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Guest lecture by Prof. Dr. Veronika Brandstätter-Morawietz

Guest lecture on the 28th November 2024, 15.00 - 16:30, Liebiggasse 5, 1010 Vienna, Lecture hall G

"ESCALATING COMMITMENT AND GOAL DISENGAGEMENT"

Escalating commitment and delayed goal disengagement pose a threat to financial, psychological, and physical outcomes. Some decades ago, escalating commitment (i. e., sticking to a failing course of action) has been in the focus of social and organizational psychological research. A heterogeneous set of theoretical concepts (e.g., self-justification, causal attribution, sunk costs, decisions under uncertainty) and diverse methodological approaches (i.e., experimental lab and field studies, case studies of real economic investments) were used to explain delayed goal disengagement, mostly in economic contexts. When researchers became interested in the phenomenon of escalating commitment and issues of disengagement in personal goal striving, the analysis of motivational and self-regulatory processes came to the fore. Most generally, one line of research looked at individual differences in the capacity to disengage from futile endeavors, another scrutinized the dynamic cognitive and affective processes involved when, after recurring setbacks, disengagement from a goal becomes an issue. Despite theoretical progress, there is still a long way to go to fully understand what drives escalation of commitment and delayed goal disengagement. In the talk, an integrative theoretical approach is presented that conceives of escalation of commitment as a dynamic decision process in which hope and despair balance each other out leading to delayed goal disengagement. In this process individual differences, goal characteristics, and situational opportunities and constraints are hypothesized to interact.

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