked, I think, almost 40 content experts to work on this course. And that's a mammoth project. So, what was the starting point there for you practically? How did you go about developing this course with so many different experts?

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:07:29] When we started, as Laura said, we went more into the topic of New Work and we went about, you know, doing research about the roots of New Work and what we saw actually what has been talking about, especially in the German New Work scene and what we have been reading about Fritjof Bergmann. And also what were the thoughts when this movement was started? We saw a big gap between theory and reality. So today, when we speak about New Work, especially in Germany, we speak about agile methodologies like Scrum, ... but also new offers. Right. But this is not New Work. Right. And they are trying to get something fancy out of it. And the discussion was very much focused on it. And also, in the New Work movement itself, there has been a tendency of some big companies to kind of capture this name and that this whole movement, where there was kind of a backlash. And I think we have been really being in this wave when there were a lot of people who actually starting this New Work movement, saw that doing this developing, they were not happy about it. Like they wanted to have to speak more deeply about new ways that we couldn't think about work. And I think when we started this idea with New Work and Purpose, the first thing that we did was identifying different stakeholders. Right. And then we just asked different stakeholders. And actually we were surprised that, like really leading New Work experts in Germany, but also politicians everywhere ready to speak with us because they thought that this is a topic that has to be addressed and not only speak about, you know, buzzwords and I think everybody was a bit annoyed from the way New Work was captured. And I think this is also why, you know, this whole course was going actually much more viral than we thought.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:09:16] And I think, you know, it's an amazing achievement over the space of five weeks. Right. You covered the topics of digitalization and labour markets, purpose and meaningfulness, corporate democracy, sustainability, and social entrepreneur intrapreneurship and is just incredible right there. They're really big topics. Each and every one of them, right?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:09:35] Yeah, right. We sat down at a table and we said, so now we have this idea of bringing the topic of New Work and Purpose together. So so what actually belongs to this whole broader nexus of topics? Right. And I mean, we both had our experiences academically and also practically and I think we actually produced a good mix of both. Right. We looked at the academic literature. We looked at the topics that have been tackled in academia. But we also took a lot from really anecdotal evidence from practice to build the concept of the course.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:10:08] And do you have a personal highlight of topics that you covered in the course, things that really stand out in your mind today?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:10:13] Yeah, my favorite topic is corporate democracy, I have to say. So that drives me since a couple of years. I really believe in this idea that companies should be more democratic. I mean, there is a lot of talk in academia and there is a very strong consensus now that companies need to change because you can see that multinational corporations now have huge power in the world. Right. You can see that we have multinational corporations that have more resources than small countries like Denmark. They are free to move these resources across the globe. They can ignore legal frameworks and regulations if they like, they can just move the resources to other countries, and we have a race to the bottom so that governments have to actually compete for companies to come to those countries. And I think this actually implies, you know, we know from Spiderman, big power comes with big responsibility.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:11:02] Absolutely it does, it's so true.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:11:04] And I think that we have to talk about legitimization of corporate activity. And companies make decisions that affect societies

in positive or negative ways, but they are not democratically elected and the ones that are making the decisions are not democratically legitimized. So, I think there is a huge topic around democracy and organizations, especially in those big for-profit multinational companies.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:11:28] And as you say, rightfully as well, it's a big responsibility that comes with that power. Right. And it's a matter of how they use it properly. That's really fascinating. Where can we find out more about that topic?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:11:38] I mean, there are a lot of academic papers which are admittedly very academic, but there is now also a lot of reports for business practice. And I mean, the terminology is very diverse, right? Sometimes it's called new forms of organizations, agile work, new work, and so on. But I think there is, in all of the different areas of society, in our movement to redefine the organizations that we are seeing in our societies. And that's a good thing. So, I think you can learn from all the different books. I think we have a very good list of books that we refer to in our MOOC, and I think that is a very good reading list, if you're interested in this topic.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:12:23] Will include those in the episode, show notes too, and so Manuel your favorite topics from the course?

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:12:29] Well, I have to say it is also called democracy, new organizational structures, even though, of course, like you, my home is social entrepreneurship. And I think at every topic we have great speakers and great anecdotes and academic evidence. But I think this topic is really something that makes us question the way we are organized within our own society, in our economy. And I think also this was the one where I actually got the most for myself, from the speakers that we interviewed. So, I remember when the interview with Andreas Zeuch from the Unternehmensdemokraten, he's like one one leading New Work expert in the field in Germany. And he told us that we only live in a half a democracy because we live in a democratic country, and we are proud of that. But then we go to work and that work, we have a bottom-down system that we don't question. And that really made me think. And also when we speak to, I think it was the same, same course where we interviewed Thomas Sattelberger and your colleague, Lennart Keil, where he speaks about unlearning hierarchies within SAP or from the political side, where even politicians like

Thomas Sattelberger say that we need more self-governance within corporations. And I think it my scene like social entrepreneurship scene we represent a lot of very early adopters of that, like Einhorn, for example, Einhorn Berlin who do vegan condoms, for example, and they have a completely holacratic model, which I think is good to to put forward the agenda. But then also, I think it's very interesting to compare this with big companies like, for example, SAP, and then you realize, well, you know what many of you will think in a small start-up with 20, 25 people, it's not that feasible for big corporations. But I think it's very important to have this conversation. And I, I personally I don't think that is an easy answer, but I think it's very important to have, especially in the times that we are in. And also what Laura said, like the power just big corporations have and the responsibility they have, there has to be new forms of stakeholder development. So, yeah I have to say, that was my favorite, my favorite part.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:14:44] And I have to say the feedback on your course truly was excellent. One learner positions it in the top three of their all-time favorite openSAP courses. And it, it's wow. Well done. And another learner also praises the excellent overview of contemporary scientific discussions and expert interviews. And that's one of my favorite aspects of your course, too. It really is such a rich summary of various topics, so much food for thought there. And one of the aspects that I really do like I was pleased to see in the course, is the topic of mindfulness, which is a recurring theme throughout your different weeks as well. And in week one, Manuel, you present the topic together with Dr. Björn Pospiech and you explain how New Work and purpose and mindfulness really go hand in hand. And so, I wanted to ask you again today, can you summarize that here for our listeners,

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:15:31] Dr. Björn Pospiech is a colleague of mine who I've been working since a very long time, mindfulness entrepreneurship coach who has really tremendous work, and he was one of the lecturers of the DNA lab at the University of Mannheim. One of the lectures also incorporates mindfulness. Laura and I just said, well, we should have this in our course as well, right. And so, the idea is that when we want to change our behavior and we want to change our thinking, we have to start somehow, mindfulness is a side of your own well-being. And we see this, for example, with the Corona response. I've seen a lot of companies and also the government where they had subsidies for trainers in order to organize distance learning, organize home office and so on, so forth.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:16:13] And exactly what Manuel said I think is true, if disruptions happen and that can be a disruption like this pandemic at the moment, but it can also be an organizational transformation where you take out structures like if you're trying to move towards more corporate democracy and you're taking out hierarchies, that can also lead to a lot of confusion and insecurity amongst employees. Right.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:16:34] And I think that mindfulness is a very interesting topic that companies should focus on, because if we talk, for example, to Uwe Lübbermann, in one of our interviews in the in the course, you said that when people come to Premium Cola and they have worked for other companies previously, that he calls it, they have pre-damages from other companies. So, they come into Premium Cola and for example, they ask all the questions like, my child is sick, can I go home? Can I stop working for today? And he says, well, you don't have to ask that question. And he says the pre-damages that people have from the other system, from the other system, they're shocking. Yeah. And I think that every time you have something that is leading to a change in the situation and that can be, as I said, an organizational transformation or something unexpected, like at the moment, then you have to have strong people that actually can deal with these disruptions.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:17:30] So Laura in the course you share this quote, and I find this really interesting, I love it. Our studies show there's a higher purpose communicated in a company only unfolds its positive effects at employee level if the people in the organization feel empowered to be a part of this higher purpose. And so, I was wondering, now that our lives have really been shaped through COVID-19, how significant is empowerment and our intrinsic need for purpose and meaning right now?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:17:57] If you want to move towards new forms of organizing and business, you have to also empower the people to be able to take over that new role. So, a lot of companies now also the big for-profit companies are defining their higher purpose beyond making profits. They are trying to move towards more agile forms of organizing work. And I think that that is first, it's a good thing, it's a good thing that we see this happening. We have five of the 30 DAX companies in Germany that now have a formal higher purpose statement on their website, which means that the you



know the past where we had the for-profit companies and the non-profit world, it's really breaking up right. We have a lot of shades in between for-profit and non-profit. We have social businesses, social enterprises, and so on. But that also requires companies to think about how they can empower people to take over this new role in the organization. And what I see in companies at the moment is that if the purpose only comes from the top, if there is top management that thinks about, you know, we have to have the fancy purpose statement on our website, but they don't change the organization itself, they don't change the system of hierarchies...

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:19:13] ...If they don't think about, for example, having courses on efficiency, self-determination and strength for the employees, then it won't work. This whole transformation is doomed to fail because this is nothing, you know, you can't just put on an organization from the top. You really have to go into the organization and change everything about it. Right. So, our companies from the past, with the hierarchies and these organizational charts with, you know, who is responsible for what, it's just not the reality anymore. But what we see in organizations is at the moment that people say, I'm really challenged by this. I don't know, what is my job role? And this is beyond my pay. They have to learn about these new roles that they are taking over. And I think that that is going to be the biggest challenge in the upcoming years to really think about purpose and work. What is the purpose of work and how can we actually empower people to be change makers?

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:20:13] We need to be those change makers, as you say as well. And empowerment is really key.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:20:16] I mean, what we already see at the moment is that many companies are trying to build new programs for, for example, social intrapreneurship. Manuel is a social entrepreneur, so he is really going his own path. He has his own company trying to tackle an important social issue or environmental issue. And what we see in companies is that they now see this innovative potential in employees, and they try to create that forums and programs for employees to be change makers in the organization. I mean, that SAP, you have the one billion loss program. Other companies like FFA starting ventures or building is a very good example. They do a lot of social intrapreneurship work. And I think that if companies don't do that, they actually miss a huge potential because employees are looking for

meaningful work and they have creative potential amongst people who are highly skilled workers and organizations. The companies have to compete to get those people. I think what they have to think about more is the jobs where people are not, you know, these sort of highly skilled workers because we also have a big proportion of people that don't have a degree from a top business school. And how do we actually create conditions in which those people can find good jobs and and their work? And I think these are usually the silent stakeholders, right. They don't have power to stand up in the organization. And I think that somebody else has to speak up for them. And if we, as the privileged few can do that, I think that's a role that we actually should take over and we should stand up for for those segments of society as well.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:21:56] And what do you say to sceptics who, there still are sceptics who dismiss New Work and Purpose as maybe another passing trend? I mean, that's not the reality that I'm seeing and witnessing right now. So how do you view that debate and around purpose and relevance to what do you say? What's your response?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:22:11] I can maybe just look back in time when I finished my Ph.D. 2011 and I said, I want to do something on the topic of corporate social responsibility and sustainability. A lot of people said, don't do it. You're never going to get a job. This is a topic that is going to pass. And I have to say, before that decision, I lived in Indonesia for three and a half years and I saw a lot of the consequences of our global supply chains. For example, I travelled I mean, Manuel is in the same situation he grew up in Sri Lanka. And if you have experienced what our economies do to places that are not directly visible here in the Western world, it's very hard to imagine that the sustainability trend is passing because we can see that what we have done to our planet and what we are doing to the people on the planet is creating damage that is going to take decades to repair. And we're going to have to think about other forms of economies in the future. The number of people on the planet is increasing. Resources are limited. We are currently using more than one planet. And this is something that is going to change into a direction that is even more severe. Climate change is already visible in many parts of the world. And if people tell me this whole trend is going to pass, I just have to say that there is always going to be people that don't want to see this truth because it is not easy. It's very complex. And the solutions that we have to think about are very complex. But I think that it doesn't make sense to wait. It doesn't make sense to close our eyes and to think this would go away.

We have to just realize that we are facing these complex issues and that we have to find solutions.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:24:02] No, I agree. And it's kind of our responsibility. We're in a position of luxury and privilege in many cases. And it's very easy maybe to turn a blind eye to something we're not impacted directly ourselves, but the evidence is there that we need to act now.

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:24:16] I would say that what Laura said I want to emphasize that it's always actually the same. Right. And Laura, you being in sustainability, and I'm coming from social entrepreneurship. Both were, you know, are seen as trends long time ago. And I have now been working since years and social partnership. And when we started, it was always against the trend. Next year will be over, next year will be over. And each year the whole movement grows and became more important and more connected and relevant within politics and companies. I think that the core of what we're talking about is that we're talking of about real systemic issues here. So, when we once realize that it's not like a nice to have feature sustainability or taking over social responsibility, in Germany we have the big discussions about supply chains at the moment. So, this is something that we have real problems like the refugee crisis, climate change that have to have to be tackled. And we are losing more and more people in the belief that our system works. And as somebody who's working between very different actors and also working a lot with social enterprises that work on the ground, I can tell you that people mostly who dismiss this as a trend they also live in their own corporate bubble mostly, and with people who think very similarly. And also, when we look at the way business schools are structured. Right. Like there's a very particular way how this people are also trained. You go from your Abitur, A-Level and then you go into your university and you're always surrounded by people who think very similar to you and you go into a corporate job and then after maybe years and years, you will be confronted with these topics. Of course, this might strike you as odd, but when you actually look beyond that, we see that also in Germany, but globally even more. I think USA is a very good example of losing a lot of people in the belief that the system works. So, with what is this replaced? Even if we don't have any suggestions with what kind of system, democratic capitalistic system, we want to replace this.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:26:27] Last week, I just met our federal minister, Gerd Müller, who is really trying to push this law, which means that companies would have to take responsibility for what happens in their supply chains, human rights infringements in their supply chains. And there is the other camp that says, well, you know, in times of COVID-19, companies are already under pressure and we cannot put more pressure on them. And then they have new reporting duties and may have to face additional costs. But at the moment, we are in a situation where companies that take over responsibility and that try to do sustainable business have a competitive disadvantage compared to companies that exploit those room for being irresponsible. And that is completely unacceptable. And especially in a time of such a crisis, we have to see that everything is connected in the world. We cannot see our different economies as something disconnected. And we have to take over that responsibility if we want to create a sustainable future for our people on this planet, right?

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:27:30] Absolutely. We're all connected. And the COVID-19 pandemic is truly showing that we're not individual economies, countries. We really all globally connected with every single impact as well. So how is this discussion really shaping New Work and Purpose? How are things evolving right now and what's affecting your work in research now, most visibly?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:27:50] I get a lot of enquiries from companies that invite me to discuss these topics and sometimes not only with the top management, but sometimes especially with groups of employees. They want to define how they work in the future, what is the new normal? And I think that's great. So as an academic institution, we now can become an objective platform for all the different companies to meet to discuss these topics. And I think the big questions are first, of course, what is the purpose of business in the future? What is the role of companies in our societies in the future? And what is then the role of the individual employee in co-creating that new form of business? Many companies now are actually having I mean, at the beginning of the pandemic, I think everybody was really focused on surviving. And now the first questions come up about how are we going to work in the future? And so we have a lot of these roundtables, a lot of these discussions like, next week, for example, I have a discussion with two hundred employees from a company here in the Rhine Neckar region discussing which role employees can play in this transformation of work and purpose in companies. And I think that the most important questions are really how are

we going to organize all of this in the upcoming months? So, I think if you look at the really salient issues, do we need offices like we have them in the past? I mean, are the companies really seeing that the the function of the office is changing? Right. [00:29:20] You don't go to the office, sit down and do your work. Many people work from the home office, but when they go to the company, they want to actually have a social interaction with the others. They want to use the office as a place for social gatherings and a concept of what a company headquarters looks like and how work is organized. That has to be completely rethought from scratch. [00:29:44]

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:29:45] Definitely times that really changing the way we work and interact. And that social interaction is so important to us right now. And Manuel, what are you observing right now? How are things changing with your work and your focus?

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:29:56] There's a big gap between the ones who are highly affected by the pandemic and the ones who actually have more to do, which, as I said, I think has something to do with the way corporates understand New Work and also how we communicate New Work. So actually, what we see right now is kind of a bottom up in the New Work scene. We have to take it to the next level and speak with politicians and have to bring it on a societal level. But also to do that, we see that some of the things that we're trying to tackle within organizations are actually systemic issues. So this is also something where there's a lot of talk about what can the New Work movement actually provide for politics or for the society not to change and what incentives of companies have to change. And I think that Laura just brought a very great example of that. In a moment. We have a situation where it's actually a disadvantage, at least momentarily, to be more responsible within your supply chains. So those are the things that they have to change because of the long term. We cannot expect companies to deal competitively and do things that actually we are giving different incentives for. And I think one of the initiatives, Laura, that you're doing at the moment is really tapping into that about corporate democracy.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:31:08] This topic really leads to very polarized reactions. So, if you talk to people who are already interested in your work, agile methods and so on, they are very open and they say, wow, our corporate democracy, great idea. Let's learn about that. And then if you talk to more traditional business

people and very traditional companies, it's not just that they doubt the concept and that they discard it as something utopian, but they really get angry. So, I have experienced talks where I spoke about democracy and companies and people attacked me verbally because they got so angry and and furious about this whole idea that companies should be something that is similar to a political system.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:31:59] Do you think there's some element of fear involved in that aggressive reaction which is completely out of order?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:32:04] So I think that democracy in organizations, if we think about democracy and big business, means that you are taking power away from the top, because at the moment we have a steep pyramid of power and hierarchies and we're not going to move directly to a situation where everybody is equal. But gradually moving towards corporate democracy means taking away power from the people at the top. And that creates fear, especially amongst those ranks. Right. And taking away power also means maybe taking away certain privileges that they have. And at the moment, we have a situation in which people at the top, not only in an organizational hierarchy, but also in a society, a system of inequality. We can see that people at the top exploit a lot of benefits from the people at the bottom. And if you talk about changing that system, of course, there will be resistance. But I think that's a discussion that we have to have, because if we look at inequalities in the world, they were there before COVID-19, but COVID-19 really enforced and let's simplify it, really amplify these these inequalities to a degree that we cannot accept it and it's not going to work in the future like this.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:33:23] And where can we find out more about the Democratizing Work Initiative?

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:33:27] So there is actually a lot of material online. There is the website where you can read about its goals and its mission, but there is also a lot of good talks on YouTube that are freely available where you can read up about this specific movement. But there are different movements, there are petitions, there are groups of people working on this topic. And I think it's something that is starting to become a bigger movement.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:33:53] And when we conclude these episodes, I'd like to ask, I guest, to summarize three key aspects from our discussion that you'd like us as listeners to remember.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:34:03] So maybe when we talk about the individual level, I think that's the most important thing because we can only be a force of change on our individual level. Right. And there is one thing that I found very inspiring in the Japanese tradition. There is this notion of Ikigai, which I think is a perfect summary of what we discussed.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:34:23] You should actually look for a job which is at the intersection of what you're good at, what you get paid for, what you love, and what the world needs. And I think that for me, that was always a very good guidepost. Right. Maybe the second thing that I would like to stress is that if you found that idea of what you would like to do with your energy in this life, then you have to have the strength to ask for it and to ask questions and to demand from your employer to give you that room to be that person, that changemaker. This requires a situation at which you have to be brave. You really have to stand up for what is right and you have to ask questions and to demand that freedom. The last thing that you have to if you found that situation, you will be privileged. We should not forget that there are people who don't have that privilege. And I think it's our responsibility to actually take over that role in society.

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:35:16] So my takeaways would be, don't be afraid of questioning the status quo. We can always complain, but we cannot change other people or we can change ourselves. And it is a willingness to take a risk. It's OK that initiatives fail and then we try and you try again and you adapt them.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:35:32] Thank you so much to both of you, to Laura and to Manuel. It's been absolutely fascinating talking to you about New Work and Purpose, talking about meaning, and I've taken away a lot of food for thought. And thank you so much for your time today.

**Manuel Kreitmeir :** [00:35:47] Thank you very much.

**Laura Marie Edinger-Schons:** [00:35:48] Thank you for having us.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** [00:35:52] Thanks for listening to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders with Laura Marie Edinger-Schons and Manuel Kreitmair. If you enjoyed this episode, please share, rate, and leave a review and don't miss your next invite. Subscribe now.