# THE THEME

*The organizing nature and quality of jobs drive behavior in organizations and make a difference in the lives of working individuals. Job design – the content and organization of one's work tasks, activities, relationships, and responsibilities (Parker, 2014) – is either directly or indirectly, positively or negatively related to various personal, work, and organizational outcomes. It represents a useful human resource management tool that has drawn much attention from psychologists, economists and sociologists over the last hundred years (e.g., Oldham & Fried, 2016; Parker, Morgeson, & Johns, 2017). While questions of inquiry might remain the same across generations of researchers (i.e. how to make people, jobs and organizations more effective), the uncertain business environment, technological developments and competitive requirements are dramatically changing how, where, and when work is done.*

*The nature and context of work is now very different, and particularly more complex than it was only a few years ago. The barriers between work and life have been all but eliminated, and employees are "always on"; hyper-connected to their jobs through pervasive mobile technology (DUP, 2015). The extant research is mostly silent (or not loud enough) about contemporary changes occurring in the organizational landscape. In addition, the majority of job design research thus far has been conducted in most developed countries (e.g., USA, United Kingdom, and Netherlands) while some other national or specific work settings have been underexplored. For instance, we are particularly lacking empirical evidence on how jobs are designed within the public sector or for a cohort of unionized workforce, and there is yet to be determined to what extent job design theory propositions and positive organizational scholarship postulates are valid around the Globe.*

*Therefore, the aim and scope of this Special Issue is to examine how contemporary (and future) jobs should be designed to provide positive outcomes both for individuals and organizations within less-explored EU countries (i.e. Croatia and Slovenia). A group of scholars with different institutional backgrounds shows how a diverse set of structural (e.g., formalization, centralization, network density) and job characteristics (e.g. job demands, job resources, flexible working arrangements) shape different work outcomes, such as employee health, quality of working life, learning and knowledge, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational performance.*

*Specifically, Tadić Vujčić conducted a two-wave longitudinal study showing that nurses, despite having very high job demands, can mobilize their personal resources and develop high work engagement by proactive interaction with their work environment. Marić, Hernaus, Tadić Vujčić and Černe also built on the job-demands resources theory in their multisource study to illustrate how job design characteristics are indirectly (via work engagement) related to employees' organizational citizenship*

*behavior.* Dežmar Krainz, Mikulić, Koren *and* Zavalić *applied the PLS-SEM methodology to show the buffering effect of job resources on the negative relationship between job demands and mental health of public transportation drivers.* Galić, Parmač Kovačić *and* Vehovec *revealed through a large-scale comparative research that older workers in Croatia perceive their quality of working life lower than younger Croatian workers, as well as than their peers from other EU countries.* Klindžić *and* Marić, *following the CRANET methodology, recognized that work-life balance arrangements and employer-driven flexible working arrangements have an opposite influence on both financial and non-financial organizational outcomes. Finally,* Sitar, Bogilović *and* Pahor *capitalized on organizational network theory to show that employees use informal in-degree centrality for internal learning, whereas informal out-degree centrality has been used to disseminate knowledge obtained from outside the organization (i.e. external learning).*

*Perspectives from different disciplines (organizational psychology/behavior, human resource management, social psychology, occupational health, and public administration) and a variety of research approaches taken in this Special Issue (mediation and moderation regression analyses, pretest/posttest measurement study, comparative research design, social network analysis, PLS-SEM) offer useful theoretical and practical insights based on different datasets. Individual-, job- and/or organizational-level data covering both private- and public-sector organizations and employees hopefully shed a new light on the existing job design theory as well as offer practical solutions for a better organizational life. Conclusions made by authors seek to move beyond a descriptive overview of the current state of affairs, and rather strive to offer prescriptive guidance to policy makers, managers and employees about alternatives that might be followed for shaping positive and effective work environments. Ultimately, we hope that this Special Issue will encourage researchers to further explore the highly relevant and ever-changing world of work.*

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