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Expertise – finding motivation and meaningfulness in telecommuting

Independent expert work as an important intrinsic value

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study was to examine how experts of a Finnish bank experience their work and the meaningfulness of work, when the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a transition to regular telework already for the third year in a row and the conditions are otherwise exceptional as the pandemic continues. The research question of the study was: "How experts find motivation and meaningfulness in work, and how telecommuting is shaping the way work is experienced?"

The theoretical basis of the research is the most well-known theories in the motivation literature and research on the meaningfulness of work. To date, there is scarce information on telework based on relevant empirical research, which is why the focus was on articles and most reliable surveys upon Finnish conditions. For interpretivist research, the data was obtained by interviewing and observing experts from a Finnish bank. Abundant data consisting of six approximately 1.5-hour semi-structured interviews were coded, themed, interpreted, and classified using content analysis.

The results of the study revealed from the data as main categories based on the content analysis. Expertise in terms of experiencing work as a common denominator of the immediate factors is the most important message of the study. Expertise combines autonomy, competence, self-development, and the atmosphere of the immediate team. Second relevant result is the description of the workplace atmosphere that indirectly affects experiencing work and its meaning. The third result is the effects of telecommuting in general and on the workplace atmosphere in particular, which is concretized by the quotations in the study when discussing the future of telework.

Equally important are the results that did not meet the expectations created by prior knowledge. Based on previous research, one of the basic factors in experiencing work is feedback, but the participants in this study did not consider it important. The same goes for the sense of community that has been emphasized recently, as it did not prove important in this study. A surprising result was also that there was no "drama" in this study about switching to telecommuting, teleworking, or returning to office work.

This narrow but profound interpretivist study showed that the generalization of research data on social phenomena must be approached with caution. An interpretivist perspective on the contextualization of knowledge about the social world was confirmed in this study. The study revealed, both clearly expressed, and observed from the facial expressions and gestures, that expertise, the most important result of the research, also has an emotional dimension: the inviolability of expertise is experienced as a very valuable matter.

KEYWORDS: autonomy, expertise, meaningfulness of work, motivation, self-development, telecommuting, organizational climate

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli tutkia kuinka suomalaisen pankin asiantuntijat kokevat työnsä ja työnsä merkityksellisyyden, kun COVID-19 pandemia on aiheuttanut siirtymisen jo kolmatta vuotta jatkuvaan säännölliseen etätyöhön ja olosuhteet ovat muutoinkin poikkeukselliset pandemian edelleen jatkuessa. Työn tutkimuskysymyksenä oli: ”How experts find motivation and meaningfulness in work, and how telecommuting is shaping the way work is experienced?”

Tutkimuksen teoreettisena pohjana ovat motivaatiokirjallisuudesta tunnetuimmat teoriat ja työn merkityksellisyyttä käsittelevät tutkimukset. Etätyöstä on toistaiseksi niukasti relevanttiin empiiriseen tutkimukseen perustuvaa tietoa, minkä takia keskityttiin suomalaisiin olosuhteisiin perustuviin artikkeleihin ja luotettavimpiin kyselyihin. Tulkitsevaa tutkimusta varten hankittiin aineisto haastatteleamalla ja havainnoimalla suomalaisen pankin asiantuntijoita. Kuudesta noin 1,5 tunnin mittaisesta puolistrukturoidusta haastattelusta koostuva runsas data koodattiin, teemoitettiin, tulkittiin ja luokiteltiin sisällönanalyysia käyttäen.

Tutkimuksen tulokset avautuivat datasta sisällönanalyysin perusteella pääluokkina. Asiantuntijuus työn kokemisen kannalta välittömien tekijöiden yhteisenä nimittäjä on tutkimuksen tärkein sanoma. Asiantuntijuudessa yhdistyvät autonomia, pätevyys ja kehittyminen ja lähitiimin työilmapiiri. Toinen olennainen tulos on kuvaus työn kokemiseen välillisesti vaikuttavasta työilmapiiristä ja sen merkityksestä. Kolmas tulos on etätyön vaikutukset yleensä ja erityisesti työilmapiiriin, jota konkretisoivat tutkimuksessa lainatut puheenvuorot keskusteltaessa etätyön jatkosta.

Yhtä tärkeitä tuloksia ovat ne, joita ei ennakkotietämyksen luomista odotuksista poiketen saatu. Aikaisempien tutkimusten perusteella työn kokemisen yksi perustekijä on palaute, mutta tähän tutkimukseen osallistuneet eivät pitäneet sitä tärkeänä. Sama koskee viime aikoina korostettua yhteisöllisyyttä. Tässä tutkimuksessa yhteisöllisyys ei osoittautunut tärkeäksi. Yllättävä tulos oli myös se, että enempää etätyöhön siirtymisestä, etätyössä olemisesta kuin lähityöhön palaamisesta tässä tutkimuksessa ei saatu ”suurta draamaa”.

Tämä suppea mutta syvä interpretivistinen tutkimus osoitti, että sosiaalisia ilmiöitä koskevan tutkimustiedon yleistämiseen on suhtauduttava varoen. Interpretivistisen perspektiivin käsitys sosiaalista maailmaa koskevan tiedon kontekstisidonnaisuudesta vahvistui tässä tutkimuksessa. Tutkimuksessa selvisi sekä selvästi ilmaistuna, että havainnoituna ilmeistä ja eleistä, että asiantuntijuudella, tutkimuksen olennaisimmalla tuloksella, on myös emotionaalinen dimensio: asiantuntijuuden loukkaamattomuus koetaan erittäin arvokkaaksi asiaksi.

KEYWORDS: autonomia, asiantuntijuus, työn merkityksellisyys, motivaatio, itsensä kehittäminen, etätyö, organisaatioilmasto

Contents

1	Introduction	9
2	Literature review	14
2.1	Meaning of work	14
2.1.1	Meaningfulness of work	14
2.1.2	Meaning of work in general terms	16
2.2	Motivation and job satisfaction	18
2.2.1	Maslow and the Hierarchy of Needs	19
2.2.2	Herzberg and the Two-Factor Theory	20
2.2.3	Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model	21
2.2.4	Action Regulation Theory	23
2.2.5	Self-determination theory	25
2.2.6	Summary of good works characteristics	25
2.3	Telecommuting	28
2.3.1	The roots of telecommuting	29
2.3.2	Telecommuting and job satisfaction	31
2.3.3	Telecommuting and COVID-19	32
2.4	Organizational culture	33
2.4.1	Culture's heyday as the 1980s	35
2.4.2	Sudden popularity and quick fading	36
2.4.3	The nature of organizational culture	37
2.4.4	The illusion of homogenous culture	40
2.4.5	Culture and performance	40
2.4.6	Culture versus climate	41
2.5	People and work in organizational dynamics	44
3	Methodology	47
3.1	Research strategy	47
3.1.1	Theoretical basis	47
3.1.2	Theoretical perspective of the study	49
3.1.3	Interpretivism as a theoretical perspective	52

3.1.4	Summary of interpretivism	54
3.1.5	Methodological choice of the study	55
3.2	Methods	58
3.2.1	Data collecting (Interviews – Bank)	58
3.2.2	Data analysis	59
3.2.3	Interpretation	60
3.2.4	Case selection – Bank	61
4	Findings	63
4.1	Interviews and the results	63
4.1.1	Acquisition of data	63
4.1.2	Job satisfaction and motivation factors	64
4.1.3	Meaningfulness of work	73
4.1.4	Organizational climate	80
4.2	Themes and categories	83
4.3	Overview of the findings	86
4.3.1	Expertise	87
4.3.2	Working atmosphere and expertise	93
4.3.3	Effects of telecommuting on experiencing work	94
4.4	Summary of the key findings and the revised framework	108
4.4.1	Coding, themes and categories	108
4.4.2	Expertise – the message of study	112
4.4.3	Workplace atmosphere and expertise	114
4.4.4	Effects of telecommuting – no drama	115
5	Discussion	117
5.1	Theoretical implications	117
5.2	Managerial implications	120
5.3	Suggestions for future research	122
5.4	Limitations	123
	References	125

Appendices	133
Appendix 1. Script of the interview	133
Appendix 2. Complementary form	137

Figures

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987)	19
Figure 2. Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975)	23
Figure 3. Characteristics of experiencing work	28
Figure 4. Theoretical framework of the study	46
Figure 5. Steps for analysing data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002: 111)	61
Figure 6. Themes and subcategories	84
Figure 7. Expertise as the main category of this study	87
Figure 8. Detailed structure of the main category of expertise from the themes and subcategories	88
Figure 9. Four-square table (based on Hakanen, 2017; Nurmi, 2022)	91
Figure 10. Telecommuting and social relations	106
Figure 11. Themes to subcategories	110
Figure 12. Subcategories to main categories	111
Figure 13. Expertise	112

Tables

Table 1. Meaning of work (Fox, 1980; Herriot et al., 1998; Martela & Pessi, 2018; EVA, 2019)	16
Table 2. JCM (Oldham & Hackman, 1975) and ART (Volpert, 1990)	26
Table 3. Theoretical perspective of the study	55
Table 4. Job satisfaction and motivation factors	65
Table 5. Meaningfulness of work	75
Table 6. Dimensions of the organizational climate	81

Table 7. The state of the working atmosphere	93
Table 8. 1. Combining work, home and leisure during telecommuting	97
Table 9. 2. Experiencing work and feedback	99
Table 10. 3. The state of the working atmosphere	100

1 Introduction

“All the swans we have seen have been white. Therefore, all swans are white.” This was a common belief in Europe until 1697, when Dutch explorers became the first Europeans to see black swans in Australia and a while later also in New Zealand. The term “black swan” has later been used to describe the uncertainty of scientific reasoning even based on solid findings – there are never enough observations that a perceived impossibility could not later be disproven. Lebanese-born mathematician, broker, and future philosopher Nassim Taleb discussed “black swan” events and its symbolics in his 2007 book, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. Taleb considers highly unlikely and completely unpredictable events that might impact the whole world: The dissolution of the Soviet Union, Internet, September 11 attacks, 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, 2008 Financial crisis etc. Although Taleb refers to extensive and devastating epidemics that shook up the world like SARS (2003) and the bird flu (2006), he probably was not expecting while writing his book that already ten years later Covid-19, a pandemic started from China (2019/2020), would be troubling the world. The coronavirus pandemic resurfaced Taleb’s 2007 book again as a bestseller, after all a pandemic of this magnitude, the Spanish flu, last raged on Earth one century ago.

“Work becomes disconnected from place, people not from work”, is how Helsingin Sanomat, the leading newspaper in Finland, wrote in their leading article to raise thoughts around the currently relevant and discussed topic of telecommuting (Helsingin Sanomat, 23.10.2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has driven people to work remotely and changed the way of working and how people view work. The citation describes well the present: the pandemic and the increased telework has diminished the line between work and leisure, and permanently changed the life of many people. Researcher Alexandra Samuel (Wall Street Journal) also wrote aptly about the ending of the pandemic (published in Helsingin Sanomat, 8.8.2021): “Teleworking has changed many workers in an extreme way – It is necessary to be prepared for the return of completely different people that once left the office.” The Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA has been performing

value and attitude surveys on a regular basis since 1984, their latest study being published just before the corona pandemic: "For Finns, the most important meaning of work comes from money." Telecommuting has caused a dramatic shift to the way of doing work, and its meanings, which is why the previous results require re-examination.

"Organization Culture and COVID-19" (Spicer, 2020), "How to Sustain Your Organization's Culture When Everyone is Remote" (Howard-Grenville, 2020), "Paradigm shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic" (Howe et. al., 2020), here are some examples of studies by distinguished researchers that present the concern caused by COVID-19 regarding the massively increased telecommuting and its effects on organizational cultures. Finland's most notable economic life publication wrote in their editorial 30.7.2021 (Economic Life 26/2021): "In the fall employees and employers are amongst some big questions. What is the meaning of work community? How long corporate culture and community spirit can be cherished in Teams?" The headlines above show again that the rumours of organizational culture learnings dying, that had their high point in 1980s, were premature (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 115, 135-136; Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 72-75; Grey, 2013, p. 79-80). Palmer and Hardy (2000, p. 115) stated in their book that some people think culture is nowhere near ready to be consigned to the graveyard of organizational history, and it has repeatedly "risen from the dead". Now while waiting for the COVID-19 pandemic to pass, the question is, if culture can save the ways of collaboration possibly harmed by telecommuting (Spicer, 2020; Howard-Grenville, 2020). For that reason, what has been studied from organizational culture needs to be introduced, chosen and gathered for this study.

The coronavirus pandemic, the "black swan" of our current time, has impacted everyone's daily life as different recommendations and restrictions have been forced to be introduced to tackle the spreading of the disease. The starting year of the pandemic (2020) had already been named as the "year of the black swan", but the nomination was premature: the year 2020 has passed and the forecasts of the ending of Covid-19 have been moved further and further to the future, and the instructions, prohibitions and

recommendations are alternately eased and increased. Organizations and the people directly dependent on them have widely been affected by the pandemic. Whole industries (i.e. restaurant, air traffic, tourism/travelling, entertainment, culture, events) have been completely or partly at a standstill, and the people they employ without work since the beginning of 2020. The way of doing work has changed for many, and the main question is which changes will last and which return to the "old normal". The discussion around telecommuting in the media, dozens of published newspaper articles, first broader reports based on surveys and my own and my colleagues' experiences have made telecommuting an interesting and relevant phenomenon to be studied and used as the theme in my Master's thesis. The possibility to collect the data for the case-study in this exceptional situation in real time, by living and sharing experiences with my colleagues and subjects of interest, supports the selection of the topic.

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate the phenomenon based on the research literature regarding expert- and remote work, and critically discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined the relevance of existing studies. The high-quality articles and surveys (Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA, 2019; Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, 2020; Akava Works, 2020; Nurmi, 2022; Mönkkönen, 2022, Hakanen, 2021) already published during the pandemic are used to gain ground for this research, but also to find new untreated themes. The scientific contribution of the study is the participation in the scientific discussion around telecommuting by complementing the phenomenon as currently known by the own findings. The theoretical discussion of organizational ontology in the thesis can offer new ideas to consider regarding the rapidly changed nature of organizational culture in this exceptional global situation.

The purpose of this study is tap into this research opportunity by answering the following question:

- 1. How do experts find motivation and meaningfulness in work, and how telecommuting is shaping the way work is experienced?***

This study contributes to the literature in three ways: it defines the different dimensions of experiencing work based on the research literature, what kind of knowledge have we gained from telecommuting based on the present studies and surveys, and what is the meaning and importance of workplace atmosphere in experiencing work. The way people experience and enjoy their work is often seen to be related to the general well-being, and especially the well-being at work of individuals, which directly impacts their motivation and therefore the effectiveness of work. These factors have been discussed in work life a long time by studying for example job satisfaction (i.a. Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1968; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Volpert, 1990) and how people experience the meaning of the work (i.a. Martela & Pessi, 2018; Fox, 1980; Herriot et al., 1998). As telecommuting is slowly dispelling the traditional ways of personal intercommunications in work communities and other established organizational structures, also subconscious ones, the question is how the “new” organization without established formations is seen? Work environment and organizational culture have significant impact as the builder and suppressor of positively experiencing work among individuals, how can these areas be strengthened while working remotely?

The thesis gathers data from employees working remotely in a banking company by in-depth and half-structured interviews and narratives, and to interpret this data to understand and explain how the subjects have experienced telecommuting so far in the different stages of the pandemic. The banking industry is often seen as a highly regulated and rigid industry with traditional ways of doing work, therefore the unexpected and sudden shift towards working remotely has had a significant impact in the field. The organizations have had to reshape their working methods and organizational structures to tackle the challenges caused by the pandemic. Individuals have had to adjust their working behaviours to match the new criteria and expectations of the firms and especially customers. The stability and strength of the organizational culture are measured as individuals search for unity in facing the completely new situation. Essential is to find out how work is experienced and to find concrete suggestions to match the organizational culture with the changed telework conditions in the industry. To understand the phenomenon, it

requires empirical research in support of previous literature in the field, as the nature of work has undergone a complete change. With the interpretation of the empirical results, that are based on the real experiences of the people doing work, we can get our hands around the phenomenon. Gehman et al. (2018) state: “What we [interpretivists] are doing is providing some deep insights in to phenomena that we couldn’t obtain without engaging the people who experienced it. Our job as interpretivists is to go out there and gain new insights in to phenomenon from the people who are living it.”

The structure of the thesis is as follows. First, the literature review aims to familiarize the reader with the most common motivation and job satisfaction theories, basics of meaningfulness in work, the shift in telecommuting caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the complex nature of organizational culture. These central concepts are introduced and used to form the theoretical framework of this study. Second, the methodology of the empirical research is presented to describe the research strategy with its theoretical basis and perspective, and the methods for collecting and analysing the data. Third, the execution and results of the interviews are displayed, based on the theoretical framework of this study. The empirical data is coded, themed, categorized and analysed with the support of the quotations of the interviewees and the existing research literature. The main results are presented, and the theoretical framework is revised. Finally, the findings are summarized, and the theoretical and managerial implications are discussed and concluded together with the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research on the topic.

2 Literature review

2.1 Meaning of work

Work is an important topic of conversation in the daily life of individuals and in social discussion. As a term, it is very context-bound and cannot be described unambiguously. In its most common form, it means paid work that secures the living partly or fully for individuals. Work can also mean being an entrepreneur or practicing a profession, but it is still discussed if the household work of the mother or father can be described as “real work”. Also, the increasing and desired work in the voluntary sector is waiting for the entitlement to be categorized as work. Due to the target group of this study the thesis focuses on discussing the most common form of work, that is paid work.

The concept of work is closely related to the culture. The power behind the advancement of the western world has been the Protestant work ethics: work is more than just a way to make living, it has internal value for the person. However, seeking financial benefits and other objectives has replaced the religious salvation. The connection between the hope for salvation and the conscientious work has come to an end as the consequence of general secularization, but from a cultural perspective the ethics of work have not disappeared: the meaning of work is in the centre when discussing people and work, and when assuming that more than just earning a living is expected from work.

2.1.1 Meaningfulness of work

If the concept of work requires explaining, defining the concept of “meaningful work” is even more complex. Part of the human nature is the need to seek meaning in life (Baumeister & Vohns, 2002). Meaningfulness plays a significant role in the well-being and motivation of individuals, and work has nowadays become one of the main areas where humans receive it. (Steger & Dik, 2009; Steger, 2012). However, the raised research attention towards meaningful work requires first understanding what is meant

with the term. Finnish philosopher, writer and researcher Frank Martela and Doctor of Theology Anne Pessi have found 36 different definitions for meaningful work based on the research literature (Martela & Pessi, 2018). However, three main themes appeared in all the different definitions: significance, broader purpose, and self-actualization. According to Martela and Pessi meaningfulness in the most common level means the value of work, in other words, there is something of intrinsic value in the work. Work is not only a tool to secure your living. The possibility to fulfil oneself and to do something of good through work is what is required to achieve the intrinsic value in work. (Martela & Pessi, 2018)

The Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA has been performing value and attitude surveys on a regular basis since 1984. The most recent study on the meaning of work has been published 18.11.2019, based on the responses from over 2000 people during 9.10-20.10.2019, in other words from the time right before the Corona pandemic. Martela's and Pessi's description on the meaningfulness of work seems fairly idealistic in the light of EVA's study, as the four highlighted factors were: money, social responsibility, self-development and the sense of community. Based on the answers from the people it might be hard to reach the same conclusions as Martela who states that in the best-case experiencing meaningfulness creates a strong inner fire and motivation towards own work in humans, which leads to results of more focus and high-quality. (Martela & Pessi, 2018; EVA, 2019)

EVA's study shows that for 65% of Finns work means a way to finance leisure time. The meaning of money is also highlighted by the fact that based on the study only 22% of people would work if they did not need any money. The second highest meaning of work is the duty to work: 55% of people see work as a social responsibility for everyone; in 2010 only 36% Finns thought this way. Self-development and the sense of community are clearly left behind money and responsibility. The results by Martela and Pessi based on foreign studies clearly differ from the answers asked from Finnish employees by EVA.

However, there is one common factor: EVA's self-development and Martela's and Pessi's self-actualization are practically the same thing in different words. (EVA, 2019)

2.1.2 Meaning of work in general terms

English Alan Fox (1920-2002) was one of the most prominent industrial and work sociologists from the late 20th century. His 50-page article (Fox, 1980) about the meaning of work is still relevant and a good basis when studying work and its meaning for people. Fox's message can be summarized for this study by using his eight-point list presented below. Fox highlights these meanings are context related. During different times and phases of life the emphasis on the meanings vary and are differently realized, as mentioned above with the unemployment.

While discussing the meanings of work the "anchor-bolts of working career" by Peter Herriot, Wendy Hirsh and Peter Reilly (1998, p. 96-99) can be included in the summarization. The meaningfulness of work discussed above by Martela and Pessi (2018) is also added to the mix to form a table that illustrates the meaning of work in the context of this study:

Table 1. Meaning of work (Fox, 1980; Herriot et al., 1998; Martela & Pessi, 2018; EVA, 2019)

Meaning of work / Alan Fox (1980)
1. By working a person can position himself/herself as a useful member of the society.
2. Work satisfies the social needs of a person.
3. Work helps people to reach a social status and to preserve self-respect. Fox points out that people nowhere nearly always realize the meaning, for example the relevance of this point concretizes for many only when they become unemployed.
4. Work is an important part of building identity.
5. Work can feel like a necessary evil; however, it is a safety net to build the rest of your life around. Also, in this point becoming unemployed can hurt a lot.
6. Work can protect, be a safe haven, from the problems in private life.
7. Work can be used to show your capabilities.

8. Even though a person had to work, they can justify themselves they are doing a socially important and protective work for fellow people (rescue services, caring industry, public sanitation etc.)

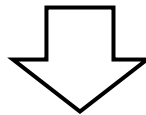


Anchor-bolts of working career / Herriot et al. (1998)

1. Materialistic meaning: pay/salary, working conditions and certainty
2. The content of work and its meaning: autonomy, self-actualization, and self-development along with the calling for work



Meaningfulness of work (page 14) / Martela & Pessi (2018); EVA (2019)



The meanings of work listed above by Martela and Pessi, EVA, Fox, and Herriot et al. can be roughly condensed to five most relevant factors regarding this study:

Meanings of work / Martela & Pessi, EVA, Fox, Herriot et al.

1. Reasonable income
2. Work is the safety net of life (including i.a. the social aspects and identity by Fox)
3. Self-actualization and self-development
4. Social relations
5. Sense of duty (emerging from the existential and prevailing Christian culture)

The meanings discussed above, existential or adapted from culture, guide the human behaviour of at least paid work in the western world. The meaning of work has stayed topical for people working for organizations or in organizations through times. German organization theorist Burkard Sievers wrote wisely already in 2003 on how humans experience in their current organizations an increasing lack of meaning in their work content, without seeing the situation improving in the pressure of globalization and

virtuality, and the reforms controlled by them (Sievers, 2003). The meanings of work can be seen as a general concept that links the individual's work life and the life as a whole and as a part of society together, when moving to discuss how people experience their work as individuals and as an individual in a work community and organization. However, the concepts have been outlined by various researchers so overlaps and differences of opinions can be present in the definitions.

2.2 Motivation and job satisfaction

Motivation, what makes people work in the intended way, has perplexed scientists for years. The great philosophers of the 19th and 20th century have considered the problem: alienation by Karl Marx, anomie by Émile Durkheim and the Lutheran work ethics as the booster of the western world's advancement by Max Weber. The founder of scientific management Frederick Taylor (1856-1915) initiated the managerial practices that praise efficiency. These practices, later known as *Taylorism*, are still ruling the western corporate world and the philosophy of management in public administration and used as the basis for various different management theories. Taylor's principle was that the work must be divided in such small steps that one step is easy to learn and thus clear to measure and monitor. Management was the brain and workers merely the physical enforcement in Taylor's world. Car manufacturer Henry Ford (1863-1947) developed Taylorism while implementing assembly line production to improve productivity, creating *Fordism*. He uplifted workers home conditions to maximize their dedication to work.

In the 1920s and 1930s the wide and thorough studies at the Hawthorn electric plant near Chicago on the impact of working conditions towards the productivity and job satisfaction of employees meant the beginning of Human Relations School (Cuncliffe, 2009, p. 15-16; Grey, 2013, p. 41-46). According to Cuncliffe this began the increased focus on studying both individuals and groups behaviour, motivation, leadership, and communication, also highlighting the supervision of motivation. Cuncliffe states (2009, p. 16): "It is also worth noting that while this concern for people and the humanization of

management is ostensibly altruistic, at its heart lies concern for improving productivity by controlling the behaviour of employees.” These studies were later analysed in the 1950s by Henry Landsberger and coined as the “Hawthorne effect”.

2.2.1 Maslow and the Hierarchy of Needs

The article “A Theory of Human Motivation” (1943) by American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) started the new era of motivation theories that still has on influence in the field. Maslow himself developed his theory even further and it has been used as the basis for various later theories, even if criticized about being one-sided and generalized. The theory is often pictured as a pyramid that represents the hierarchy of needs.

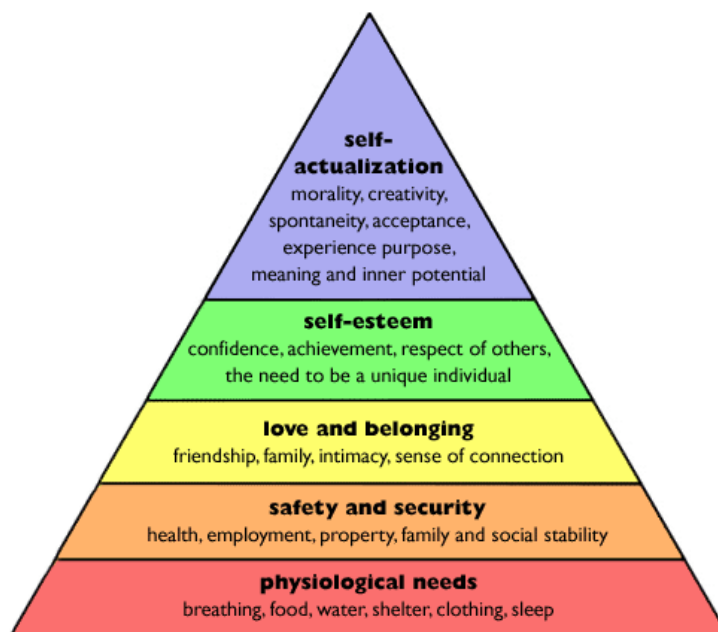


Figure 1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987)

The four lowest levels are the deficiency needs and the final level, the top of the pyramid, are the growth needs. Not until the basic needs of humans are satisfied, they can move to the upper level to satisfy their psychological needs. The final level of self-fulfilment is the hardest one to reach: humans want and are given challenges, can develop to reach

their full potential, and use their creativity. Maslow's theory has been criticized about being too generalized: humans are complex individuals and their behaviour depended on the circumstances and situations in life, by no means do they all climb the pyramid in the same way (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 104). Despite the criticism Maslow is still a good foundation for motivation studies (Ball, 2012, cf. Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 41-53).

2.2.2 Herzberg and the Two-Factor Theory

American psychologist Fredrik Herzberg (1923-2000) brought a new element to the motivation theories, dividing the motivation elements into hygiene factors that satisfy the basic needs and motivation factors that satisfy the higher values (Ball, 2012; Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 41). The core of Herzberg theory is that different factors impact the job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. The opposite of job dissatisfaction is non-job dissatisfaction and by no means job satisfaction, and on the other hand the opposite of job satisfaction is non-job satisfaction. For example, basic salary is a hygiene factor, and a low salary increases job dissatisfaction; a pay rise will decrease job dissatisfaction but not increase job satisfaction. Receiving recognition, getting challenging tasks and responsibilities, possibilities to personal development and progression are motivation factors that increase job satisfaction. Herzberg's hygiene factors mean roughly the same as Maslow's deficiency needs (physiological, safety, belonging, esteem) and motivation factors same as growth needs (self-actualization).

Herzberg's theories are still nowadays used by organizations in projects where different incentives are used to influence motivation, but how well the theories are understood is another question. The original study by Herzberg that introduced the new theory was already published in 1968 and was later reintroduced in its original form by Harvard Business Review in 2003 (McAuley, 2007, p. 123). The editor-in-chief of the paper wrote sarcastically: "Herzberg's work influenced a generation of scholars and managers – but his conclusions don't seem to have fully penetrated the American workplace, if the

extraordinary attention still given to compensation and incentive packages is any indication." How much the situation has changed when entering the 2020s is probably not significant.

However, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is still relevant as different job satisfaction surveys are widely performed on a national and organizational level. When new measures regarding motivation are considered based on the results it is worth examining which factors are centred around job satisfaction and which around job dissatisfaction. The situational variation needs to be taken into account; for example, if the continuity of employment, practically the basic livelihood, is seen as a hygiene factor that needs to be in order, it might become a motivation factor in an industry that is struggling. Herzberg also paid attention to the duration of the effects; a pay rise that belongs to the hygiene factors only decreases job dissatisfaction for a short time, whereas investing in motivation factors has a considerably longer effect.

2.2.3 Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model

In 1975 the first article discussing job design by organization psychologists Greg R. Oldham and J. Richard Hackman was published. The studies were later complemented by various articles and their theory altogether was named the Job Characteristics Model (JCM). The model and its countless variations have already been used for over 40 years. Oldham and Hackman started to improve the job characteristics to balance Taylor's theories, as they realized that employees' results were not increased despite becoming experienced in the work, by enhancing working methods and with strict supervision. Instead, employees became bored, and dedication decreased. (Ball, 2012; Ulich, 2011, p. 107-110)

Oldham and Hackman came in their studies to the conclusion that there are five decisive components that make work interesting and binding and thus leads to better productivity: 1) *Skill variety*, 2) *Task identity*, 3) *Task significance*, 4) *Autonomy*, and 5) *Feedback*

from job. The five components listed above make it possible to reach such basic psychological states that lead to high performance, motivation, and satisfaction. The psychological states are: 1) *Experienced meaningfulness in work*, 2) *Experienced responsibility of the outcomes of the work*, and 3) *Knowledge of the actual results of the work activities*.

The outcomes are:

- *High internal work motivation*
- *High-quality work performance*
- *High work and job satisfaction*
- *Low absenteeism and turnover*

Oldham and Hackman generated relatively specific measures to observe the defined job characteristics. Regarding this study the most relevant part is to find points in common with other researchers' opinions on work task's decisive components (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback). Especially noteworthy is that Oldham and Hackman view autonomy and feedback independent from other factors, in other words, neither missing autonomy can be replaced by increasing e.g., skill variety, nor missing feedback can be compensated with even a perfect autonomy (Ball, 2012; Ulich, 2011, p. 107-110).

The picture below illustrates Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (Ball, 2012):

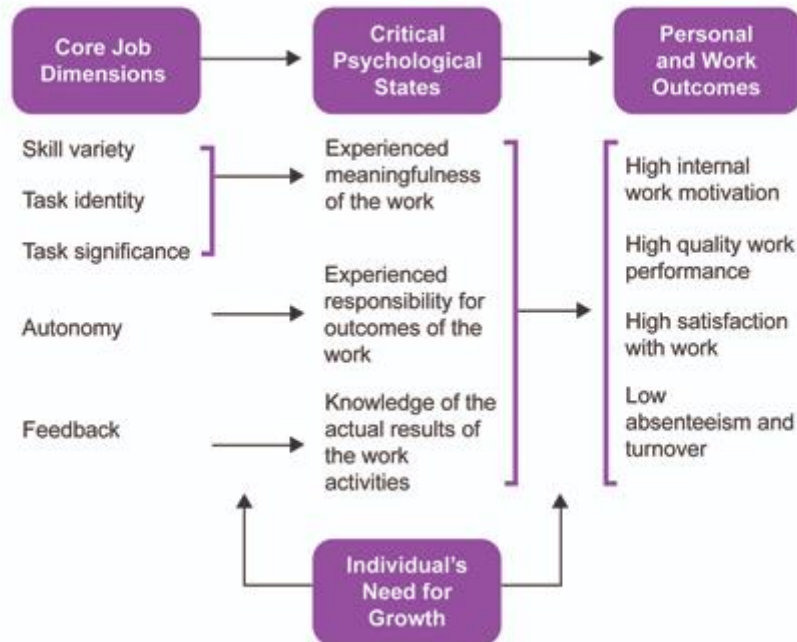


Figure 2. Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975)

2.2.4 Action Regulation Theory

Approximately the same time with the studies of American Oldham and Hackman an industrial psychology school was born in Germany and Switzerland. Its basic learnings were named as the Action Regulation Theory (ART) that was represented by i.a. Winfried Hacker, Peter Richter, Rainer Oesterreich, Eberhard Ulich and Walter Volpert. Many of the German studies by the school remained relatively unnoticed on an international level, compared to for example the Job Characteristics Model, as they were sparsely translated to English. ART has received a fair number of followers in Sweden and Norway as the Central European culture is closer to the Nordic countries than the American. (see e.g., Aronsson & Berglind, 1990)

In the context of this study, it is relevant to focus only on the design of work assignments that impacts the different factors on experiencing work (e.g. job satisfaction), instead of discussing the wide domain of ART. When comparing the job characteristics, ART and JCM are relatively close to each other. However, the starting points of the theories are completely different and illustrate the differences between the American economic system and the European market economy. JCM aims to make work tasks such that people make their work more effective, in other words, the goal is a better result. However, ART starts that good work is a value itself and when work fulfils as many so-called good works characteristics as possible the outcome is a better result (Oesterreich and Volpert, 1999). So, the aim is good work for people (Volpert, 1990).

The two main elements of ART are feedback and hierarchy. The results of working activities are compared to the objectives and the feedback will guide to the necessary improvements. The regulations have hierarchical levels: sensory-motor, operational, and intellectual. On the sensory-motor level the activities are routine or have changed to routine. On the operational level situational factors need to be taken into account, the skills that have shifted to the sensory-motor level must be able to be adapted regarding the current circumstances. On the intellectual level it is a matter of target-oriented plans and their implementation by flexibly using both sensory-motor and operational skills (Aronsson, 1990; Volpert 1990).

ART's fundamental idea in the learning process at work is that humans need to be able to use all the different levels while working; sensory-motor and operational levels need to be capable of continuously releasing the intellectual capabilities to process new and challenging tasks, but also to give recovery time to the people's intellectual level (Hagström, 1990). Volpert (1990) has listed nine characteristics of "good work" that repeatedly occur in the ART-literature, that Ulich (2011, p. 112-115) has compressed from Volpert's verbose text:

- Feedback received timely and in the right manner from: work itself, customers, colleagues, management etc.
- Autonomy, including time-autonomy, in relation to own work and doing it

- Possibility to challenge yourself at work
- Adequate variation in work tasks
- Task significance
- Social relations
- Self-development potential at work
- Possibility to control the physical and psychological stress

2.2.5 Self-determination theory

In addition to the theories discussed above, the theory of self-determination (SDT), developed by the American psychologist E. Dec and R. Ryan (2000) should be mentioned, as it has only recently been cited as Maslow's "ultimate displacer" (Fowler, 2014; Luoma-aho, 2021). SDP seeks to distinguish people's motivation as consisting of and dependent on its internal and external factors. This psychologically profound theory states only that it focuses on psychological needs, three of which are superior to others: autonomy, ability/competence, and sense of community. The same elements with slightly different definitions also appear in the Hackman and Oldham's and Volpert's concepts discussed above.

2.2.6 Summary of good works characteristics

Oldham's and Hackman's (JCM) and Volpert's (ART) characteristics of good and effective work are relatively similar as seen from the comparison below, and when taking into account the features listed in the JCM chart above (page 23). The sociability probably portrays best the basis of ART. The challenges at work are separately mentioned, after all, it plays an integral role in learning at the highest levels of hierarchical roles (page 25). The main difference between these schools is important to remember: the job characteristics in JCM are a tool to better results, while in ART a better result is an outcome of good work, and that good work is a desirable value itself.

Table 2. JCM (Oldham & Hackman, 1975) and ART (Volpert, 1990)

Oldham & Hackman (JCM)	Volpert (ART)
Skill variety Task identity Task Significance Autonomy Feedback from job	Skill variety Task significance Autonomy Feedback Sociability Personal growth in the work Possibility to challenge yourself at work Possibility to control physical and psychological stress

Worth mentioning is that salary, other materialistic benefits (dining, health care, hobbies etc.) and healthiness of working conditions are nowhere to be seen in both Oldham's and Hackman's and Volpert's lists, despite their commonness in practical studies (cf. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, page 19). Whereas in the definitions on the meaningfulness of work they are often included in the concepts of pay and livelihood, as well as the continuity and certainty of work. Fox (1980) mentioned sarcastically the disappointment of many academic researchers when it turned out that especially among industrial workers life and self-actualization work did not play a central role (cf. also EVA, page 15). In general, the lists are directed towards Herzberg's motivation factors. Especially during financially difficult times hygiene factors might become motivation factors, so they should not be ignored in practical studies (cf. Herzberg, page 20; Fox, 1980). Regarding this study the materialistic dimension has been added to the table of job satisfaction factors, after all, pay is always included in the job satisfaction surveys on a national and organizational level also in Finland (cf. EVA, page 15).

In the diagram below Oldham's and Hackman's and Volpert's lists have been combined with the presented combined list of the meanings of work (meaningfulness of work, page 17). The diagram includes control, trust, and power from the elements of organizational dynamics. Autonomy is probably the most emerged factor in job satisfaction studies, but it is also a problem as it is ensued by its companion supervision. Fox (1980) states

that when people get to define the biggest cause for the gap between what work is and what it should be in their opinion, the majority of answers is related to supervision. And in supervision, people see power. What is seen as the balance to autonomy, control and power is trust (Watson, 1980, p. 185-190, 207-208). In organization literature power is discussed sparsely, although everyone knows its existence and effectiveness (Watson, 1980, p. 185-190).

Power and trust play an essential role in organizational dynamics and are examples of phenomenon's that are real, even though they cannot be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted by anyone (cf. ontology, page 50). In this study they are more closely discussed alongside organizational culture, but they cannot be ignored when studying how people experience their work. In the observation and interviews of the ethnographic research and its field work the impact of these "invisible" but real elements must be attempted to be highlighted. However, people often prefer to stay silent regarding e.g. power, although it can influence many motivational factors.

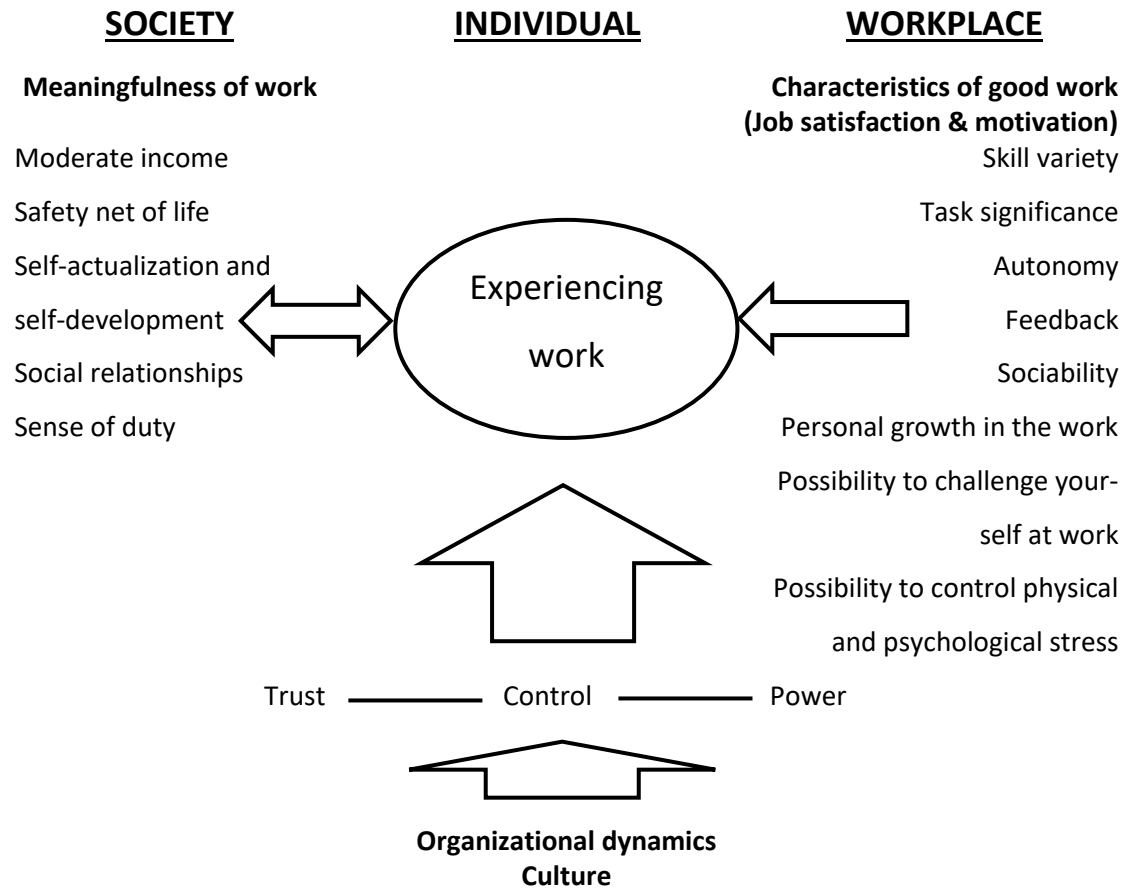


Figure 3. Characteristics of experiencing work

2.3 Telecommuting

Irish organizational behaviour and management philosopher Charles Handy (1932-) predicted already in the beginning of 1980s the inevitable shift in the way of doing work: “The shape of work influences to a great degree the way society feels, acts, and thinks. The shape of work is determined by what technology makes possible and by the prevailing social and value structures.” He predicted the end of the hierarchical institutions and their management to answer to the needs of organizations of the new of society, and expected a better understanding of people, work, and community as a unity. But why did it take a pandemic to completely shape the way of doing work? The studies,

technology and the tools were already there to convert telecommuting as the new normal, but the final push to break the barriers on a global scale was missing. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed the inevitable shift to happen, but how did it reshape the way of working for the individuals and society?

The terminology around telecommuting is often relatively confusing; the terms and their meanings have evolved throughout the last decades and have various definitions. Telecommuting, also known as remote work, or as one of its sub terms i.a. telework, distance working, flexible workplace, working from home (WFH), working from anywhere (WFA), mobile work etc. is a confusing field of different terms. Telework was probably the first commonly used one that has nowadays evolved into newer terms, such as flexible workplace, WFH and WFA. For clarity reasons only the terms telecommuting, and telework are used in this study, apart from a few exceptions, as they are commonly seen as the general concepts in this field.

2.3.1 The roots of telecommuting

"Sometimes the best transportation policy means not moving people, but moving their work, a trend known as telecommuting. Millions have already found their productivity actually increases when they work nearer the people they are really working for – their families at home. Think of it as commuting to work at the speed of light", is what president George H. W. Bush stated on March 8, 1990. Telecommuting started to gain ground around these times especially in the USA, Japan, Australia, The United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, and Finland, where the telecommunications technologies were noticeably ahead of other countries. However, similar to other technological advances, telecommuting was accompanied by a lot of hype and over-selling of its potential. It was handed to managers as a revolutionary concept that turned out to be a rather optimistic and naïve solution during that time to change the traditional ways of doing work. (Mokhtarian, 1991)

Throughout history work has always been stationed to a central work location until the idea of telecommuting was introduced. The term was first coined by American physicist Jack Nilles in the early 1970s before personal computers were even introduced. Telecommuting has evolved significantly in the last decades, but the main reason behind this mostly remains the same. Jack Nilles based his theory on his own observations of people who were traveling to work to their offices, not to workplaces where you have to be there, such as factories. He asked around the year 1970: "When they get to the office, they get on the phone and talk to somebody somewhere else. Why don't they just do that from home in the first place?"

Telecommuting was in its early stages defined as organizational work that was performed outside of the traditional organizational boundaries of space and time. The term telecommuting evolved from the idea of utilizing telecommunications technology to replace partly or completely traveling to a specific work location. Mokhtarian (1991) introduced one of the early definitions for remote work: "Work done by an individual while at a different location than the person(s) directly supervising and/or paying for it." What makes this definition defective, is that telework performed from the conventional workplace or office location would not be characterized as "remote work" in this context, as the focal point is the remoteness from supervision. (Mokhtarian, 1991; Nilles, 1996)

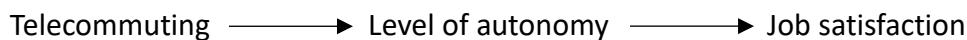
The technological development allowed changes to the ways of conducting work, but there were limitations to working remotely. According to Margrethe Olson (1983) the main requirements for telecommuting can be summarized to six factors: 1) Minimum physical requirements, 2) Individual control over work pace, 3) Defined deliverables, 4) A need for concentration, 5) Defined milestones, and 6) A relatively low need for communication. Olson highlights, that successful remote workers typically have similar characteristics; they are experts with notable skills and high self-discipline and self-motivation, that gives them significant bargaining power. Often these individuals prefer working alone, limiting their social interactions minor beyond their family.

However, various issues also occurred that were linked to the unknown nature of telecommuting, that impact both the individual and the organizational level. Similar to other new concepts, the research on these issues raised more questions than it answered, especially regarding the long-term concerns. The most highlighted problems often circulated around the individual and social status that telecommuting created – what do the co-workers or superiors think about individuals working from home? The public image of companies was threatened when their employees worked remotely and still gained the same salary as those working from the conventional office location. The main individual concern was linked to the visibility and supervision of the employee; how can people progress in their careers when they are not visible in the organizational environment, and how does the management define the objectives when the work cannot be supervised “over the shoulder”? (Olson, 1983; Mokhtarian, 1991; Nilles, 1996)

2.3.2 Telecommuting and job satisfaction

According to the telecommuting literature, people doing telework are often seen to have more flexibility in their jobs compared to those doing “regular” work (DuBrin, 1991; Guimares & Dallow, 1999). However, this is affected by nature of the job or job context and how the work activities must be performed. The most commonly mentioned advantage, by the general opinion on telecommuting, is the increased job satisfaction caused by the personal freedom in doing work. To understand the relation between telecommuting and job satisfaction, Golden and Veiga (2005) have listed three critical characteristics of work that should be realized for teleworkers: 1) *Task interdependence*, 2) *Job discretion*, and 3) *Work-scheduling latitude*. Task interdependence is the extent to which team members rest on each other to effectively perform their work (Kiggundu, 1983), job discretion illustrates the level of control in carrying out the required work tasks (Langfred, 2000), and work-scheduling latitude is the possibility to adjust work as its best suits the personal preferences of individuals (Baltes et al., 1999). All these three factors can be roughly categorized under autonomy, that is considered as one of the most important elements in job satisfaction studies (cf. experiencing work, page 28).

The effect of autonomy on telecommuting and be illustrated as follows:



The level of autonomy can be considered as a significant factor on the job satisfaction in telecommuting. However, the figure excludes many important elements i.a. telecommuting intensity (extent of work done remotely), combining work and family, supervision etc. Experiencing work and job satisfaction is differently perceived by every individual, and is also affect by the organizational culture, which makes it challenging to draw sweeping conclusions based on the limited amount of empirical research on the topic. (Golden & Veiga, 2005)

2.3.3 Telecommuting and COVID-19

Some research has already been done on telecommuting during COVID-19 (see i.a. Waizenegger et al., 2020; Toscano & Zappala, 2020; Carillo et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Tokarchuk et al. 2020). The sudden switch from regular work to telecommuting, caused by the pandemic, widely forced individuals to work remotely, often from a home environment not suitable for it, and to adapt to the new circumstances (Waizenegger et al., 2020). The pandemic situation turned upside down the traditional ways of doing work. The leading newspaper in Finland described the situation several months after the pandemic started (Helsingin Sanomat, 25.10.2020): “It is a new time in working life, not an exceptional time.”

According to Tokarchuk et al. the experiences on telecommuting have been mainly positive during the pandemic situation for both individuals and the employers. Nguyen (2021) found that when employees become familiar with telecommuting, they tend to choose it again over previous “regular” work. However, Carillo et al. (2020) discussed the problem of professional isolation in their findings – the lack of informal encounters and conversations with colleagues and reduced feedback from superiors. The feeling of social

isolation was also confirmed by the findings of Toscano and Zappala (2020), and its negative effect on experiencing work and productivity.

However, the research literature is still limited due to the fresh nature of the phenomenon. The results are mostly general and indicative and therefore require further research. Most of the studies are conducted in countries with completely different conditions and social and working life structures that their applicability needs to be considered case-by-case. Their findings are often relatively non-committal and based on small sampling, or suitable only for a specific case. There is a place for caution in drawing conclusion on the topic, before the COVID-19 situation has stabilized and more distinguished studies are published.

2.4 Organizational culture

There are as many definitions for culture as there are definers. One of the most referred definitions is by the profound cultural theorist Edgar Schein (1985) (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 118):

A pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems.

A simple and apposite is the definition by Peters (1993) (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 118):

The way we do things around here, the unwritten rules of what constitutes intelligent behavior in an organization, the shared values which people have.

Howard-Grenville (2020) have in their short definitions reached the deepest nature of organizational culture that fits the basic assumption of this study:

Culture is the holistic and somewhat mysterious force that guides actions and interactions in the workplace.

This study focuses also in understanding the nature and meaning of organizational culture to experiencing work. The environment and conditions for working play a decisive role in experiencing work. This entirety is called the context (Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 68). Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 68-70) state that organizations do not work in a vacuum, but in their own context that is dependent on the society around. They see culture as one of the most important components in this context from the viewpoint of leadership and action. Also, Schneider et al. (2012) highlight the decisive meaning of culture on how people experience their work environment and work.

The articles listed above were written when no-one could anticipate that the pandemic was just beginning. For that reason, they are cautious speculations for researchers instead of being based on empirical studies. However, they have one common characteristic with many distinguished publications writings that is at the same time a significant deficiency: organizational culture is used as a general term that has a self-evident meaning. The reader must content themselves with non-committal statements such as; a strong organizational culture is a good thing, good organizational culture furthers reaching better results, a "suited" culture creates a better workplace atmosphere etc. For example, Palmer and Hardy (2000, p. 117) state: "That culture has become a buzzword meaning many different and sometimes contradictory things." Schneider et. al. (2012) gives a bleak description: "Simply stated, there is no agreement on what culture is nor how it should be studied." Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) wonder while there were over 4600 scientific articles on organizational culture by 2011, the organizational research is still lacking a common understanding on the nature of organizational culture. Denison (1996) sees as one the reasons for the exploratory contradictions and disunity the so-called paradigm war: the researchers have barricaded themselves in their own encampments that stand behind their own opinions without backing down on basic questions such as; qualitative or quantitative approach, organizational climate or culture, *has* or *is* i.e. has the organization a culture or is the organization the culture in itself etc.

As it turned out above, the term organizational culture is so fragmented and contradictory in the research and management literature that for an individual study it needs to be explained and defined, in other words, what the research means with organizational culture (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 117-119, 135-136). Clarifying the term is also necessary because organizational culture has since the 1980s been an integral part of organizations' daily management jargon, used to construct the "official" reality, that is the context in which culture plays a central role (cf. page 34). The culture boom has successfully been utilized by many consulting firms by offering non-committal solutions to keep organizations "up to date." (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016; Grey, 2013, p. 64-67; Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 72-75; Schneider et. al. 2012)

2.4.1 Culture's heyday as the 1980s

Nations, tribes, clans etc. have always had their cultures that historians and philosophers have described through times. Anthropologists can be seen to have started studying culture as its own branch of science already in the turn of 19th and 20th century. Since then, cultural research has spread to many areas of life. Organizational research rouse relatively late to apply the term culture. However, it happened by a force that has not been seen before nor later, although so-called management theories have come and go in the corporate world, starting from Taylor's days (cf. page 18). Organizational culture theory took over the western world in the blink of an eye and one of the most decisive books in this was: T. J. Peters and R. H. Waterman's book (1982) "In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best run companies." The book sold over 3 million copies in four years, neither management book has reached similar numbers (Grey, 2013, p. 61; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

Peters and Waterman have chosen 62 "excellent" companies to their book and summarized eight characteristics from them that describe a strong company. According to Peters and Waterman these companies have a strong corporate culture, "which valued the apparently unique contribution of each employee while, at one and the same time, tied

them into corporate community based on an ethos of excellence, quality and commitment” (Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p. 103). The eight characteristics introduced by the writes became highly popular in the corporate world for the following few years (Cunliffe, 2009: 79-82; Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 72-73): 1) A bias for action, 2) Close to the customer, 3) Autonomy and entrepreneurship, 4) Productivity through people, 5) Hands-on, value driven, 6) Stick to the knitting, 7) Simple form, lean stuff, and 8) Simultaneous loose-tight properties.

The popularity of the theory was immense, which lead to it spreading across the western world. Companies started cultural coaching in the hopes of strengthening their business. The reason for the culture boom cannot be explained only by several successful half-scientific books. One of the main reasons for this is seen to be in the economic and mental situation after the war between the USA and Vietnam. The USA felt as the underdog in the economic attack of the Pacific Rim states, especially by the Japanese companies. The superficial studies showed that in Japanese companies the employees gave their hearts, minds and souls to their employers (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 79): they were committed, kept quality as a point of honour, worked long days, were rarely absent etc. All of these were at least pretended to be marks of a strong organizational culture, that was seen to be the source of success for Japanese companies. (Grey, 2004, p. 61-64; Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p. 102-103; Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 117)

2.4.2 Sudden popularity and quick fading

Organizational culture was quick cure for all the management problems offered at a suitable time. Grey (2013) has described ironically how the Holy Grail of the management (Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p. 98-99) was finally found: “So you could have better products, less waste, less conflict, better service, a happier and fairer workplace and save money into the bargain – if you could just get the culture right. Unfortunately, it proved to be big ‘if’.” When culture was proven to not be a quick and effective cure the interest declined and organizational culture stepped aside when new theories arose in the 1990s

(lean management, total quality management etc.) However, organizational culture continued to influence the new theories as it was still seen to strengthen the employee commitment. (Grey, 2013, p. 79-80).

The high point of organizational culture was mainly based on superficial managerial best-sellers and according to Grey (2013) the book by Peters and Waterman and its data and interpretation of 62 “excellent” companies were scientifically poor (Schneider et. al, 2012; Chatman & O’Reilly, 2016). In addition, most of the companies did not fill the criteria of excellence after a year and some of them ceased to exist after a few years. One relevant problem of Peters and Waterman’s book was never discussed: were the companies excellent because they had a strong culture, or did they have a strong culture because they were excellent (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 129)? The strong organizational culture was instilled to employees by various ways: slogans, symbols, seminars, events to raise the spirit combined with childish games, adventures and remuneration ceremonies that Grey calls with the collective name “hoopla” (Grey, 2013, p. 65). The consultants played a significant role in this and Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 73) describe the frustration experienced in many organizations: “When the consultants have gone, the organization is as transactional as ever and leadership is still stifled.”

2.4.3 The nature of organizational culture

Culture exists although no-one has heard, seen, smelled, or tasted it, until the circumstances change, and it gets realized that something is missing. Howard-Grenville (2020) points out that culture is not seen during “normal” times: “That’s why we often only recognize our organization’s culture when we step outside of it – for example, by working closely with a new client or switching companies, roles, or geographies, or perhaps through the sudden loss of it when working at our kitchen table with no physical interaction with colleagues.” Also, Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 72) indicate the same phenomenon: “Somewhat ironically, however, we are invariably able to make the most sense of an organization’s culture once we have left it and joined another organization.”

The research literature regarding organizational culture has several opposite beliefs that divide the researchers into their own camps. The main themes regarding these beliefs are represented below.

Variable or basic metaphor

The most relevant dividing question is if culture can be led: in other words, is culture a critical variable or the basic metaphor/perspective (Grey, 2013, p. 67-70; Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 125-126). The first mentioned means that the management can build and shape their organizational culture to their liking. In that case, culture is a management tool among others. Culture as a basic metaphor means that it is natural, spontaneous, and it cannot be led: people carry out their work in organizations when they work together in a specific way. When culture is discussed as a management tool it is something that the organization *has*. As a basic metaphor, a perspective, culture is what the organization *is*: “culture is the organization and organization is the culture (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 126). Culture as a variable starts from the fact that it can be identified, measured, and analysed. The senior management can create, maintain, and change the organizational culture: culture is a technical question, “push-button control” -tool. When culture is seen as a metaphor, the opportunities for its conscious building and shaping are seen as remote. According to the view, people are not passive receivers of cultural interventions but instead active agents. Culture is therefore participative, communal, and interactive. (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 133-134)

Culture was tested as a tool for leadership during the short heyday of organizational culture, but when instant results were not achieved the managers and consultants disappeared after new trends. The supporters of metaphor thinking believed that the conscious leading of culture is an easily failing project, “it [culture] is relatively impervious to interventions (Grey, 2013, p. 69). Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 73) state that some think leading culture is an exercise in futility. They continue: “Leaders do not create culture; it emerges from the collective social interactions of groups and communities.”

Quantitative / Qualitative approach

The supporters of culture as a management tool are also supporters of quantitative methods that are based on questionnaires. In this case, the factors that are connected to the culture are pursued to be measured, such as, commitment and its quality, the level of innovativeness, risk appetite etc. For example, the well-known culture theorist Edgar Schein has wondered the obsession of researcher to measure culture (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 126): "I fell that they are simply not seeing what is there, and this is particularly dangerous when one is dealing with a social force that is invisible yet powerful." Quantitative study often focuses on the noticeable passing fads that are easy to detect and place into questionnaires: the external characteristics of culture, such as, logos, other symbols, appearance, office design, rituals in negotiations and meetings, events to raise the spirits etc. The belief is, that there is a common "grand theory" for culture that can be reached by wide questionnaires; like this the management can compare their company's culture with others (McAuley et. al., 2007, p. 92-93).

Those who see organization as a culture do not consider it possible to reduce culture into variables. This is why the school prefers qualitative methods like ethnography (Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p. 113; Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 126): "This treatment of culture denies any 'objective' existence and instead focuses attention on the interwoven nature of language, meanings, symbols and rituals." Hatch (1997, p. 236) states that "culture involves the members of an organization in a socially constructed reality". The elements of this common social reality, that is culture, is constructed of symbols, norms, values, beliefs, rites, rituals, stories, myths etc. In this socially constructed context, the members of organization direct routine-like their experiences and activity. This context is what actually is seen as the organizational culture (Hatch, 1997, p. 236). To study the always original culture of organizations, Hatch gives and unambiguous recommendation for ethnographic approach (1997, p. 236):

"No amount of talk about culture will substitute for the direct experience of studying a culture yourself. In order to appreciate fully the power and value of the cultural perspective you will have to personally go into an organization and look for artifacts and symbols and listen to interpretations."

2.4.4 The illusion of homogenous culture

The bestsellers (cf. page 35) that started the march of cultural studies highlighted the importance of so-called strong organizational culture as the creator of success. The writers also took it as granted that this strong culture means a common culture that covers the whole organization. Soon it was realized that people cannot take in the whole organizational culture as it is when entering work, because the culture they have adapted in their lives over centuries is affecting them. Many subcultures might influence in organizations, that actually are stronger than the common culture that organizations think they have (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 120-123). One of the most typical ones are for example the lingual and religious subcultures. Especially in some geographical areas organizations can have people from the same religion, that forms a group that adheres to their traditions, beliefs and habits and does not integrate to the mainstream culture.

It was emphasized before that every organization has their own individual culture. However, in the same industries some manners in the organizational cultures can be surprisingly similar – so the highlighted idiosyncrasy might be a myth. When a strong organizational culture turns out to be an illusion it is partly caused by the already unrealistic assumption that a strong homogeneous culture can at all be reached. The fundamental question is, if the organizational culture actually is what is presented in the internal and external communication, or is this official culture just a daydream of the management (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 120)? People protect themselves when trying to change them and secure their backs by pretending the commitment to the culture (Grey, 2013, p. 69-70). Only with a long-term participatory observation the true culture can be tried to be imitated and understood (Hatch, 1997, p. 296).

2.4.5 Culture and performance

I.a. Peters and Waterman implied that by fulfilling their eight characteristics of a strong culture the road to success was secured. Since then, the connection between the corporate culture and performance was not even questioned, despite most of the 62

companies presented by the writers did not even exist after a few years. There is no mutual understanding what a strong corporate culture is. There is also a complete disagreement if the strength or culture can in the first place even be measured. For those reasons the attempts to prove the connection between organizational culture and performance have failed (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 128-133). The above-mentioned dilemma (cf. page 37) by Peters and Waterman has become the insurmountable question: have companies succeeded because of a strong culture, or do they have a strong culture because they have succeeded?

Palmer and Hardy see the connection between the culture and performance problematic. They state (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 133): "A fundamental problem lies in the methodological difficulties concerning how both culture and performance are operationalized, making it unlikely that definitive evidence, either supporting or refuting the link between culture and performance, will ever be found." Although the direct connection between culture and performance has not been able to be proven, culture still exists; it is a social, invisible, mysterious yet powerful force (Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 126; Howard-Grenville, 2020). Its indirect meaning is so significant and unexpected that it cannot be side-lined in company-specific research, although the "high-point" of the cultural learnings has been passed (Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 71-75, 93-94), because culture is again making its new coming (Howard-Grenville, 2012; Spicer, 2020).

2.4.6 Culture versus climate

Organizational climate is often used as a term instead of organizational culture. Mixing up these terms is generally harmless, but the theoretics of the discipline have argued for decades if culture and climate are completely different matters or just different interpretive perspectives of the same matter (Denison, 1996; Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 117-119; Schneider et al., 2012; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2006). For those who consider the difference to be important, only qualitative research is "correct" when studying climate, while in

cultural studies also quantitative research is possible (Denison, 1996; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

The reason for the scientific controversy is based on the different backgrounds of the terms. The organizational climate study is older than cultural studies and was born from the work of organizational psychologists. The book "Motivation and organizational climate" from the organizational psychologists Litwin and Stringer published in the USA yr. 1968 expedited the research on organizational climate, that was around a dozen years later overshadowed by the culture eagerness (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Litwin and Stringer saw that employees' perceptions on the characteristics of the work environment and conditions, such as, autonomy, organization of work and handling of conflicts and employees' concerns can impact the motivation and behaviour. They called the above-mentioned entity "organizational climate". Schneider et al. (2012) have described organizational according to its research traditions: "Organizational climate may be defined as the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviours they observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected." The relevant factor in organizational climate studies has been, that the study starts from the experiences of individuals and later the "average" experiences are combined.

Organizational culture is described by Schneider et al. (2012) as follows: "Organizational culture may be defined as the shared basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that characterize a setting and are taught to newcomers as the proper way to think and feel, communicated by the myths and stories people tell about how the organization came to the way it is as it solved problems associated with external adaptation and internal integration."

According to Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) organizational climate focuses on situational phenomena and is more temporary and easier to mold. Culture on the other hand is stable, lasting and rooted in the values and beliefs. Climate is based on the individual

experiences, while culture is founded on the common values and beliefs of the whole community and the meanings of myths, rites, and rituals. Some consider climate as the result of culture, in other words, culture precedes climate that adapts and changes to the broader and more intangible frames of culture (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

The American based comprehensive sorting of culture and climate is not just theorizing. Its clear merit is that it takes culture back to what it was before it took its commercial turn (Schneider et. al. 2012; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016): people's own views on their work conditions and work environment, and the liking on the ways of doing work are the basis of job satisfaction and motivation. The culture eagerness of the 1980s separated from the daily life actors and became a management tool and bolstering jargon with its values, missions, visions, best practices etc. (Cuncliffe, 2009, p. 79-82). Generally, can be said that the corporate management with its consults defined an appropriate and strong culture for the organization, that was from top to down. Organizational climate on the other hand was at its best built from bottom up.

The finely polished organizational culture declarations and unveilings by consults, with their impressive slogans and great stories were left, and are unfortunately often left, as tricks to maintain the prestige of firms and the management in the eyes of the environment (Grey, 2013, p. 64-67, 70). The file and ranks are not really interested in the values, mission and vision of the company, and looks down on the artificial and often flattering hero stories – especially, if fixing the ventilation of their own workstations is told to be “mission impossible” (cf. Grey, 2013, p. 69-70).

Organizational climate is closer to the individuals than culture, experiencing work is also more concrete compared to the noble values and historical traditions of the organization (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). By simplifying it can be said, that when discussing even slightly bigger organizations, the organization has a culture, but its individuals, units, departments etc. have a climate. Culture is a macro level and climate a micro level phenomenon; climate gets in a way its framework from the culture. The unit as a community

“adjusts” the norms of the homogenous culture and its “holy” regulations and can end up in contradiction with the so-called homogenous culture. On the other hand, the homogenous culture also changes when it “quietly” adapts the manners and habits of units etc. in its daily activities (cf. the illusion of homogenous culture page 40).

Organizational climate can be practically defined by imitating the Swedish researcher Siv Lindroth (1990):

Organizational climate is the emotional atmosphere that prevails in the organization or in a part of it (unit, department, workplace). It is a collective depiction and a cross-section of the members descriptions (“average”).

Lindroth (1990) states that the climate of workplace has a decisive influence on how people work. He sees that a creative and open climate stimulates commitment and initiatives. An optimal climate is one that has liberty, trust, and enough challenges. We reach the same conclusions as in the characteristics of good work (pg. 25). Lindroth’s organizational climate is in terms of research language completely same as “*workplace spirit*” that has been used in daily work for years; the spirit can not be seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled, but the employees know if its good or bad. This “mysterious social force” (Howard-Grenville, 2020) that impacts the daily life of every member of the community can only be tried to approach by going to observe and listen to the people in their work (Gehman et al. ; cf. Hatch and ethnography pg. 39).

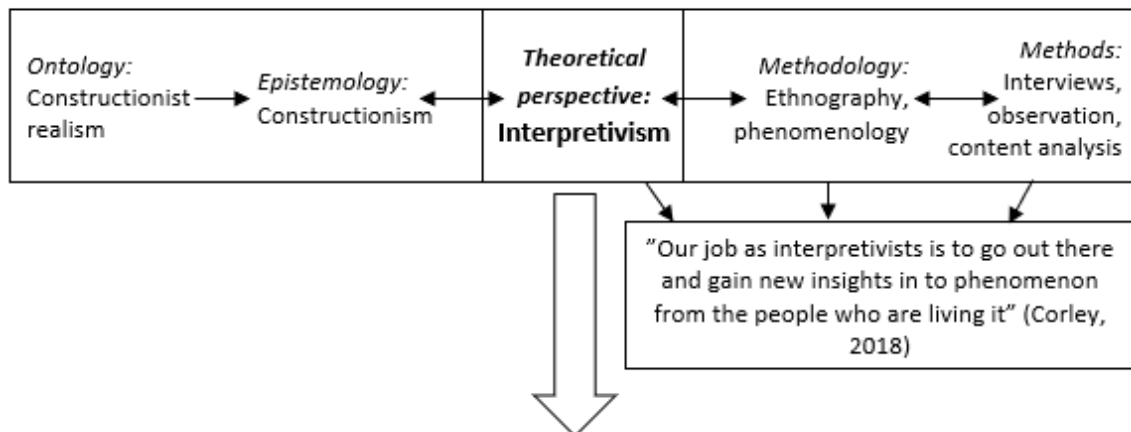
2.5 People and work in organizational dynamics

The diagram below illustrates the dynamics of the organization in which a person does and experiences the work. It has interactive factors that influence and are influenced by each other and is often unpredictable in its effects, because it is a matter of human interaction. People are not only passive in reacting to situations, but independent and proactive, weighing matters with others. In organizational dynamics, they actively shape and change the work environment and working conditions based on experiences shared with community members, the context, which key component is the culture. When this study

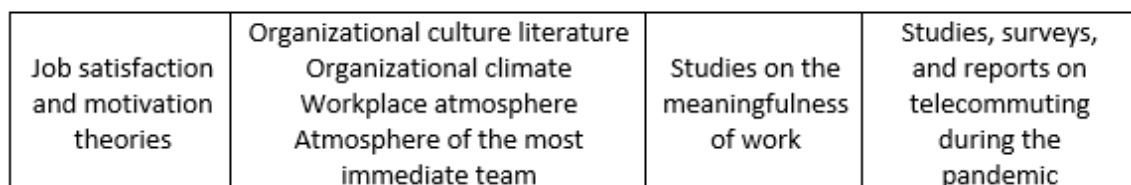
focuses on people's experiences, it is more appropriate to treat culture as organizational climate with its concepts. The organizational climate plays a key role in the chart, as its emotional force invisibly affects how people perceive their job satisfaction and motivation.

Based on the research literature, theories and schools of thoughts discussed above we can outline the theoretical framework of the study:

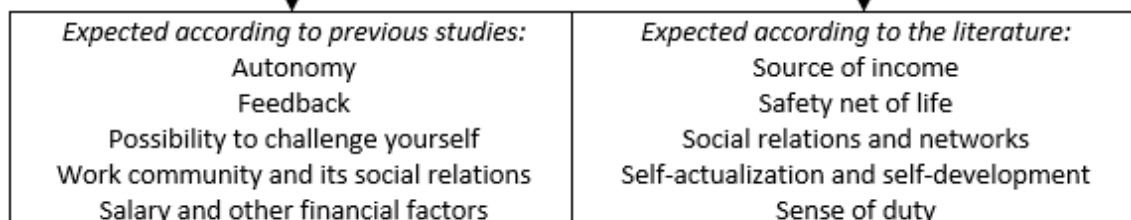
Theoretical basis of the research



The theoretical framework



1. How do experts find motivation and meaningfulness in work, and how telecommuting is shaping the way work is experienced?



Findings

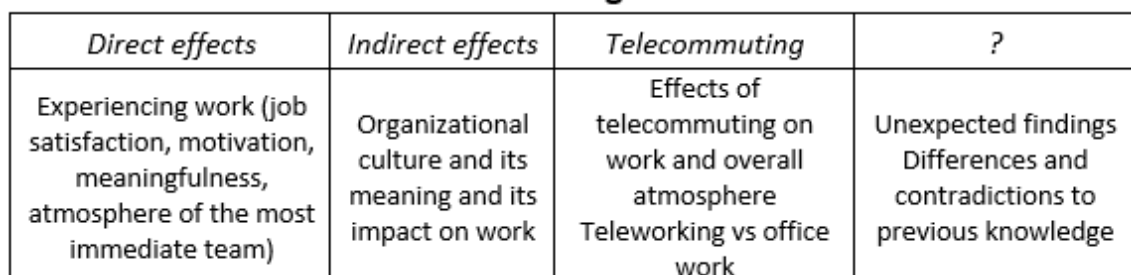


Figure 4. Theoretical framework of the study

3 Methodology

3.1 Research strategy

3.1.1 Theoretical basis

Organization research became its own branch of science only in the 1960s and so far, there have not emerged any commonly agreed practices by the scientific community that would form a prevailing paradigm (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 45; Starbuck, 2003; Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2003).¹ The studies in the field utilize eclectically many learnings from older sciences like philosophy, psychology, sociology, pedagogics, statistics, mathematics, anthropology etc. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006/2002, p. 7-8). Although the research literature that builds the basis for organizational research is from various sources and often has a practical nature, it also requires the defining of a theoretical perspective that guides the study likewise other studies in various fields. This assures the purpose, objectives, and the logicity of the methodological choices of a study, and its exploratory rigour. (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 39; Crotty, 2011, p. 1-4; Grey, 2005, p. 5-7; Johnson & Duberley, 2003, p. 1-9; Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 68)

In the philosophy of science, the terminology used is often confusing and contradictory even in the distinguished sources of the field (Blaikie, 2011: 1-2, 13-14; Crotty, 2011: 1). Because of logicity this study leans on the concepts used by Crotty (2011), who is often referred to in social studies. Crotty's description of the interdependency of different elements in the theoretical foundation is clear, and therefore used as the theoretical basis of this study (Crotty, 2013, p. 1-17). The elements of the basis have also been complemented from other sources: i.a. Bell and Thorpe, 2013; Blaikie, 2011; Easterby et. al 2006; Hatch and Yanow, 2003; Scherer, 2003 and Grey, 2013.

¹ Paradigm is a distinct set of concepts. It represents the idea of the world that defines its own nature, the place of individual in the world, and its own relation to the world and its parts. The beliefs are accepted as self-evident facts because their fundamental truth cannot be proven.

Crotty defines the four elements of a theoretical basis:

1. **Methods:** Technics and methods that collect and analyse the data required by the research questions
2. **Methodology:** Learning about methods, forming the methodological strategy used to pick the relevant methods.
3. **Theoretical perspective:** Scientific basic assumptions and beliefs that are the prevailing principles of methodology forming the context and logic of the research process.
4. **Epistemology:** The most essential part of the theoretical perspective. Crotty defines epistemology shortly: How we know what we know. Epistemology is a science, and of knowing: What kind of knowledge, and how, is possible to get, and what knowledge is appropriate and legitimate, what conceptions are from the truth etc.

The established element of theoretical basis is ontology, the science of being and its nature, in other words, what kind of is reality, both physical and social. Ontology defines the reality from which the knowledge is searched by the concepts of epistemology. However, Crotty outlines ontology as tool for philosophical thinking without considering it as an essential part of practical studies. However, in this study, the ontology is alongside other basic elements, because the organizational culture included in the research question requires the opening of the concept of organization.

Crotty illustrates the dependency of these elements with arrows:

Epistemology → Theoretical perspective → Methodology → Methods

The different orientations of these elements will not be more closely discussed in this study except by a few examples:

1. **Epistemology:** Objective and constructive epistemology
2. **Theoretical perspective:** Various different ones e.g. positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and postmodernism
3. **Methodology:** Experimental research, survey research, ethnography, phenomenological studies, grounded theory, action research, discourse analysis etc.
4. **Methods:** Questionnaire, sampling, observation, interview, case-study, narrative, statistical analysis, theme identification, content analysis, conversation analysis, document analysis etc.

The arrows in Crotty's description move from one element to another from left to right: Epistemology defines the theoretical perspective, and these two together define methodology and the above-mentioned entity decides the used methods. The combination of these elements needs to be science-philosophically logical, for example, a specific orientation of epistemology does not fit with every different theoretical perspective (Hatch & Yanow, 2003).

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective of the study

In practice the arrows by Crotty can also move from right to left, and chronologically this often happens. Already when deciding the research questions, the researcher often starts from methods and methodology when considering how to collect the relevant data for the study, so the arrows also move from right to left. The meaning of the empirical part of this study is to describe and understand how telecommuting is experienced in the different phases of the pandemic so far by the people of the subject community. The most natural way to study this is to utilize qualitative research methods, like interviews, observations, and narratives, that is going to the people and asking questions and discussing with them. These are typical methods used in ethnography and phenomenology, in other words, moving from right to left in Crotty's theory, from methods to methodology. When moving further from right to left for both ethnography and phenomenology the most logical choice for the theoretical perspective is interpretivism, that is fundamentally already constructivist. Interpretivism sees that research on human beings by human beings needs to be studied in a social context, in other words, objective results cannot be achieved by utilizing traditional scientific methods used in natural sciences.

Therefore, the elements of the theoretical basis of this study are:

Ontology – Constructionist realism

Epistemology – Constructionism

Theoretical perspective – Interpretivism

Methodology – Ethnography and phenomenology

Methods – Interviews, dialogs, theming, observation, documents

The research question concerns the problematic nature of organizational culture and therefore organizational ontology is used as the roof theory for this study. Organizational studies consider the organization as it is, and the definitions of organizations are often of a general nature – there are as many definitions as there are proposers (Chia, 2003; McAuley et al. 2007, p. 12-15). Starbuck (2003) states based on a few studies: “Their data indicated that different members of an organization disagree so strongly with each other that it makes no sense to talk about an average belief, and members’ belief about their organizations correlate very weakly with measurable characteristics of their organization, in other words, the properties of organizations do not have to support of consensus.” Based on McAuley et al. (2007, p. 12-18) the most common definitions express in one way or another the uniting of stakeholders to reach common goals. However, McAuley et al. consider this idea naïve: everyone has their own goals, and no-one even has any idea what the “common” and so-called official goals are – how many have even been asked about it in the first place?

The question on organizational ontology is interesting regarding this study due to the exceptional nature of time. In natural sciences and also in the imitative social sciences has occasionally prevailed the so-called naïve i.e. empirical realism: nothing exists except what can be detected by sensory perceptions i.e. what can be heard, seen, touched, smelled or tasted. Hardly anyone doubts the existence of an organization, although it does not meet the criteria of empirical realism; organization still pays the salary and in the worst case it sends a notice of dismissal. If an organization can be seen or heard or be touched is insignificant, the organizational ontology depends on those meanings that people themselves and together with others give to an organization (Crotty, 2011, p. 10-12). This type of ontology is called the constructivist realism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006: 33). Grey (2013, p. 6) writes aptly: “Organizational reality does not have an objective existence but is constructed by people in organizations and by organization theory itself.” The meanings might stick as structures in the course of time and the constructionistic nature of organization is forgotten. Grey (2013, p. 130) reminds: “The problem, though, is that in organizations (and elsewhere in life) the facts do not speak for themselves. They

are always interpreted and when the interpretations 'stick' and get believed by all or most people they come constructions."

The long-lasting influencer of organization research William H. Starbuck (2004) describes how his view on organization has changed during time. In his article the title of chapter is "Organizations Become Less Real", in which he states:

"Thus, organizations began to look less and less like distinct social systems and more and more like arbitrary categories created by observers or social conventions. The previously real phenomena I had been trying to study were vaporizing into mental and social constructions."

Ontology is therefore realistic in this study but the constructionistic emphasis is highlighted, in other words, organization is social construction of the meanings individuals and society give to the organization. Westwood and Clegg (2003) state: "Organizational ontology reflects such constructivist concerns through stressing that there is no external and material organization beyond the mutually constituting activity of members' interactional work". This results that when the times, circumstances, people, and their societies change, also the meanings change. Therefore, organization must be seen as a process instead of a static entity. Chia (2003) sees that the traditional organization is based on being-ontology, that is slowly shifting towards becoming-ontology. He writes: "Its [becoming] central argument is that organization must not be understood as a concrete social entity (whether socially constructed or otherwise) with durable characteristics and tendencies. Instead, organization is better understood as the aggregative, unintended outcome of local efforts at ordering and regularizing our otherwise intractable and amorphous life world in order to make it more predictable and livable. Organization is more a tedious and interminable process of factioning out the real than a solid, static thing."

The constructionist building of organization is an important underlying factor of this study. The COVID-19 pandemic in itself and the changes in work it has caused have altered and will alter even further the intercommunication between people and organizations. Meanwhile organization is constantly in a constructionist change. The question to be asked is; to what extent the pandemic with its telecommuting and other

phenomenon is making organization less and less concrete, solid and static, and will organization and its people grow further apart. (cf. Chia, 2003 above; Nurmi, 2022)

3.1.3 Interpretivism as a theoretical perspective

From the elements of theoretical basis, the most important, and the scientific outline of the study, is the theoretical perspective (paradigm). The theoretical perspective of this study, interpretivism, was decided based on the meaning of the study, research questions, and by moving according to Crotty's (2011) arrows (cf. page 48). The decision was supported by what was written in the organizational theoretical literature about interpretivism started to "fit" as the theoretical base for this study (i.a. Bell & Thorpe, 2013; Cuncliffe, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2006; Grey, 2013; Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Lee & Lings, 2008; McAuley et al., 2007; Scherer, 2003).

Interpretivism includes many orientations based on German philosophy hereditary already from the 19th century i.a. phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical theory, symbolic interaction, that cannot be pursued to be discussed comprehensively by organization research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 7-8). According to Hatch and Yanow (2003) interpretivism as the umbrella term, with its basic assumptions and concepts, usually covers well the concepts needed in organization research. Interpretivism is based on the interpretation that the reality is not objective and exterior, but instead constructed socially by the meanings given by people. It focuses on the ways people use trying to understand the world by sharing their experiences with each other. The language in general, and especially the language of the society has a central role in this.

The guiding principle of the interpretivist research methods is still adopted from the over one hundred years old German school's embraced principle: nature we explain, life we need to understand interpretively (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Scherer, 2003). One of the main sociology persons, Max Weber, became the leading figure of understanding

interpretative being/conditions of time (Crotty, 2011, p. 94; Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 58-59).² The interpretivist school has emphasized from the beginning that studying social life and its people is completely different compared to natural sciences, because humans act based on their values. The research subjects of anthropology such as interpretivism are not mute and often even answer to the researcher's questions by commenting and asking themselves unlike the subjects of natural sciences. The subjects are target-oriented, think, feel, and communicate with fellow humans, forming their own standpoints.

The objective of the researcher is not primarily to gather facts and measure how often and how much something happens, but to discover different constructions and meanings that people direct to their experiences. The focus is on what people as individuals and as a collective consider and feel. The attention is on the ways that people communicate with each other, verbally and non-verbally, such as, gestures and expressions. The meaning of the study is trying to understand why people experience matters differently, then to find external reasons and common laws to distinct behaviours. Human action arises from the total sense that people have established from the situation, not from direct response to the external stimuli. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 29-31)

Interpretivism sees that it is challenging, if not impossible, to generate nomothetic knowledge of the complex areas of human behaviour, because the areas depend on social actors that are concerned as creators of meanings. The knowledge is thus very situational and context-related: knowledge is unique and tied to the cultural and historical moment, and the gained knowledge can be generalized mostly as thought-provoking. This kind of ideographic knowledge can only be gained from organizations and its people by approaching them as closely as possible (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 10-11, 46-49). The approach is experience-near or emic (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 11). Participative observation as a method of field work is often necessary complemented with other qualitative

² The father of the sentence is a German philosopher William Dilthey (1839-1911). The idea was developed by Max Weber (1864-1920) who reminds us from the Spanish flu, the horrible pandemic that raged one hundred years ago. Weber himself died in the disease.

methods like interviews. The objective is to reach a so-called thick description of the phenomenon and the people: what is “hidden” behind the talk and behaviour (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 47-48; Hatch & Yanow, 2003)?

Differing from natural sciences an interpretivist researcher asks from the subjects what they already know (first order construct). The researcher interprets what has already been interpreted, but the original first order construct of the subjects is the starting point. When the researcher then interprets what he hears and observes with technical language it's about the interpretation of interpretation (second order construct) (Blaikie, 2007, p. 92-93). According to today's interpretivism the interpretation with technical language must reach a mutual agreement with the subjects of the dialog (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Scherer, 2003).

3.1.4 Summary of interpretivism

Positivism as a theoretical perspective has been established in natural sciences and spread from there to other branches of science that has for a long time been the only “scientific” paradigm. Easterby-Smith et al. illustrate the situation in organization research: positivism is assigned to the defending champions corner (red corner), and interpretivism to the challenger's corner (blue corner) (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 26-28). The most relevant characteristics of interpretivism are often represented by comparing them to the equivalent characteristics of positivism. Bell and Thorpe describe positivism as the “state church” of scientists that most are part of, while interpretivism forms the “religious sect” hiding in the shadows of the state church, that already threatens in the so-called human sciences the hegemony of the state church in Europe (Bell & Thorpe, 2006, p. 43-55; also cf. Grey, 2013, p. 5-10). In America other than positivism still has a marginal relevance.

The table below leans on i.a. the following sources: Bell & Thorpe, 2013; Easterby-Smith et al., 2006; Grey, 2013; Lee & Lings, 2008; McAuley et al., 2007. The characteristics are

for clarity reasons rarely occurring extremes: the differences are not so absolute in practice, in other words, both schools use some practices from the opposite school. Easterby-Smith et. al. (2006) state that organizational researchers effectively combine with consideration some principles of both schools in their studies.

Table 3. Theoretical perspective of the study

Characteristics	State church Positivism	Religious sect Interpretivism
Purpose of the study	Explain and predict	Illustrate, interpret, and understand
Information	Neutral, objective, scientific, universal	Time, place, and situation related (contextual), information is not neutral, power creates the "real" information
Objectivity	Possible and necessary	The attitudes, values and prior knowledge of the researcher impacts what is seen and how
Truth	Achieved by competent researchers by the right methods	There is no one and only truth, only interpretations made from different perspectives, credibility instead of truth
Language	Corresponds 1:1 to the reality, independent about what it represents, reflects the reality	Describes and builds the reality, shapes the study starting from the research question, always an interpretation of an interpretation
Values	Not a part of science	Research is free of values and researcher is an illusion
Methods	Main emphasis on quantitative methods	Main emphasis on qualitative methods
Power	Not discussed	Central research subject in some fields, i.a. critical studies

3.1.5 Methodological choice of the study

Following Crotty's terminology, methodology is a research strategy that guides appropriate method choices (Crotty, 2011, p. 1-9). When treating with the theoretical perspective of this study, phenomenology and ethnography were selected as methodologies according to Crotty's criteria (page 49).

Phenomenology

The roots of phenomenology are already from the late 19th and early 20th century's European philosophy (Edmund Husserl) and American sociology (George Mead), and phenomenology is more or less behind all interpretivist tendencies (Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 60-62). Organizational research has since quoted, as appropriate, the theories of phenomenological philosophy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 7-8; McAuley et al., 2007, p. 294-298).

In the examination of organizations and the lives of its people, the phenomenological approach focuses on describing and understanding the everyday experiences of the actors in the organization and the meanings that the actors attach to these experiences. Experiences are sought to be revealed without theories and pre-assumptions imposed by the researcher. The researcher must get as close as possible to their subjects in order to reach their life world and subjective experiences. The approach often used is the so-called in-depth interviews, on the grounds of which the researcher seeks to compile a so-called thick description (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 47-48). In phenomenology, the starting point is the "uncontaminated" experiences of individuals and their descriptions. The role of the researcher is to interpret the experiences of individuals in order to gain an understanding of what members of the target community as a whole have experienced about the phenomenon and how they have experienced it (Creswell, 2013, p. 76-80). (Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 61-62; McAuley et al., 2007, p. 294-298)

McAuley et al. (2007) emphasize that a phenomenological perspective on an organization helps to understand that external factors of behaviour and internal factors such as emotions and values interact with each other. Our narrative of organizations, both rational and irrational, views of an organization's life are integrated at some deeper level. This complexity means that information about the organization is constantly being created and renewed in a social and interactive relationship (cf. organizational ontology page 50). (McAuley et al., 2007, p. 294-298)

Ethnography

Ethnography has a common background with phenomenology, but when phenomenology has a psychological basis, ethnography is based on anthropology, i.e. the study of indigenous cultures (Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 62-63). The use of ethnography has expanded to other social sciences, and it has also increasingly been used in organizational research in two senses: 1) As a narrow concept, it means methods of acquiring research material. 2) As a broader concept, ethnography is its own research tradition, in which an ethnographer interprets his/her observations in order to obtain a thick description within the community of the frequencies and patterns of behaviour, i.e. the culture (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 49). In this study, ethnography has both uses. Ethnographic research methods such as interviews, observation, and interpretation of subject documents are appropriate to the purpose of the research and the research question (Crotty, 2011, p. 2-14). When discussing organizational culture, ethnography is a logical choice for the study, as it has originally been precisely the study of culture (cf. Bell & Thorpe above).

For the purposes of this study, phenomenology and ethnography complement each other well: phenomenology focuses on individuals when ethnography deals with “collectives”; companies, departments, classes, that is, any community and its members interactions with their symbols, rituals, beliefs, and artefacts. Phenomenology uses only interviews, but in ethnography the long-term observation within the community has traditionally played the most important role, and this has been referred to as fieldwork since the early days of the method. In fieldwork, discussions are important and require a confidential relationship and thus often a long-term presence. Ethnography also uses all the data available in the form of various documents (Gray, 2012, p. 23-24). Ethnography is particularly interested in the language used within the community with its narratives (storytelling) and the “hidden meanings” contained in the manifestations of the language (Gray, 2012, p. 23). The purpose of ethnographic research in organizations is to highlight and explain the ways people in the work community try to understand, describe, act, and manage their daily situations (Leyland, 2008, p. 7).

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Data collecting (Interviews – Bank)

Interviews

The most important method of acquiring data in both phenomenology and ethnography is interviews. This study uses an unstructured and semi-structured interview. An unstructured interview is essentially a discussion in which the interviewee speaks, and the interviewer listens while trying to hold the discussion in useful areas based on the research questions. When the core of phenomenology is to reach the human cognition without the distorting effect of prior knowledge and outside opinions, an unstructured interview is the preferred option.

In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer leads the discussion to the areas in which he/she has considered it important to obtain data when focusing on his/her research topic. The interviewer thus has a rather loose “script” that is used more or less depending on the interviewee and the situation. The important thing is that the interviewer is responsive to any opinions that are not expected – they can be very valuable to the research. In both types of interviews, it is important to avoid straying from the subject and stay on topics that are interesting and useful for the research. Often an unstructured and semi-structured interview is used in the same interview, for example, starting with a free-form discussion on the topic, i.e. an unstructured interview, and gradually moving to the script to get answers to the desired themes (Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 87-88). A structured interview asks similar questions for everyone, so it is suitable for surveys and is more a method of a quantitative approach.

Observation

Observation is an integral part of ethnographic research and the acquisition of its data. In this study, the observation is open and participatory, in other words, working “normally” with the work community of the research subject. Because the corona pandemic

limits observation, it is complemented by autoethnography, in which the researcher reflects on his/her own experiences against both the interviews and observations and the prior knowledge of the phenomenon that is studied (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 105). Occasional discussions during observation may provide a rich addition to the data. (Creswell, 2013, p. 163-168; Easterby-Smith et al., 2006, p. 83-97).

3.2.2 Data analysis

The majority of the data in this study consists of recorded and transcribed interviews. One interview of about 1,5 hours accumulates an average of 20-30 pages, which lead to a total of about 150 pages. The purpose of the analysis is to create clarity in the data so that clear and reliable conclusions can be drawn from the interviews. Qualitative analysis is based on logical reasoning and interpretation, in which the material is first broken down into parts, conceptualized and reassembled into an entity that serves the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 109-110). There are methods for analysing the data, e.g. thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis. In their basic technique, they are very similar, and this study uses thematic analysis, briefly “categorizing” (Bryman, 2008, p. 554-556).

All methods of analysis start with the **coding** of material (mainly text): all passages of text that are considered to be of value to the research are marked, “coded” in the text, often developed by the researcher himself (Bryman, 2008, p. 554-555). Coded parts must be named by quoting a passage in the text or by giving the meaning of the phrase a short name (Creswell, 2013, p. 184-187; Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 243-246; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 373-374). After several reviews of the material, a “hard” decision must be made: all non-coded parts of the data are left aside (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 94). The coded material is **themed**, i.e. passages of text that mean the same thing, even if expressed in many different ways, form a separate theme (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 373-375; Creswell, 2013, p. 184-187). The number of themes must remain within manageable limits, although the exact number is impossible to say (Creswell, 2013, p. 184-187).

The “related themes” form a few **subcategories** and “related subcategories” form **main categories**; if there are several main categories, a **connecting category** is formed (Creswell, 2013, p. 184-187; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 93-95).

Theme identification is in the key position. In this study, the data has been obtained through unstructured / semi-structured interviews, and the “script” of the interview already contains **theoretically guided** thematic suggestions, whose relevance becomes clear in the interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 76-78). Unstructured parts of the interview produce **data-based** themes (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 374-375; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 116). There is no Philosopher’s Stone to identify the themes, everything depends on the skills and insights of the researcher (cf. Bryman, 2008, p. 555). Regardless of the coding, theming and classification, the researcher must maintain the audit trail principle in the processing of the data: the researcher must be able to show on which interviews the themes and related quotations are based, without violating the anonymity promised to the interviewees.

3.2.3 Interpretation

The data reduced to themes and categories is combined with theoretical concepts, i.e. the “language” of the people in the study is transformed into the research language and its concepts (Blaikie, 2011, p. 92-93; Creswell, 2013, p. 187). Themes and categories are abstracted to a higher level: how the results relate to previous research, what matters mean to the research subjects, what the study tells about the phenomenon to the target organization and social discussion (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 110, 115). The basic idea must also be remembered in the interpretation: matters should be aimed to be understood from the perspective of the subjects. Interpretation is a continuous dialogue between the data (including observation), previous research information (theory), and the researcher’s own views. The diagram below illustrates the steps for analysing the data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 111):

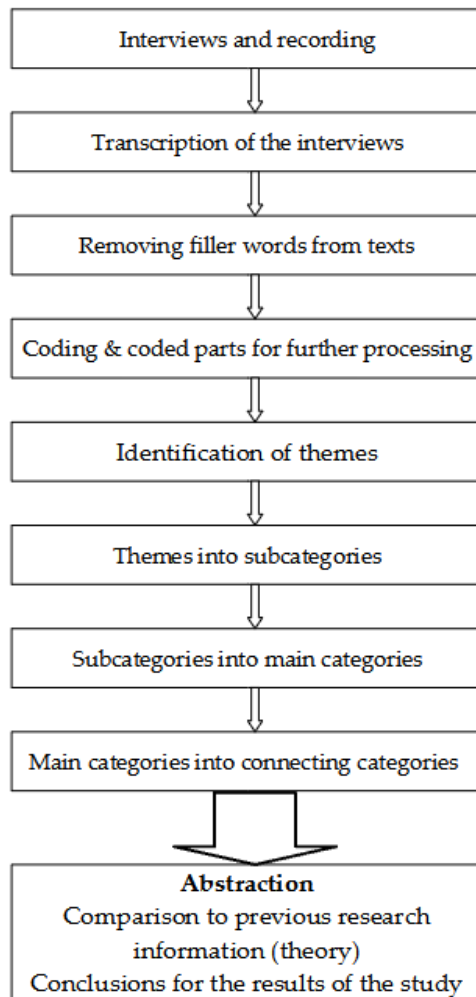


Figure 5. Steps for analysing data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002: 111)

3.2.4 Case selection – Bank

The highly regulated and rigid nature of banking industry makes it a convenient subject for this study. Its traditional ways of doing work have experienced a complete turnaround that offers a suitable environment to study the topic in real time. The amount of empirical research is currently limited and therefore a qualitative research can help to understand the experiences of the individuals and the factors that directly affect experiencing work, and the relation to the indirect influence of the organization. This relation, and the organizational culture with its complex nature can be studied best by

interpretivist approach, where it is required to get as close as possible to the people for which information is desired (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 10-11, 46-49; Gehman et al., 2018). Those who see organization as a culture do not consider it possible to reduce culture into variables. This is why the school prefers qualitative methods like ethnography (Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p. 113) Palmer and Hardy states (2000, p. 126): “This treatment of culture denies any ‘objective’ existence and instead focuses attention on the interwoven nature of language, meanings, symbols and rituals.”

In the observation and interviews of the ethnographic research regarding the research question it is impossible to discuss all the elements of experiencing work listed above within the framework of this study (page 46). The focus must be on the elements that are generally seen as the most relevant and problematic regarding the research literature of telecommuting. It must also be considered that the interviews may emerge views that have not been discussed in the research literature at all, or that are contradictory. The researcher needs to be receiving to matters that are unexpected based on the expertise in the topic.

Deciding the most essential good work’s characteristics is very research specific because not even researchers want to explicitly state the order of importance of the elements. Most researchers emphasize *autonomy, feedback and possibility to challenge yourself at work* that are at the same time also seen as preconditions for *self-actualization and self-development*. Autonomy and feedback are also highlighted by Oldham and Hackman that consider them independent of other elements, in other words, their deficiency cannot be covered by investing more in something else (cf. JCM page 23). The challenges in work are emphasized by ART because studies have shown that even a straining work may not expose to stress if the person experiences enough autonomy and an appropriate amount of challenge in their work.

4 Findings

4.1 Interviews and the results

4.1.1 Acquisition of data

The empirical data of the study was gathered by interviews carried out during November and December in 2021. It included six interviews that were originally supposed to be held in person, but the Covid-19 pandemic with its continuously changing restrictions and recommendations lead to the use Microsoft Teams to flexibly conduct the interviews remotely. The interviewees were randomly picked with the help of the HR department. The employers of the interviewee's treated the study very positively which allowed the interviews to be held during working hours. For these reasons it was correct to limit the interviews to approximately 1,5 hours, which generally is close to the recommended maximum length of an interview.

The interviews were so called semi-structured interviews that were steered towards selected themes collected from the previous research literature, relevant discourses and discussions held inside the work community, with the use of a loose script and relevant questions. The script of the interview can be found in Appendice 1. One goal of the interviews was to bring out new themes that were not included in the script by the use of different activating/accelerating means. In this respect the interviews produced little in the way of practical results, which proved that an open in-depth interview that requires significantly more time and a longer research experience offers more possibilities compared to a semi-structured interview (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002: 76-80).

There were some matters left in the interviews that required complementing and more close defining, which is why a complementary form was sent to interviewees online in January 2022 (see Appendice. 2). The form consisted of three themes that required more attention regarding the study:

- Combining work, home, and leisure during telecommuting

- Experiencing work and feedback
- Working atmosphere of the work community (team)

All of the interviewees filled out the form and answered to the questions without reminding, which showed the constructive stance towards the study.

The expert attitude of the interviewees was also revealed in the interviews: a lot of discussion was held around the concepts and terms of the interviews to clarify the questions, instead of the interviewees randomly picking their answers. This can be seen as an indication of trust that increases the credibility of the answers. All the interviewees are experts in their work. The interviewees consisted of three men and three women, and their ages ranged from 25 to 50 years. The default research ethical principles are implemented in the study regarding the interviewed persons: the individuals are not revealed to the employer or the work community nor anything is quoted anonymously from the interviews without the consent of the interviewee. The quotations used in this thesis are tagged with the number of the interviewee, following the time stamp of the interview (e.g. 1/10:23 = number of the interviewee/time stamp). The transcribed interview data consisted of approximately 150 pages (including filler words). The interviews were coded and themed, and the themes were formed into sub- and main categories. The interviews were held in Finnish, so the quotations presented in the analysis are translated to English as accurately as possible.

4.1.2 Job satisfaction and motivation factors

To describe job satisfaction and motivation factors, five different themes were chosen to the interview script based on the theory presented above in the study:

- Autonomy
- Appropriate feedback
- Possibility to challenge yourself at work
- Work community and its social relations
- Salary and other financial factors

As pointed out before, self-actualization and self-development have been identified as important in the research literature. It is discussed in the interviews as its own theme, however implicitly as if a result, because it is included in the triplicity autonomy, possibility to challenge yourself and feedback (cf. page 62).

Table 4. Job satisfaction and motivation factors

Job satisfaction and motivation factors	Ranking / pcs					Average grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Autonomy	3	1	1	1		9,0
2. Appropriate feedback		1	1		4	7,8
3. Possibility to challenge yourself at work	1	2	1	2		9,2
4. Work community and its social relations	1		3	2		7,9
5. Salary and other financial factors	1	2		1	2	7,8

As the activator of the conversation the interviewees were supposed to rank the five themes listed above in their order of importance. The columns in the table above display which themes were chosen as the most and least important ones, and the rows show how the answers on each theme were spread. After the ranking the interviewees were asked to rate from 1 to 10 how they feel these themes are currently satisfied in their work, and the average grade illustrates these answers. The reason for this numerical listing was to open the conversation and to clarify the topic for the interviewees, therefore the average grades should not be seen as the absolute truth. Noteworthy from the interviews was that the interviewees had challenges using the whole scale from 1 to 10, because the traditional scale of school grades from 4 to 10 is printed in our minds. Each one of these five themes and their answers are more closely discussed below.

Autonomy

Autonomy as a theme was introduced by defining it based on Oldham and Hackman's theories:

Autonomy is the freedom, independence, and decision-making possibility and ability that the person has in scheduling work and in deciding the appropriate ways of doing work.

The table above shows that autonomy is the most important job satisfaction and motivation factor for the interviewees. The result does not come as a surprise as all the interviewees saw themselves as experts in their work and autonomy is the most valued work characteristic by experts (see e.g. Oldham & Hackman; Volpert). Noteworthy is that all the interviewees rated their autonomy relatively high with the average of 9,0. The importance of autonomy illustrates also the fact that Hackman and Oldham, some of the most well-known researchers in the field, see autonomy as an independent factor besides feedback. In other words, the lack of autonomy cannot be compensated by increasing e.g. the challenges in work to the maximum (Ulich, 2011, p. 109).

Some of the quotations are presented below to illustrate how the interviewees described autonomy and its importance in their work.

So, it is important for me in a way that I can independently make decisions. And yes, after that certainly comes salary. (1/07:55)

*Sometimes you just must be like OK, I need to make some decisions. And of course you must be able to validate your own decisions, but sometimes these cases are such, that you kind of have to feel from which direction to approach and solve it. **But I say, this is like independent, really independent work.** (1/10:49)*

*So, this has been this sort of **independent expert work**, you can affect what you do and when and where. That is an important intrinsic value that I appreciate in this operational model. (3/14:32)*

-- so I can do my work really freely and I can actually decide myself about almost anything so to say -- (5/22:37)

Possibility to challenge yourself at work

The possibility to challenge yourself at work was found almost as important as autonomy and it was introduced to the interviewees with the following definition:

To secure the progress/development at work and to prevent the mental boredom, work should offer enough challenges, in other words tasks, that are not so-called routine and offer a chance to utilize your own experience and competence to independently solve new problems (Volpert, 1990).

To fulfill the possibility to challenge yourself requires “independent solving”, which describes well the interdependency of autonomy and the possibility to challenge yourself: the latter cannot be experienced, and you cannot develop through it at work, unless the work has enough true autonomy.

The average grade of 9,2 illustrates quite well how the interviewees saw their work as challenging enough.

*Yes, it's a ten [grade]. It's a ten, I don't know if it can be more challenging than this. **The challenge factor does not run out.** (1/14:08)*

-- you do something new all the time, so it is still challenging or maybe it could be like an eight [grade] nevertheless. (3/38:48)

*Well, **autonomy and the possibility to challenge yourself** are currently the most important ones. (4/13:13)*

*-- because now I find **that my work is like very challenging and all the time something new comes up** -- (5/28:25)*

***The possibility to challenge yourself, that comes at first** [ranking]. (6/18:39)
Even then it is really interesting that it brings challenges, that in them [challenging tasks] you always had to be awake -- (6/43:14)*

Work community and its social relations

The conversation around the theme was initiated by freely quoting Volpert's (1990) findings on the topic:

The development-contributory working conditions must enable and increase cooperation by promoting direct communication between the members of the work community.

The interviewees found the social relations of their work community and salary and other financial factors roughly as important. The remote work caused by the pandemic would have seemed to have the effect of giving greater importance to maintaining the social relations that have possibly become more difficult. In fact, the awareness on social relations was surprisingly lackluster. Instead, when shifting towards discussing the changes caused by telecommuting the value of social relations was already realized (cf. own section later)

The answers were relatively general by nature:

I am that kind of person myself, that I like to associate with people. --- So that I won't stay here at home working remotely when it [going to the office] is possible. (1/48:55)

And they haven't been relevant before [social relations] but you have come across them [other people] somewhere over there and for coffee and lunch. (4/58:10)

The perspective of inherent learning also arose:

Yes, I really enjoy myself in a community. --- And in that sense, that what you like learn from other people kind of unnoticed. (6/27:58)

And when everyone does their job little bit differently, you might do the same thing differently and you get to pick like the best pieces from everyone and find your own way of doing the job. (6/45:31)

Work community and its social relations also reached the top of the list:

Probably that fourth point [work community and its social relations] is, in fact, the most important of all, that if there was something wrong in that work

community, it would affect that day-to-day work. That is definitely the number one [most important]. (5/17:10)

Salary and other financial factors

When discussing salary, a question was raised that researchers are often concerned about in mass studies based on surveys: pay cannot be equated with other job satisfaction factors, because if people would not get paid, they would not be able to answer the other questions on job satisfaction.³ Even some of the interviewees of this study said that they would not be here answering questions unless they were getting paid. However, salary is always listed as an equal job satisfaction factor in surveys. Even a value and attitude survey by a distinguished Finnish research institute EVA was published with a citation: "For Finns, the most important meaning of work comes from money", followed by: "for as many as 65 percent, work is largely a mean of financing leisure time". The data had been collected from about two thousand Finns aged 18-70 throughout the country. When the survey includes employed, unemployed, retired, incapacitated and underemployed people, can the answers about the meaning of work really be simplified to one percentage?

The above-mentioned contradiction was emphasized in the interviews, but it was agreed with the interviewees to treat the salary and other financial factors on an equal footing with other factors. Even the interviews in this study revealed that talking about pay has never been very natural in Finnish culture, which probably affects the answers as well. In addition, it must be taken into account that the interviewees are experts. The culture of experts often involves the emphasis on getting the satisfaction from the work itself as the most valuable source of job satisfaction rather than pay (see Hackman & Oldham)

Some of the interviewees captured well the basic idea that emerged from the salary in most interviews, even directly but especially between the lines:

³ Salary was the only one from the pre-selected themes, which according to Herzberg's two-factor theory is a so-called hygiene-factor, i.e., an increase in salary reduces job dissatisfaction but does not, at least in the longer term, increase job satisfaction

And then finally [in the order of importance] is salary and other financial factors. And as you said of course, they are super important, but it is maybe more, I somehow see it in a way, that if the reward for the work is at a sufficient level, then after that it is not the most important factor anymore. (5/20:50)

*On the other hand, about the self-actualization, I don't remember who I told --- that sometimes it **feels like I get to do this job as my hobby**. So, I get to do this as a hobby and **then I get paid for it**, that kind of feeling. (6/1:06:19)*

Salary is also addressed in this study as one of the sources of meaningfulness of work. Characterizations on salary act as a suitable transition between the two groups mentioned above (motivation and job satisfaction & meaningfulness of work):

*Well, you go to work to get some kind of financial benefit, salary, but **for me at work, it's important that I do something that has a meaning**. (4/31:48)*

*-- **absolutely the meaningfulness and appreciation of your own work and such, it is more important [than salary]** (4/33:56)*

*I don't have to [because my salary is average] put my salary so high -- **I am privileged to be able to put it [self-actualization and development] so high**. (4/40:37)*

Employee issue and other employee benefits

Among the financial factors, the recently held employee issue emerged in the interviews. Due to the attention, it received in the interviews, it deserves to be discussed as its own theme. The employee issue was held in September 2022 and offered the possibility to subscribe for the employer's shares at a discounted price. The primary goal of employee issues is to engage personnel in the organization. How this is done depends on the terms of the issue, the method of implementation, the timing and the information. In this case, about a third of the personnel participated in the issue which shows its success. Generally, it was considered excellent, as the quotation show:

*I thought that it [employee issue] **was a good idea. Extremely good**. (1/1:00:36) And I thought it was like cleverly designed for once, **that it gave everyone a chance no matter what you do; are you a salesperson or a big boss**. However, you have the opportunity to subscribe as much as you want. --- **there was no***

***classification among people.** In that sense, I feel like it was pretty well done.
(1/1:00:51)*

*So, one thing I thought was really good was to **get a little bit of that kind of entrepreneurial spirit.** I also participated to make the work **like you want to do things even better because you want the stock price to rise.** --- But I hope that in the future we have more things like this, that you get to participate in employee issues. (2/1:25:38)*

*Of course, this employee issue was also fair **from my point of view,** and of course I took the opportunity and took a loan from the company and bought shares.
(3/1:21:08)*

One of the interviewees criticized the rush:

*In my opinion, it was extremely, extremely badly prepared, leaving an image from the urgent schedule like... I personally didn't seize the chance, because I felt it was too busy, handled with an urgent schedule and too poor communication. --- That trust in it was like [bad], because I felt it was poorly prepared and poorly done.
(4/1:02:25)*

Despite the latest quote, the employee issue seems to have been quite a success, and at least its impact on motivation and job satisfaction has not been negative.

Appropriate feedback

Feedback was approached with the following characterization:

Humans have the need to have a comparison of their work performance to alter their working principles in order to achieve the required goals and to develop themselves. Feedback can be provided by the superiors, colleagues (often with experts), clients, and especially the challenging and interesting work itself (Hackman & Oldham).

The most surprising result of the interviews and completely contrary to the prior research on which the study is based on concerns feedback. According to several leading researchers in the field, autonomy, possibility to challenge yourself at work and appropriate feedback are the three basic pillars of job satisfaction and motivation (Hackman

& Oldham; Ulich, 2011, p. 109; Volpert, 1990). Hackman and Oldham also consider autonomy and feedback as independent factors, i.e. the negative effects of low feedback on experiencing work cannot be prevented, for example, by unlimited autonomy (Ulich, 2011, p. 109).

As many as four of the six interviewees rated appropriate feedback as the least important of the five pre-given factors. Unlike other factors, the ratings given for the actual feedback ranged from three to ten, and the average of 7,8 fell far short of autonomy and the possibility to challenge yourself at work. The superior, the work itself, colleagues and clients were relatively evenly named as the providers of feedback.⁴

When all the interviewees considered themselves experts, many may not even need any feedback other than what the so-called good work gives them, as in the old saying “a workman is known by his work”. Colleague feedback may not even be expected, as the interviewees work in teams of 5 to 10 people, each carrying out their own work independently. The superior must be very adept at giving feedback on work to experts with professional pride: there must be the right time, place, and situation, because even a sort of pretentious pat on the back can have the exact opposite effect than intended. One of the interviewees reached aptly the saying “a workman is known by his work”:

*So yes, **you get some praises here and there and the measurement show positives etc. and blah.** But for myself, maybe you more reflect on what the effectiveness is, and I try that if I see that the things you are trying to tell or instruct **are realized in real life, so that is the best feedback for me. Not that verbal or written feedback from someone but that functional change.** (3/36:45)*

All of the above may explain part of it, but when the previous research evidence is strong, the question is why didn't feedback arouse in these interviews? Is it a symptom that experts are too autonomous and, supported by it, too complacent to need more feedback from a superiors or colleagues? Is there a risk that the development of one's own work and own development will fade with it? In any case, the suspicion remains that

⁴ The interviewees have little contact with the customer. Many have so-called internal customers (other department, team etc.), but this aspect was not raised in the interviews

little feedback from superiors is a symptom that one important and natural channel of interaction and information between the organization and the expert is weakened.

Yes, it [feedback] has dropped to basically zero. (4/18:39)

So er.. alone here, here in the desert you get to whirl/swing. Let's say, a nice try, but maybe like a three [grade for feedback]. (4/18:23)

In many ways, the interviews tried to stir a discussion about the appropriate feedback, but it didn't really light a fire. Feedback was and remains a motivational factor whose importance was not recognized. There were some exceptions, comments, that emphasized the superior's successful role as a feedback provider, naturally alongside the work without making a fuss:

I'm just grateful that my own superior is present and always has time to encourage and help, and that is what makes a concrete impact on that day-to-day work and satisfaction. (5/10:52)

That it is indeed a luxury to be able to engage in a back-and-forth with a superior even, if necessary, on a daily basis, on a practical level that what those things mean and how this should be taken forward. (5/14:31)

The same interviewee described aptly about handling the work done in the team and the feedback it gives:

What we do also involves that whenever we have been somewhere and done something, we always come back to it, to the team or process regularly and many times, and then we always measure those results and usually we go through it with the management team and those stakeholders as well who are affected by that process. And I think that is a very good way to go about it, and that's exactly what leads to the realization that 'hey we have made some progress on this' and then that will lead to like positive feedback. It is quite true that through it the feedback comes, yes. (5/25:08)

4.1.3 Meaningfulness of work

Job satisfaction and motivation factors have been addressed above at the micro level, at which the organization and the employee agree on the terms and conditions of work. At

the macro level, the social level, three factors face each other: the *organization* as the provider of resources and as the most important determinant of working conditions, at least its general framework, *employee* as a performer of work but also as the influencer of working conditions, and in addition to these, *society* with its structures, standards, services, resources, subsidies, taxes etc. (see experiencing work, page 28)

When examining work at the macro level there is discussion on the relevance of the meaningfulness of work, and it is considered important for both the individuals themselves and for the employer's and society's perspective (Ball, 2012; Fowler, 2014; Helsingin Sanomat 8.8.2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Ulich, 2011, p. 495-497). The meaningfulness of work is also investigated in Finland with numerous national surveys, of which the most well-known is probably the "Value and Attitude" -survey conducted by EVA every few years already since 1984 (the latest in 2019).

The discussion on meaningfulness of work was initiated in the interviews by freely quoting Martela and Pessi (2018):

Meaningfulness means that there is something valuable in the work itself. Work is not just a tool to earn a living, but there is something about work that makes it valuable in itself. When a person easily spends a third of his/her waking hours working, a person needs, admits it or not, more content/meaning in life than just getting the rent paid and a bottle of light beer in the evenings.

From the literature in the field, five sources of meaningfulness defined by the researchers in a slightly different way emerged as the themes of the interview (cf. page 17; also, EVA, 2019; Fox, 1980; Martela & Pessi, 2018):

- Source of income
- Safety net of life
- Social relations and networks
- Self-actualization and self-development
- Sense of duty

As the activator of the conversation the interviewees were again supposed to rank the five themes listed above in their order of importance:

Table 5. Meaningfulness of work

Meaningfulness of work	Ranking / pcs				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Source of income	2	3	1		
2. Safety net of life	1	1	1	2	1
3. Social relations and network		1	3	2	
4. Self-actualization and self-development	3	1	1	1	
5. Sense of duty				1	5

Self-actualization and self-development

Self-actualization and self-development were perceived as the most important factors regarding the meaningfulness of work, in addition to the source of income, i.e. salary. As noted for job satisfaction and motivation factors, salary is in the “wrong company” in such surveys (page 69). If salary is treated as if it were separate, self-actualization and self-development are clearly the most important factors when it comes to meaningfulness of work.

The discussion around the theme was introduced by combining Martela and Pessi (2018) and Hackman and Oldham (Ball, 2012):

Work is perceived as valuable when a person can express and realize himself through it. There should be an opportunity to learn new things at work, which requires work, that is considered challenging and thus developing. Extensive autonomy is needed to meet the challenges.

The quotes illustrate how experts experience work and themselves:

*But it probably comes down to how many people actually get to do that kind of work, which they experience as meaningful, that the majority of people go to work, so to speak, just to make a living. That it is pretty **rare to get to do that kind work that you feel is important.** (1/27:05)*

*The number one is self-actualization and self-development. (3/52:55 & 5/48:26)
I can put that self-actualization so high; **I am privileged to be able to put it high.** (4/40:37)*

*That sometimes it feels like I get to do what is at the same time a **hobby for me.**
So, I get to do like my hobby and then I get paid for it, that kind of feeling I have had sometimes. (6/1:06:19)*

Self-actualization is also learning:

***In other words, it is always possible to learn something new, it has been a complete jackpot for me.** (5/10:16)*

*--- so, I feel that **I get meaningfulness especially from the development,** that I get to improve something. (5/42:25)*

Source of income

In this study, the source of income includes salary plus the benefits provided by the employer. The problematic role of salary in this type of research has been addressed already above (page 69).

When discussing work as a source of income, the EVA's Value and Attitude –survey from 2019 was highlighted. The study was headlined: “Only one in five would go to work if they didn't need the money.” The release specifies: “The importance of money for doing work is also shown by the fact that only 22 percent would go to work even if they did not need the money.” The interviewees were asked a speculative question of whether they would continue to work in a hypothetical situation that would give them a lottery win, a legacy, or otherwise so much money that they would not have work anymore because of the money.

The responses of the interviewees in this study are completely inconsistent with the EVA's study. Only one in six said s/he would leave the job, but the conversation revealed that s/he would actually continue to work as well, as one of his current hobbies might gradually turn into a full-time job. The answers speak for themselves:

I would definitely go to work, otherwise my head would probably like explode, yes. (6/59:42)

*I have one friend I go for a run with, and he has almost a million in income, and with him we laughed one time that if I won the eurojackpot, for how long would we have the energy to travel around beach resorts and restaurants and others. **And then you feel like hey, should I actually do something again. (1/21:51)***

*(little shortened) Yes, I would go to work, we talked about this just a few days ago with a guy here, **that if a lottery win pops into your arms, that what would you do, then at least I would keep working. --- Yes, I would keep working. Whether I would be working at this bank or somewhere else, I can't say that, but I would be somewhere. (3/50:10)***

However, some said they would reduce their workload somewhat:

I would probably get bored, so I would have to do some kind of work. I would probably develop something. Not necessarily, but something yes. (4/34:44)

Safety net of life

Work has a very unique place in Finnish society, deeply rooted in people's souls, which has been further strengthened by the Lutheran religion. While secularization has deprived work of some of its respect, work has retained its importance as a unifying factor in society.⁵ Although the government's efforts to include all citizens into working life thus has a strong economic and political goal, work is seen as a stabilizing factor in human life.

⁵ Those who are out of work are still easily stamped as e.g. work dodgers or social parasites without bothering to find out the causes of unemployment of the person concerned

The conversation around the topic was started by freely quoting the research literature:

Work fights boredom, and as a daily routine, it forms a safety net on which to build the rest of one's life. Meaningful work provides protection against disruptions and disappointments in private life (Fox, 1980).

As the table shows, the safety net of life did not inspire the respondents in this study: the dispersion was large, and half set it as the fourth or the last. Even the interviewer started to get frustrated when the discussion of the theme felt slightly forced. Maybe those who have been out of work for a long time are more aware of the importance of the theme? When the interviewees are experts and they all have a pretty uninterrupted career behind them, the option of no work does not come to mind spontaneously (e.g. Fox, 1980; Ulich, 2011, p. 495).

Sense of duty

In the West, and especially in Lutheran countries, the attitudes towards work have been, and still are, guided by the belief instilled by religion and maintained by the secular government, that if one does not work the future will be bad. Doing work is perceived as a duty, a person is born to do work. Although Lutheran societies are now secularized, the perception still lives and controls the minds. According to EVA (2019), religion has now been replaced by the threat of a public sustainability deficit, which needs to be tackled by raising employment rates and condemning idleness.

Therefore, according to EVA's study (2019), 55 percent of respondents consider work to be a duty of a member of a society. It is surprising that in 2010 only 36 percent of Finns thought so. This result in its own justified taking the sense of duty as one of the themes for the interviews.

The interviews gave a complete blow to EVA's results: as many as five interviewees rated the sense of duty as the least meaningful and one as the second least meaningful factor.

The explanations for this can only be guessed at. One is, at the very least, that this type of mass survey-based research targets the public in general and thus has no context and no people within the context, as in a case study like this. Also, for example, how conductively questions are asked in mass surveys is its own chapter. The interviewees in this study are all experts whose relationship to work is unique, like the job satisfaction and motivation factors and the importance of salary have shown above. Based on the interviews it can even be said that for those who see themselves as experts, the whole idea of work as a duty is foreign.

Few of the responses show the strangeness of the sense of duty:

Well, the last one [sense of duty], so as the last I put that sense of duty.
(6/1:02:02)

*Maybe it's that safety net of life [as third], and after that comes those social relations **and then as the last that sense of duty.*** (5/50:04)

The sense of duty probably lies somewhere deep, unconsciously, and maybe more would have come to light if there was enough time to discuss every subject thoroughly in an hour and a half of interviewing. There were also contributions that were aware of their sense of duty, e.g. payment of taxes to finance the welfare of society was highlighted in a couple:

*Of course, you think of it yourself in the way that it is a certain type of duty to take care of when you are able to work. That then, people who can't do it can do their own stuff and whatever they want to do. **That you help the weaker party [by paying taxes].*** (3/55:00)

*But, if and when I think that with my **tax money**, that it is like an obligation, that with my tax money what I pay for that work, then it **finances the activities of this whole society, the welfare state.*** (4/38:58)

4.1.4 Organizational climate

Organizational climate was discussed as the third topic. The conversation was started by freely explaining what is meant by the organizational climate, based on the researchers in the field:

Organizational climate is the emotional atmosphere that prevails in an organization or in a part of it (unit, department, workplace). It is a collective description and is a cross-section of members descriptions (Lindroth, 1990). The organizational climate is exactly the same as the word “workplace spirit” used in everyday working life for ages; the spirit is neither seen nor heard, it cannot be touched, tasted or smelled, but the people in the workplace know that there is one, good or bad. One researcher says it is a “mysterious social force” that affects the daily work of all the people in the community (Howard-Grenville, 2020). Even sad is that people only become aware of a favorable organizational climate after losing it because of moving to another organization (Jackson & Parry, 2011: 72).

The discussion of the organizational climate revealed an issue that can be considered as one of the findings of this study: at least for the employees, also experts, of relatively large (by Finnish standards) organization, the organizational culture and organizational climate are too far from daily life. Instead, talking about the workplace spirit, the atmosphere of the team, etc. at the workplace level arouse on a different level. In order to concretize the theme, the interviewees were asked to give a score of 1 to 10 for some dimensions of the organizational climate of the employer company (dimensions are cited from Lindroth 1990):

Table 6. Dimensions of the organizational climate

Dimensions of the organizational climate (1-10)	Average
uncommunicative (1) – open (10)	8,8
suspicious (1) – fair (10)	8,5
passivating (1) – creative (10)	6,5
skeptical (1) – trusting (10)	9,0

The interviewees' perceptions of the organizational climate of their employer company are very positive, apart from the passivating – creative comparison. Without this exception the atmosphere would be optimal based on Lindroth (1990). Unlike the others, there was also a lot of variation in the answers of the passivating – creative dimensions, and the average of 6,5 masks that there were three fours among the grades.

Next there are a few quotes about the dimensions that indicated a favorable work atmosphere. The passivating – creative dimension is discussed more extensively last.

Uncommunicative (1) - open (10)

Well, I think we have a pretty open organization. (2/1:07:03)

I have always had the feeling that the atmosphere is like open. (6/1:15:24)

I think it's gotten better. (6/1:16:12)

Some criticism as well:

*Yes, our organization is **somewhat segmented**. However, how I would like to see it at the moment, it would be more on the open side than on the closed side.*

(3/1:00:07) I would argue that, as at the entire organizational level, perhaps we perform on a level of seven. (6/1:16:12)

Suspicious (1) - fair (10)

Well, the people that I have been dealing with, yes, I could say it's a ten [grade]. That I have not experienced any suspicious attitudes. (1:37:48)

I think it's on the fair side. Yeah, I have always felt that the organization is fair (2/1:11:42)

Also, little criticism:

It has changed again. I think it has gone towards more distrust, in a more stalking direction. In an accusing direction, but there can be many reasons for that. Maybe we are around like five-six [grade]; then here when we talk about the organizational climate, we talk about people, then those those people themselves are pretty fair though. (4/49:26)

Skeptical (1) - trusting (10)

It is a ten. (1/40:30) So at least in our unit, you don't have to think about who is doing what, and the all the people who are doing this job are taking care of their own cases. (1/40:36)

*On the other hand, in this [telecommuting] the employer and the superiors must have insane trust, because there are people all over the place, **so the trust has probably increased in that respect.** (4/51:56)*

The trust is strong in the teams:

*Once again there at the **team level**, at the level of the close circle, yes, I claim that the level of **trust there is very high**. But then, when we go outside that close circle, it starts to go towards that the skeptical side. (3/1:08:16)*

From the dimensions of the work atmosphere, passivating – creative deviates clearly from the others: as many as half of the interviewees gave it a grade of 4. One of the cornerstones of expertise is self-development, which again required creativity, and creativity requires a stimulating atmosphere and collaboration with colleagues. These, in turn, are related to the feedback that was identified as problematic above (page 71). The quotes illustrate the atmosphere in terms of creativity:

Passivating (1) - creative (10)

***But those ideas are never really treated.** There might not be such a place where you could put your ideas. So that is kind of a shame, because there would probably be some really good ideas in the organization. (2/1:17:29) In that sense*

*I would say we might be, well **maybe a 4** [grade], it's pretty low in my opinion, yes. (2/1:18:57)*

***In a way creativity does not get to bloom.** There are so much **hierarchical goings-on** in places where it shouldn't be. --- in a way, **throwing yourself in the game and that kind of courage to do things and make that change is, on average, very low.** (3/1:03:45)*

*No detachments are taken in there and **things are rather done as they have been done before**, without questioning whether it makes any sense. Uh, it's like that kind of unfortunate feature. And then it leads to that, in a way, **that instead of even trying things out to see if it makes sense, a lot of effort is put into the debate that this is bullshit.** (3/1:05:39).*

***Well, maybe we have because of telecommuting become more passive**, that maybe we are **like a 4** [grade], tilting towards that. (4/51:41)*

One interviewee aptly summarizes the interplay between the dimensions:

*All those word pairs [dimensions] should be improved, of course, and they actually go hand in hand. **If you have open communication, then it increases the trust. And if the organization's operating model is fair, it will increase creativity.** (3/1:10:07)*

The ideas disappear into the black hole:

*At the higher level, no one really seized them [ideas], so you have already become frustrated in that. I had the energy to give feedback for a while, that hey there is this type of situation, that shouldn't there be some kind of change in this. **But then when at the end of the day nothing changed**, you don't have the strength to be so active yourself, so let's put an 8 there, yes. (6/1:18:19)*

4.2 Themes and categories

The purpose of the thematic analysis is to create clarity in the data so that clear and reliable conclusions can be drawn from the interviews (Bryman, 2008, p. 554-556). The data is in a way broken down into parts, conceptualized and reassembled into categories that serve the research and further into main categories (Tuomi & Saarijärvi, 2002, p. 109-110).

In the figure, from themes to categories (page, 88), the left-hand column contains summarized themes from the coded interviews, grouped into four themes to facilitate further processing. The themes were then formed into three subcategories based on the content of the data:

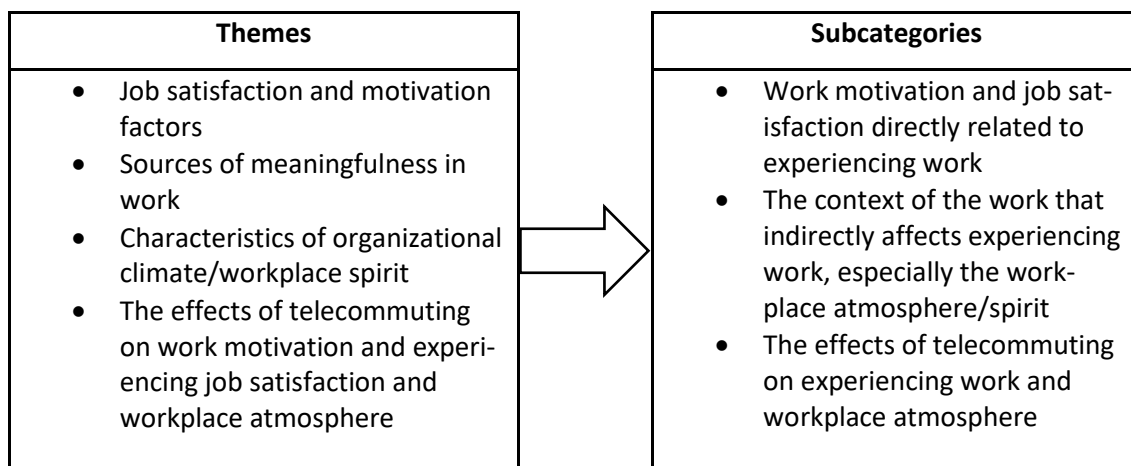


Figure 6. Themes and subcategories

Expertise

As the interviews progressed, the concept of an **expert**, either explicitly or implicitly included in the conversations, began to be encountered more and more often:

*So, in its own way, it is important to me to **be able to work independently and make decision independently.** (1/7:55) --- our superior is good at understanding how to **lead a team of experts** like this. (1/12:52)*

*--- that this has been kind of **independent expert work.** (3/14:32)*

*--- And, **I have been doing expert work** here for several years. (4/2:43)*

*--- And those **conducting expert work** put the meaningfulness as most important. (5/51:24)*

There is a clear consensus in the literature in the area, albeit in their own terms, about what the experts themselves consider to be most important. Casey (1990: 59-64) identifies three basic needs: competence, autonomy, and sense of community. Emery and

Thorsrud (1982, according to Ulich, 2011, p. 205) mention the following criteria: sufficient autonomy, learning and development, varied work tasks, collegiality, meaningfulness of own work, and a sense that one's career is not in a dead end (according to Oesterreich, 1999, Ulich, 2011, p. 205). Fowler (2014) has autonomy, competence, and relatedness based on Deci's and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. For Hakanen (2021) three things rose above the others: development at work, seeing the results and meaning of work, and working in a good and encouraging team; these are what Hakanen calls work engagement.

When looking at the characteristics of experiencing work, classified into subcategories from the interviews (cf. page 88) and comparing them with the perceptions of prominent researchers in the area, the comprehensive idea of the interviews, spoken and between the lines, gradually unwinds: **expertise** is what dominates the interviews and is the common thread of the content. The main category of elements that directly affect experiencing work is expertise, which arises from autonomy, competence and development, as well as the team and its favourable work atmosphere.

The following quotes are a good illustration of how experts emphasize their own role by making a distinction with others, even in a quite pungent way:

*--- excel men [management] have again managed to start running things and it looks good there in excel, but then **what about the real human capital** [are the decisions in its interest], which is the most important capital, yes, it leaves a bad taste in the mouth. (3/31:26)*

*When people are independent, this doesn't get better with any micromanagement. That is a different matter when you **have to lead such people** [non-experts], who need to be **reminded every day** that you should be working also today. (1/13:09)*

And also, some expert critique on one of the myths of business life: when people are fired through a codetermination procedure, unproductive or troublesome people are getting rid of. An expert breaks this myth:

That [codetermination procedure] is a crisis within the organization, and the end results is usually that the guys who should be getting rid of in the end game, may not necessarily be released. And then those best guys from the top of the stack state that 'I suppose this is it'. That it's like the last straw of being able to go somewhere else now to look for a little better job. (3/1:19:58)

The study clearly gives a reason to one speculation: based on the popularity of the employee issue (cf. page 70) and the discussion on the issue, it could become a link between experts and the organization – and an addition to the characteristics of expertise?

Workplace atmosphere and expertise

The second main category is the workplace atmosphere and expertise, which contains the context of the work, that is the framework in which the work is done, and the expertise meets the organization. The organizational climate / workplace spirit / workplace atmosphere is an essential but hard-to-reach intangible element of the context for experiencing work (page 28; Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 68-70; Schneider et al., 2012). Although the organization resources the tangible framework of the context, the intangible element of the context cannot be built by anyone alone: it is the result of everyday interactions that depends on all actors, management, and the concrete and non-concrete structures resourced by the organization.

Expertise and the workplace atmosphere need each other but also interact: the most essential elements of expertise, autonomy, competence and development, need a good workplace atmosphere to grow and develop, but a good workplace atmosphere only emerges if people experience job satisfaction and motivation in their work.

4.3 Overview of the findings

The interviews provided a clear picture on the research subject of how the people on the expert teams perceive their work. No conclusions can be drawn for the whole company, only for the experts. For example, the work and working conditions of those in

daily customer work differ so much from those included in this study that the results cannot be seen as all-embracing. Interesting was the so-called saturation, that is, the point in interviews where the researcher feels that less and less relevant new information is gained. This could already be sensed after the fourth interview and the perception was strengthened after the fifth and sixth interviews. Six interviews turned out to be enough, when similarities were sought from the interviews, not differences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, p. 95). Of course, it was also affected by the fact that the interviewees had quite similar backgrounds. In addition, for some parts, a separate form was used for certification and completion.

4.3.1 Expertise

Among the features of experiencing work, autonomy, competence and development, as well as the feeling of belonging and a favourable work atmosphere in the team, typically represent the qualities that experts consider most important in experiencing work (see page 88). This is what of the interviewees said:

*It's really hard somehow, because I feel **that they're all [motivation factors] just super important.** (5/16:43)*

The entirety of these features is well illustrated by the expertise that developed as the main category of this study.

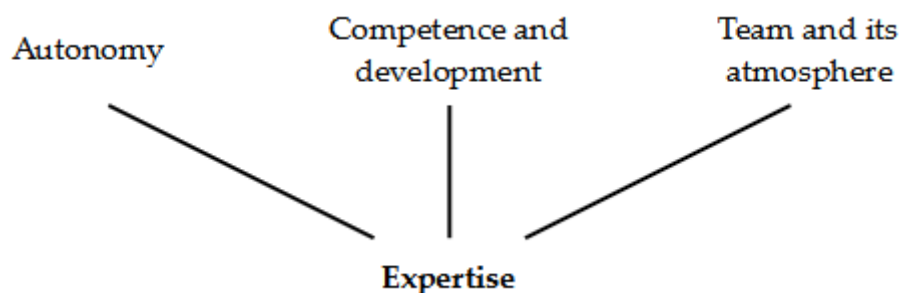


Figure 7. Expertise as the main category of this study

The detailed structure of the main category of expertise from the themes and subcategories is shown in the diagram below:

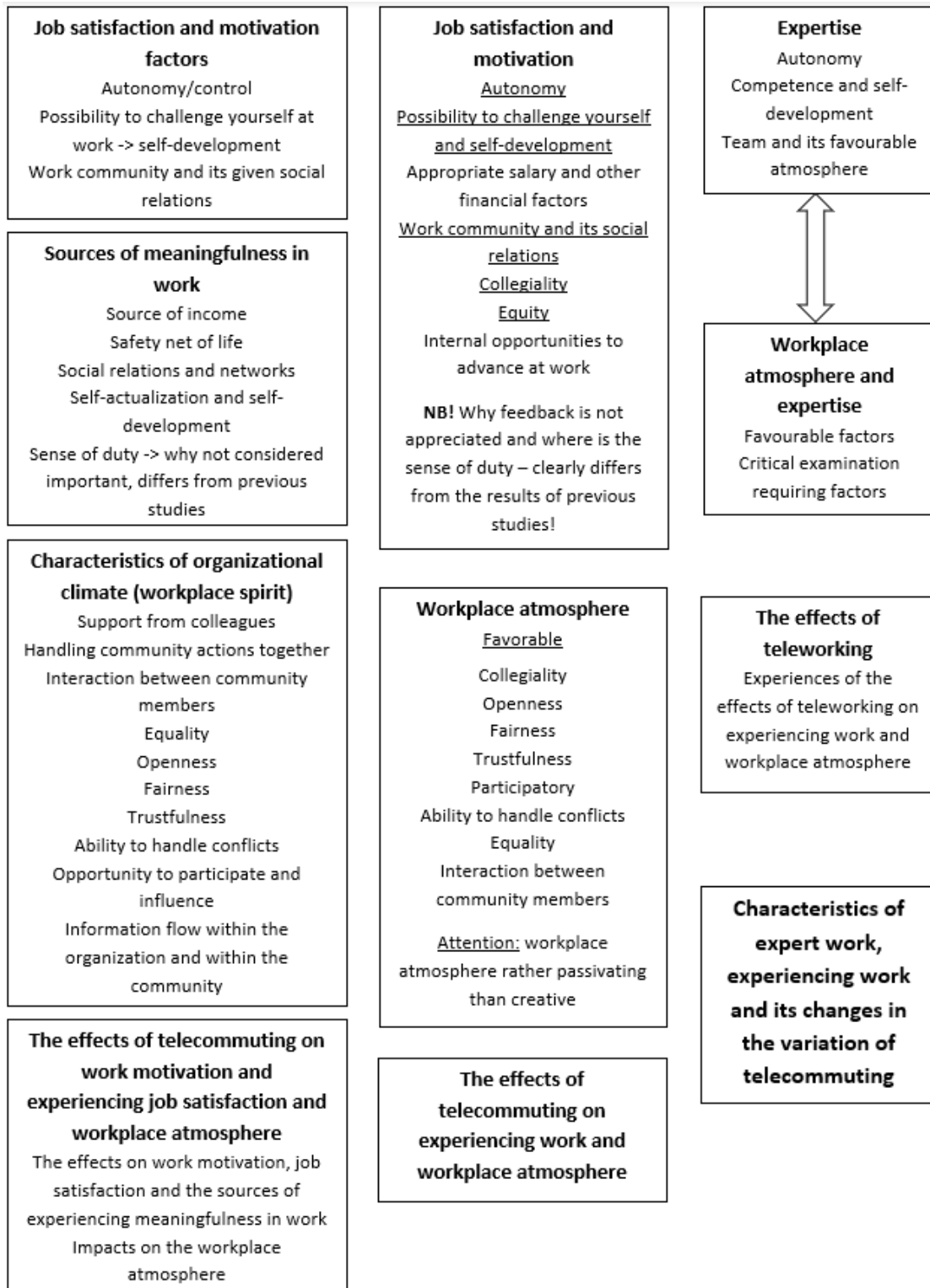


Figure 8. Detailed structure of the main category of expertise from the themes and subcategories

Individual themes have been discussed above. It was found that most of the themes that have since been combined into expertise, that the characteristics of expertise are realized well in the opinion of the interviewees, even very well according to many. This is also reflected in several responses at the start of the interview: “Are you currently satisfied with your job and situation, please rate it on a scale of 1 to 10?”

*Currently **really satisfied** with this own situation that we have. (1/04:18)*

*The extremes are always such that they are rather not used, **so let's say 9.** (3/14:07)*

*Yes, I have to answer very honestly, that **this is a ten**, now it feels like I'm in the right place. (5/10:01)*

Examining the good overall picture of satisfaction, it is worth returning in more detail to two factors that have already received critical attention in the past: feedback (page 71) and the work community and its social relations (page 68). In addition to autonomy, feedback is considered the most important factor in job satisfaction in the field's literature; feedback is the cornerstone of Action Regulation Theory (ART), and in the Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (JCM), feedback is an independent factor in addition to autonomy, and therefore not substitutable (page 23).

Well-known Finnish researcher Professor Jari Hakanen has aptly titled his article on feedback (2017): “Feedback is the smallest big thing in working life.” According to Hakanen, feedback is a sign that a person's work is noticed. He believes that in many organizations, employees feel they are slogging away alone, even if the feedback would allow them to share their achievements with others. Hakanen believes that there is a large lack of appreciation and feedback in Finnish workplaces. He emphasizes: “Continuous, encouraging feedback supports a person's work identity, or perception of what he or she is like as an employee. It increases motivation to learn and develop; on top of all that, feedback is like cement, creating a psychologically safe atmosphere in the workplace.” Hakanen hits a sore point when he asks why feedback is distributed in organizations frugally, after all, feedback is an untapped resource in many workplaces – and it's free after all!

From Hakanen's text above, especially two points can be drawn to the expertise of this study: feedback increases motivation to learn and develop, and feedback strengthens a safe workplace atmosphere, both characteristics of expertise (cf. page 87): competence and self-development, and the team and its atmosphere. Another critical observation concerns the work community and its given social relations, which were generally stated (page 68): In fact, awareness of social relations was surprisingly low. When we talk about the workplace atmosphere in this study, it means the closest work community, usually a team. Nurmi (2022) warns: "If the importance of social relations weakens, people begin to focus more and more on their own tasks, which is reflected in the team atmosphere." He sees a paradox: Yes, everyone is happy as individuals, but despite the satisfaction of individuals, teams don't work as expected. Nurmi warns: "If the connection with co-workers starts to weaken, organization is in trouble."

In this study, the poor appreciation received for feedback and social relations clearly differs from the prior knowledge generated by the field's research literature. Although the realization of today's expertise in the study is in excellent condition, the possibility that the deviations found in the study are symptoms described by Hakanen and Nurmi should be taken seriously. The four-square table illustrates Hakanen's (2017) and Nurmi's (2022) perceptions:

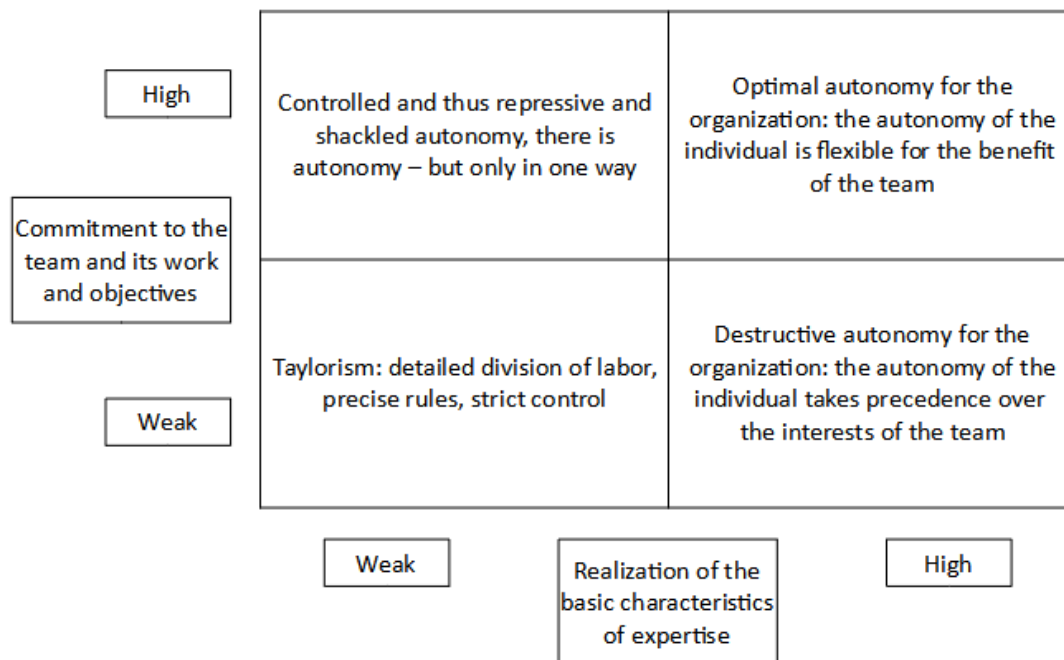


Figure 9. Four-square table (based on Hakanen, 2017; Nurmi, 2022)

The top right is the impression of the current situation of the research subject created from the interviews. Referring to what has been said about feedback and social relationships, it can be asked, whether these are developing symptoms of movement towards the bottom right, i.e. does individuality and individual satisfaction, the highlighted individual autonomy, begin to threaten the integrity of teams' activities based on community?

The bottom right is the organization / department / unit of experts emphasizing individual autonomy, where spectacular looking solo performances may take place – at the expense of the total benefit. **The upper left** describes the situation where an organization believes in the power of a strong organizational culture as a driver of autonomy: you can be autonomous and fulfil yourself – as long as it's done in the one and only right way. **The bottom left** resembles the so-called Taylorism, which is still doing fine despite its age of over a hundred years (page 18): everyone does what is compelled.

Due to the limited research, there are no preconditions for reliable and especially generalizable conclusions. In addition, there are reasons that may explain a part. One may be that the interviewees have not become aware of the feedback as a special thing to

mention: the feedback comes in daily life without even noticing it. Another possible reason is of cultural origin, and e.g. according to Mönkkönen (2022), giving feedback is particularly difficult in Finland. A “pat on the back” is very easily perceived as insincere, in which case it has the opposite effect. The third reason may be, at least in an expert culture, to say that there is no need for any feedback other than what the work itself provides. In this case, however, the opportunity given by the feedback, from the team, colleagues or superior, for natural and continuous learning is easily lost (Volpert, 1990; Hakanen, 2017; Mönkkönen, 2022).

Feedback and development discussions that are still in vogue are better than nothing, but they easily lose their naturalness, and the discussions become forced and even embarrassing over time (Mönkkönen, 2022). The most natural and functional feedback occurs as the so-called micro-feedback; when meeting in the hallway, while having a cup of coffee, or between work (Hakanen, 2017; Mönkkönen, 2022; Nurmi, 2022). The opportunities for this are decreased by the extensive telecommuting. If the latter is an essential factor, it partly explains the answers, but at the same time calls for action to be taken when the extent of telecommuting is more or less established. In any case, since telecommuting has come to some extent to stay, it is necessary to try to decide how to make micro-feedback work naturally in everyday telecommuting (Hakanen, 2017; Mönkkönen, 2022; Nurmi, 2022).

On the basis of this limited and context-sensitive study, no attempt is made to disprove the notion of the well-known and scientifically valued research literature on the importance of feedback as a motivating factor. Instead, the research literature forces us to ask whether the problem, although sometimes latent, still exists and concerns the entire Finnish working life, as the Finnish experts Hakanen (2017) and Mönkkönen (2022) suggest. Finns hardly differ from other peoples so much that they do not feel they need feedback at all. The feedback deficit is then cultural in origin and continues, as it seems, from one generation to the next, unless it is recognized and action is taken to close the gap, even if telecommuting does not at least improve the inherent conditions for

feedback. Changing culture always takes time, but in this case the facilitating factor is that reducing the deficit costs nothing, benefits everyone and does not have to interfere with the power structures of the organization, which is usually an effective barrier to change (Hakanen, 2017).

4.3.2 Working atmosphere and expertise

Organizational culture declarations and their sublime things are not of interest to every-day actors. When honesty, openness, responsibility, etc. are repeated in the values of almost all companies, their credibility is so and so. The organizational culture, with its values and operating principles and ethical guidelines, is often primarily foreign to the reality of daily life, but rather just showy marketing (e.g. Cuncliffe, 2009, p. 79-82; Grey, 2013, p. 64-70).

When this study focuses on how people perceive their work, that is, their daily activities with its smaller and larger things and problems, the more relevant to the culture of the whole organization is to use the “old” concept of organizational climate, which began to be used especially from individual experiences (Chatman & O’Reilly, 2016) earlier than the enthusiasms for organizational culture arose at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. Participants of the interviews were asked how they reflect the working atmosphere and the following table was assembled from the results:

Table 7. The state of the working atmosphere

The state of the working atmosphere of the most immediate work community (team, etc.)	Rather poor	Average	Good
Support, help and tuition from colleagues		1	5
Discussing the activities of the team together		2	4
Interaction between team members		2	4
The flow of information from the organization to the team	1	1	4

The flow of information inside the community		2	4
Real opportunities to participate and influence the organization of work and plans of the team		1	5
Equality in the team (no domination by big “egos”, no bullying, no one is shut out, etc.)		1	5
Transparency (no gossiping behind the back)		1	5
Ability to deal with conflicts constructively (without fear of revenge, hatred, etc.)		1	5

Lindroth (1990) considers that it is especially the climate of the workplace, the workplace atmosphere, that has a decisive effect on how people work (including Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 68-70). An optimal climate is one in which there is freedom, confidence and enough challenges. So, we come to the same conclusions as in the characteristics of good work. Experiencing work as good and a favourable organizational climate are “bound by fate” with each other, one does not exist without the other, they feed each other.

On equal terms it is worth quoting the interviews, in which no signs of the well-described and destructive when present phenomena were observed in the work atmosphere survey or the interviews.

*If you have a team of 6-7 people **with one big person who dominates it** and makes a good result and then discourages the others, then that whole team makes a worse result. Then if that big person leaves, those other might do more together. (1/47:10)*

*And then when the **“big guy” just dominates and destroys the atmosphere**. Yes, I have seen all these kinds of personalities during my lifetime. (1/47:31)*

4.3.3 Effects of telecommuting on experiencing work

Finnish telecommuting reports

There have been massive surveys around the world based on extensive surveys of how much people have felt that telecommuting has changed their work and their lives in other ways. Due to the very different working conditions and established practices, it is

appropriate to rely on research and studies conducted in Finnish conditions. These include the study by the National Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos) and five Finnish universities freely translated and entitled “Telecommuting in Finland during the coronavirus pandemic” (2020) and Akava Work’s survey “The corona pandemic and the working life of Akava employees in autumn 2020” (2020). These investigate how telecommuting has affected e.g. cognitive and physical workload, work productivity and social relations. However, in addition to the overview obtained from these studies, contextual studies are needed as each case (unit, department, team) has its own unique staffing structure, circumstances, working methods and telecommuting arrangements.

Finnish studies and surveys show that at least in the first year of telecommuting in 2020, no dramatic changes had been experienced. According to the report “Telecommuting in Finland during the coronavirus pandemic”, after six months, about 85 percent of the employees who responded to the survey were satisfied with telecommuting. The proportion of those who prefer work remotely, on the other hand, had risen from 45% to 63% in six months. Interestingly, only about a quarter considered the home a disruptive work environment. About 70 percent of respondents felt they remained highly productive during the pandemic. The difficulty of establishing and maintaining social relations in the context of telecommuting was clearly a phenomenon already experienced in the first year. According to the above-mentioned study, about 65 percent of telecommuting workers said they missed the opportunity to create social ties in the workplace. While individual performance has not suffered from telecommuting, the decline in social interaction has reduced the opportunities for spontaneous exchange of ideas among colleagues. The “Telecommuting in Finland during the coronavirus pandemic” study (2020) states that “maintaining an innovative approach to work has been difficult in remote conditions”. The extensive survey of Akava Works (2020) with 14,400 respondents also showed that the lack of interaction between the work community is a significant factor in experiencing an increase in workload.

With more than a million people in Finland, that is more than half of the total workforce, was and some still are teleworking, it is understandable that the effects of telecommuting have been a very popular topic in both newspapers and magazines, not to mention social media. Because teleworking began in March 2020, there is still very little scientific research on the topic. Nor does the two-year period yet justify drawing conclusions about the effects of a longer period. Therefore, colourful but involuntarily superficial descriptions based on personal interviews often give an unnecessarily dramatic picture of the effect of teleworking.

Effects of telecommuting on this study

The research scheme asks how telecommuting is shaping the way work is experienced. The company that is as the subject of this study switched to telecommuting in March 2020, following the general recommendations, and since then teleworking has begun to become a new norm in some operations. The return to the office has since taken place more or less, depending on the current pandemic situation. While the disease is still showing no signs of ending, the prevalence of telework has not stabilized as the spring of 2022 approaches. Changes in experiencing work caused by telecommuting were asked from six experts in semi-structured interviews. All interviewees had switched completely to telecommuting in March 2020. Some had occasionally worked remotely voluntarily and for special reasons in the past. In order to prevent the spread of the corona pandemic, the authorities' recommendation to switch to large-scale telecommuting had already been awaited. When the decision came, the matter was taken calmly at the research company, although there were, of course, practical problems at the beginning. However, the problems were not long-term:

Well, the beginning was challenging. That when you start working remotely and deploy all these systems you had never used before. Okay, I'm pretty good at systems, I learn quickly, but then you're hit by a computer program you've never used before, and you need to learn them remotely. (1/1:05:49) But, yes, once you're used to it, this is quite OK. (1/1:08:15)

Just like surely everyone felt, first came like the shock and we left laptops and screens at our elbows then in March 2020. But first it was like exploring, then it

slowly started, you got numb, and I would say, now it goes, and it is like everyday life, you are completely used to it. (4/04:41)

Surprisingly or not, from the first interview, the perception began to form that there is no great “drama” about the effects of telecommuting at the research company. Saturation in the interviews on this issue was already achieved in the third interview: the perceptions of the interviewees began to resemble each other.

After a couple of weeks from the interviews, the interviewees were asked for clarifications and evaluations via a complementary form that was sent online (see Appendice 2). The question groups were: 1) Combining work, home and leisure during teleworking 2) Experiencing work and feedback 3) Changes caused by telecommuting to the state of the work atmosphere of the most immediate work community (team etc.) (table of current status page 93). The three tables presented below illustrate the general statement of “no drama”.

Table 8. 1. Combining work, home and leisure during telecommuting

1. Combining work, home and leisure during telecommuting	Change during / as a result of telecommuting Weakened vs. improved				
	Clearly declined	Slightly declined	As before	Slightly improved	Clearly improved
The amount of exercise and general motivation to exercise	1	2		2	1
Healthy and regular eating (at work & outside of work)	1		5		
The relation between work and home (e.g. combining work and family, the flow of daily life, separating work and leisure)	1	1	3	1	
Feelings towards work (e.g. motivation to wake up, feeling of the length of the workday, ability/desire to concentrate during the workday)		2	3	1	

The public has often raised the issue of neglecting things that affect one’s own well-being after the regular rhythm of office work has changed to self-selected. There has also been a lot of talk about the problems of combining work and family life. Experiences of the

ability to concentrate in a home office compared to a “real” office are very individual. As the table shows, there is no drama in the experiences of the people in this study: combining work and home and taking care of one’s well-being have remained more or less the same during the teleworking. Of course, everyone has had their feelings and adjustments, as can be seen from the general characterization of telecommuting, a small pleasantry first:

*Well of course, **being at the office always beats home conditions.** (1/19:47)*

*Well, I'm better able to work from home because I have better equipment than the office has. **There is no disturbing factor here [at home].** (2/23:36) It [working at the office] really depends on the tasks, but if there’s **something that requires concentration, then I see no reason why I should go to the office.** (2/1:32:24)*

Ergonomics was more generally perceived as a problem:

*I hadn’t known such a concept before, what **neck-shoulder region pain** means. (3/08:01)*

*Well, it is **definitely ergonomics that pulls it down** [job satisfaction]; after all, here the home office does not have as good a workstation in terms of ergonomics as the office. So, the whole body suffers from it, unfortunately. (4/07:08)*

*Definitely ergonomics should be invested in [kitchen table as home office desk]. And of course, it is also one where **the employer could support and make it as easy as possible for the employee.** (5/32:35)*

Separating work and leisure was an issue for some of the interviewees:

*I did a hell of a long day, the **whole model of doing work got distorted** back then. (3/08:01) --- we worked the first few months like crazy and realized that our physics can’t stand this. (3/10:58)*

*What has been bad here that it has been **such a blur all the time that you don’t know when you’re at work**, and then sometimes you might even look at your emails on your cell phone along the night and reply to them, which is totally foolish, so it had to stop. (3/19:11)*

*Well, in the early days, it really happened that people **worked longer days** when they were home – that’s what I still do (4/1:08:43; 1:08:50)*

In my opinion, the working day has frankly become longer with the telework. (5/1:24:57)

On the other hand:

It has not messed up [daily life and leisure] any more than before this corona time. (6/1:43:03)

I don't think work has increased in any like bad way. (6/19:52)

Table 9. 2. Experiencing work and feedback

2. Experiencing work and feedback					
		Average	Decreased	As before	Increased
Managing own work (control): the feeling that I control my own work regarding the schedule and required skills	Before the pandemic (1-10)	8,3			
	During the pandemic (1-10)	8,3			
Change in workload during the pandemic			1	2	3
	Average	Work	Superiors	Col-leagues	Clients
The main source of feedback and the effect of the constructive feedback received on motivation (1-10)	9,2	1	2	2	1
	Clearly declined	Slightly declined	As before	Slightly improved	Clearly improved
Has the workplace spirit as a unifying factor in the organization changed during telecommuting	1	2	3		
How well are you "really listened to (initiatives, ideas) and whether what you say is taken seriously			6		
How to you experience your opportunities for advancing in your work (vertically or horizontally, e.g. moving to more rewarding tasks)	Level now (1-10): Average 7,5				

The table 2 above provides further information on how work was experienced and the level and main source of feedback during and before the pandemic. As the results show, nearly all factors have remained the same, apart from slight changes in the workload and workplace spirit. This verifies the utterance of “no drama”.

Table 10. 3. The state of the working atmosphere

3. The state of the working atmosphere of the most immediate work community (team, etc.)	Change caused by telecommuting		
	Negative	As before	Positive
Support, help and tuition from colleagues		1	5
Discussing the activities of the team together		2	4
Interaction between team members		2	4
The flow of information from the organization to the team	1	1	4
The flow of information inside the community		2	4
Real opportunities to participate and influence the organization of work and plans of the team		1	5
Equality in the team (no domination by big “egos”, no bullying, no one is shut out, etc.)		1	5
Transparency (no gossiping behind the back)		1	5
Ability to deal with conflicts constructively (without fear of revenge, hatred, etc.)		1	5

The effects of teleworking on the atmosphere in the work community have also been small, as the table 3 of the complementary form shows. A couple of things are worth noting in particular. Equality in the team is perceived as good and has remained good even during teleworking. The same applies to transparency, which is essential for the “non-toxicity” of the working atmosphere. Only in the case of factors related to interaction, about half of the respondents feel that negative developments have taken place, but the other half also see the situation as unchanged.

Stabilization of the extent of telework

The prolongation of the corona pandemic and the frequency of the epidemic waves have delayed the point of time when the disease situation can be said to have stabilized at a sufficiently low level. At the same time, decisions about the relation between telecommuting and office work have been more or less temporary or experimental.

At the time of the interview around the turn of 2021-2022, it seemed that the solution might be close. Even in the interviews of the study, the question of the future turned out to be a favourite topic: either remotely or at the office, or the so-called hybrid-model. This word, used in all possible contexts nowadays, here means that of the five working days of the week are part-time teleworking and part-time at the office. The subject proved fruitful in many respects. In connection with this, the disadvantages and advantages of telecommuting and office work for the interviewee were weighted up, which then formed themes explaining motivation and job satisfaction and the workplace atmosphere, such as the effects of telework on social relations and interaction and cooperation in the work community during telework. These had again an impact on the feedback that proved essential in the research literature, which was surprisingly not considered very important in this study (page 71). Creativity, which received a low rating when discussing organizational climate, also emerged.

Remotely or at the office

First, the experts' own feelings, experiences, and perceptions of the relation between teleworking and office work, that were expressed in the interviews are treated.

*When I myself am the type of person that I like to interact with people. Yeah, and I have thought like this, that I'm looking for kind of a balance, that I'm **working part of the week at the office, and part of the week at home** [hybrid]. That I'm not going to stay telecommuting here at home, then when it's possible. After all, I've already been to the office. Uh, this week I went once, and yes, I want to go there. (1/48:55)*

Yeah, that balance is in having moments when you want to do things alone and in your own peace and reflect and write and whatever you have. But then it's also

*like it, that it would be nice to have little bit of buzzing around, so **fifty-sixty it is.** (3/39:30)*

*You get nothing done there [at the office]. So, in that sense, if I think what's optimal for me, it would be **4 days at home and one day a week there** [at the office], when that one day could be given as a day of communality and social interaction. I don't know, in the long run, I think the employer will probably not let you, so like **2-3 days is more realistic and that would be just fine.** (4/1:04:40)*

*Well, in my opinion, that what has been elevated here now, is that I think it is good for an employee to be able to decide mostly how they want to work. But maybe I would see it this way, that it would be good if an incentive comes from the employer sometimes to come to the office. Because it easily happens, for example, at least in my case I believe that **it's best for me to be at the office maybe 2 days a week.** (5/1:19:10)*

Some interviewees didn't really see any reason for management to dictate the terms for this issue:

*I would let the autonomy in the team to decide here what is the most sensible way to work. But yes, in expert work, I would give a **team-specific complete freedom to organize the work reasonably.** --- And then from the point of view of the team building and such, of course the team and the superior makes sure that those joint events or brainstorming are held live. But then if you are doing the everyday work, it's all the same, if you are working from Madrid or Laajasalo, it's kind of whatever. (1:25:36)*

*After all, we have nothing to say in the endgame if the management decides that the model is now 3 days at the office and 2 at home, what is there to mutter. But yeah, I hope that also the employer side and the management would have learned here in the 1,5 years, almost 2 years, that yes, **those things will be done.** (4/1:06:08 & 1:06:36)*

Clear support for the hybrid-model

The quotes above speak for themselves: with slightly varying emphasis, the interviewees see the so-called hybrid-model as the most suitable way of working for them. The most common option is 2+3, with a slight emphasis on having more telecommuting days. However, a few thought that, with the exception of some joint meetings, they would prefer to work only at home, but they also were preparing for the fact that the employer's decision may be the hybrid, and they have nothing against it either. In a couple of interviews,

it was suggested quite emphatically that teams should be given the freedom to decide how to organize their work. However, even in these speeches, an understanding was shown that the employer's solution applies to the entire company, in which case e.g. equality issues must be taken into account.

The popularity of maintaining some degree of teleworking, some day after the pandemic ends, is influenced, and perhaps to a large extent, by personal interests independent of the actual work, which were told quite openly by the interviewees. For example, in the metropolitan area, few are able to travel on foot to the office within a reasonable time. Depending on the location of the apartment, in addition to the working hours, traveling back and forth can easily take up to two hours a day, which are available for alternative purposes while teleworking. There are also considerable savings in commuting costs in teleworking. In addition to this, you can make less effort for the appearance at home, which saves time.

*I would probably go more to the office, but when the **commute takes 1h15min in one direction**. However, it's like, when you think about your own total time usage, that when you go to the office, you can say that it takes almost the whole day. (1/1:03:11)*

*But the fact that how much you basically spent time traveling before telecommuting, and getting to the workplace, it is a terrible amount. If you say, like **1,5 hours a day**, that you wake up, have a coffee, take a tram to work, take a tram back home. So, I **counted it's 345 hours a year, or 46 working days, which I have basically had free now because of it**, that I don't have to travel – so I see it **almost a bit like a salary even**. (2/32:53)*

*You could notice for example, that **the car did not need to be refueled nearly as much**. (6/39:39)*

The value of increased personal time, flexibility of working hours and comfort is recognized and there are guilty consciences that there are that tasks that require being at the office.

I am grateful to those inside the house [who are only at the office], but I can't do anything about it. It's not like it's a balanced matter. (3/22:00)

Conclusions on telecommuting

The interviews anticipated the decision to continue working remotely when / if the regional recommendations expire.⁶ The decision is not easy in organizations because it involves a lot of important and controversial issues: accessibility issues from the customer's point of view, development of new operating models suitable to e.g., hybrid work, impact on job satisfaction and motivation and through it on work productivity, people's commitment to the organization, office premises issues, etc. A Finnish professor in the field recently summed up the problem as follows (Nurmi, 2022): "After the pandemic, you have to think about how you want to work, not how you have to work. The culture of dictation from top management takes you nowhere. What have we learned during the corona years? What are we good at, what things don't work well virtually? Every organization has to develop a new operating model and culture."

All those interviewed in this study have been mainly teleworking throughout the corona pandemic. After more than two years of teleworking, it has already become a new norm for the interviewees, and the rhythm of work and rest of the life has stabilized. Everyone has also been happy with telecommuting, but no-one wants to be completely isolated in the home office:

I'm becoming a hermit here. (6/1:39:38)

But then, after months alone, it felt like I was a bit like a cabin-crazy in a way. (1/1:08:14)

The decision is on the verge of the ultimate question already referred to when dealing with organizational ontology (page 50): "Organizational ontology reflects such constructivist concerns through stressing that there is no external and material organization beyond the mutually constituting activity of member's interactional work (Westwood & Clegg, 2003)." This leads to the fact, that as times, conditions, people, and their communities change, so do meanings. To what extent is the pandemic with its telecommuting and other phenomena making, or already has made, the organization less concrete, solid

⁶ The national telecommuting recommendation ended on February 28, 2022

and static, and is the organization and its people becoming alienated from each other (cf. Chia, 2003)? Nurmi (2022) means the same thing when he states: “Any organization is eventually made only by people, and if the connection to others starts to weaken, the organization is in trouble.” In this study, one of the experts says the same thing like this:

And then the fact that we are the culture, that create those [cultural factors] for our part. (3/1:25:04)

Nurmi (2022) also points out that people’s commitment has decreased “quite madly” and their willingness to dismiss has increased.

The most appropriate solution is not found with excel and cannot be purchased from consultants. The process by which the solution is sought may be more essential than the solution itself. Nurmi (2022) warns of the post-pandemic solutions at hand: “The dictation culture of top management is not leading anywhere.” With the exception of a couple of weaknesses, the level of job satisfaction and motivation of the experts in the research subject is very high, and telecommuting has not affected the overall picture in any way. According to this study, more important than the numerical amount of weekly telework days is that the characteristics of expertise – autonomy, competence and development, and the team’s atmosphere – remain intact in the process (see page 84):

*So, this has been this sort of **independent expert work**, you can affect what you do and when and where. That is an important intrinsic value that I appreciate in this operational model. And it has been fulfilled constantly. **It has not changed. And it is important that it does not change.** (3/14:32)*

At least in the preparation of the decisions, the input of the natural teams could be fruitful; it would support the organization and engage the teams and their people. Responsible team autonomy is the key (cf. teams in four square table page 91):

*But yes, in expert work, I would give a **team-specific complete freedom to organize the work reasonably**. --- but from a work standpoint, that autonomy would be at the team level the key to happiness in my opinion, and then like those own ground rules to that, what we are doing here. (3/1:25:36)*

Themes arising from stands on telecommuting

The changes caused by telecommuting were most discussed when respondents were asked about the relationship between telework and office work when an “permanent” decision is made in the organization. Themes were emerged from these stands that complement the above interpretations of job satisfaction and motivation (cf. figure page 88). Telecommuting has most clearly affected social relations and, through it, the quantity and quality of natural situations of interaction and cooperation. Has this for one contributed to the confirmation that the feedback as a motivating factor, unlike in the research literature in the field, is left in a minor part in this study (cf. page 71)? The decline in interaction and cooperation situations may also have affected creativity, which was not highly valued as a work atmosphere factor. The themes arising from stands on telecommuting are presented as a diagram with their relationships:

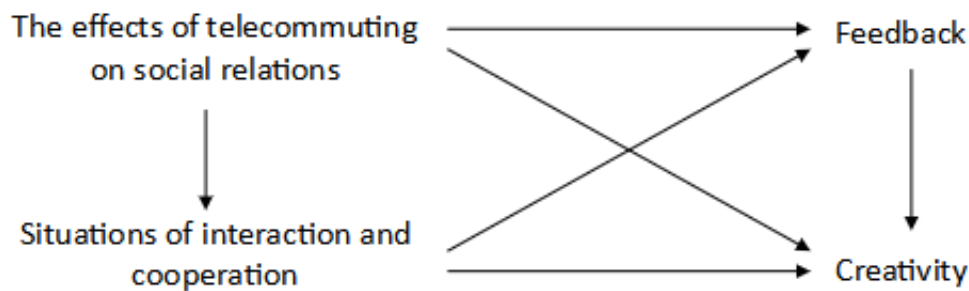


Figure 10. Telecommuting and social relations

Telecommuting and social relations

The importance of social relations was found to be rather weak in this study, contrary to prior knowledge, as stated above (cf. page 68). It was noted that when discussing changes in telecommuting the picture changes: social relations are not among the most important characteristics of expertise and telework has further weakened them. This can be seen in decrease in established interactions between people (also according to “Telecommuting in Finland during the coronavirus pandemic, 2020”). On the other hand, also in this context, it should be emphasized that two years is a short time to draw bold conclusions. Telecommuting has decreased the natural everyday intercommunication the most, which existence is only noticed when it does not exist (cf. the first quote). The

quotations highlight the interaction situations, feedback and creativity (e.g. development ideas and sparring), as also in the diagram above.

*In the past, the work community and social relations were taken for granted; that you are there and meet people. During the corona period you **have realized how important it is**. --- And then the fact, that you probably received a lot more feedback live at that time, and because of that **the work community and feedback, they have suffered from inflation here, that they have kind of decayed**. (3/27:28)*

*Maybe the **threshold to contact someone is higher**, meaning that the natural coffee table or aisle conversations are left out, it [telecommuting] has made it perhaps more challenging. It requires that you book a Teams meeting, even if it's only 15 minutes. But yes, it has become more difficult. (4/20:05)*

*But if I think about that daily work, **you're in a way more alone now** when you work all day at home. (5/31:01) That when I was still there at the office, **we always went to have lunch together** and so, but now... [it has ended] (5/1:24:57)*

*And then maybe the threshold to it, that you don't necessarily call about every issue, that **it's really easy when you have that guy next to you**, then you can give that feedback just like right away, but then again if you have to start calling etc... (6/22:36) And in the sense that you learn from others bit like secretly, that is left out, that is the sadder side with this corona [telecommuting]. (6/27:58) --- [live at the office] you get to pick the best pieces from everyone, and you find your own style to do that work. (6/45:31)*

One of the clear diminishing factors of natural interaction situations in several interviews was the remote organization of meetings and consultations, i.e. meetings, which was almost the only option during the pandemic. Technical arrangements do not favour the natural appearance of people with their expressions and gestures, so the so-called body language is completely left out. Meetings are forced to become business-like and effective, firmly focusing on the current agenda. Compared to the "old" practices, the time before and after the official meeting time has disappeared, when the participants were allowed to catch up and exchange views more freely or simply "have a chinwag".

*But then all the meetings and such, they go through like **agenda issues**. (6/31:28) Those [meetings] **become like work-oriented** --- **that free conversation with that person is left in the minority**. Once a week a morning meeting and once a week a*

team meeting, but it's not the same kind of discussion as when you're going to lunch or something. (2/24:24)

Scepticism about efficiency:

*But then you maybe expected a little harder effort and stuff on it [telecommuting and its tools], and you can find whatever tools you want to improve the community. --- **you seemingly got more efficiency in that work, when errands were run in Teams.** (3/43:56)*

*That when everything happens through Teams, **it's all such factual content**, that very little like informal "slack" is received. (5/17:10)*

***In Teams, you go straight to the point**, there is no "foreplay". Of course, there are people who enjoy it, and **it's supposedly so effective** to go through things like "zak zak", straight through it. But yes, **most people are social animals, and they want some kind of conversation around it** --- [in Teams] **you don't see those micro-expressions**, you don't see how that body language works; if there is any training or something, then you will immediately see when people are kind of lost. It is perceived [live] in a different way. There is no haptic sensation of any kind here. (3/28:42)*

One expert personally and vividly describes how particularly innovative meetings are "blood, sweat and tears" that no Teams meeting can ever reach:

*That [daily work] has remained exactly the same. The only thing that is not so good are these Teams meetings and such; they are **suitable for normal meetings** or commenting on documents etc. **But then when you have to brainstorm something new or develop something, it's so lousy, it's so flat. It must have that blood, sweat and tears** and to be able to squeeze that guy from the "cojones". And everyone cries and whimpers, arms are twisted, hairs are teared out, and whatever the rites are that come with it – so, it's like **the absence of that, that's what I've suffered from.** (3/37:46)*

4.4 Summary of the key findings and the revised framework

4.4.1 Coding, themes and categories

To answer the research question, six approximately one-and-a-half-hour interviews were conducted at the target organization, consisting of roughly 150 pages of material that

were transcribed, coded, themed, and categorized; this way the material was pruned and summarized into a manageable number of parts to be further processed. After reading the material several times, the themes that already partly emerged on the basis of the research literature were outlined, for which further clarification was obtained through extensive surveys. The themes were grouped into those that directly affect experiencing work (job satisfaction, motivational factors and sources of meaningfulness in work) and those that indirectly affect experiencing work (workplace atmosphere and telecommuting with its effects).

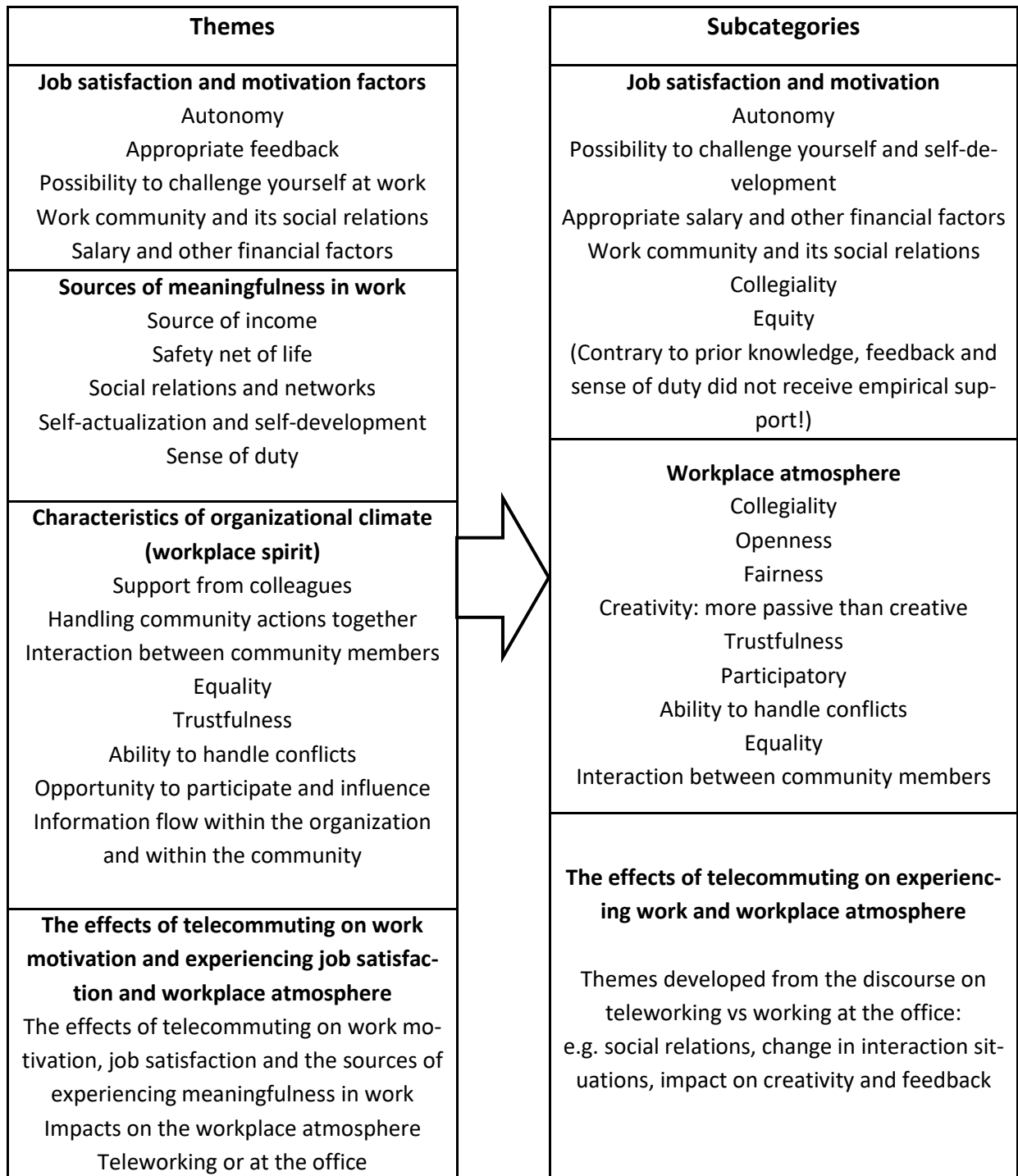


Figure 11. Themes to subcategories

The subcategories were combined into three main categories. Combining the main categories and their content gives the theme's answer to the research question.

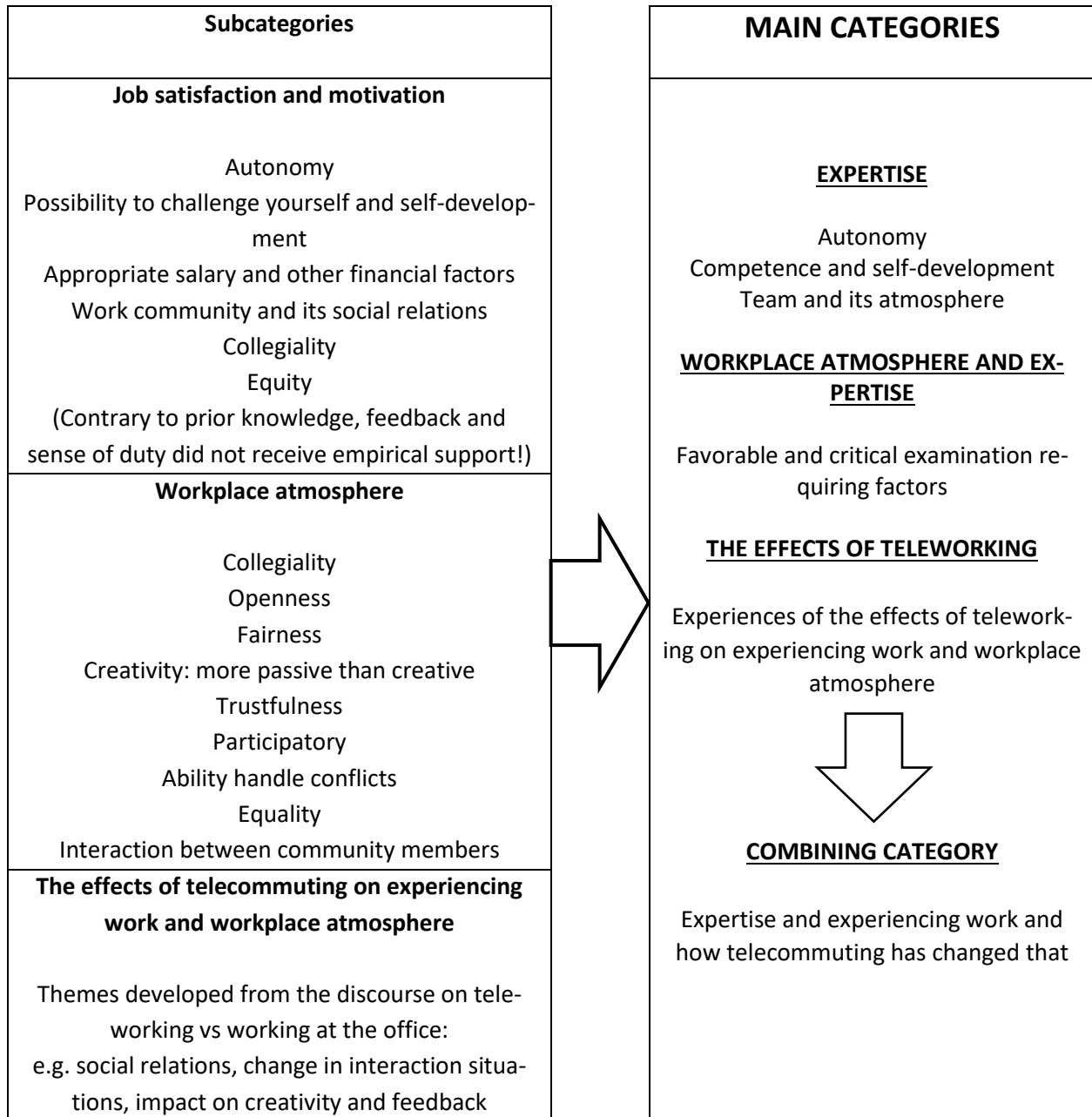


Figure 12. Subcategories to main categories

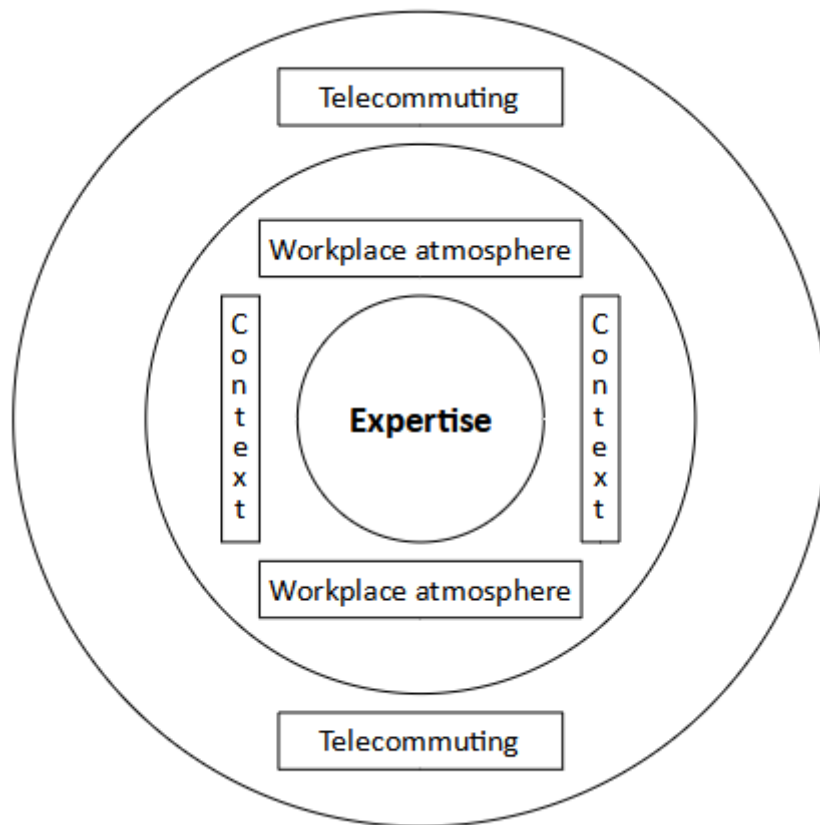


Figure 13. Expertise

4.4.2 Expertise – the message of study

This study sought an answer to how people in the target organization perceive their work in general and now in the different situations of telecommuting in particular. The research literature guided the search for answers to research on motivation theories and meaningfulness of work. The prior knowledge was utilized in the leading questions of the interviews conducted to obtain empirical material and in the discussion of the interviews themselves. The table in the previous section (4.4.1.) show the grouped themes and the subcategories that are further combined from the themes.

The word expert had begun to appear frequently since the first interview. There are plenty of quotations above that illustrate the significance of the concept in this study (expertise quotations, page 84). The significance was further strengthened when the

value charge related to the concept could be sensed from the video interviews. Thus, the most important factors of the immediate experiencing of work turned out to be quite clearly the combination of several themes: 1) autonomy, 2) competence and development, and 3) team and its favourable atmosphere (also depends on the broader atmosphere, the context), as can be seen in the tables above. Autonomy, competence and development, as well as the team and its favourable atmosphere, form the main category whose name expertise was found without a thought. Expertise with its meanings found in the study is the main result of this study, a simplified answer to the research question.

Feedback and sense of community are considered to be important indicators of job satisfaction and motivation (feedback page 71, communality page 68). The same has been emphasized by Finnish expert very recently (Hakanen, 2017 and 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Nurmi, 2022). In this study, these are not among the key features of expertise. This also surprising irregularity has been addressed in several sections of the study, but with the exception of some uncertain explanations, the irregularity remains to be clarified.

When discussing the relationship between telecommuting and office work, the negative effects of telework on both feedback and community (interactions, etc.), which are co-factors in creativity and development, were highlighted (figure page 106). In terms of sense of community, it can be said that experiencing social relationships is a very individual matter. Even the interviews revealed that some people do not place much emphasis on sociality. For some people, in relationships the emphasis is on life outside of work. It may be that it is precisely in experts that work centrality is emphasized, so communality is left behind. As with cultural affairs in general, community is not born with programs and software. Communality rises from time to time, as it does now, into a fashion phenomenon, causing organizations to feel bad about their conscience, which drives them to all kinds of childish games, adventures and remuneration ceremonies developed by consultants (Grey, 2013, p. 65, uses the work "hoopla"). Artificiality and the feeling of "sudden turnaround" easily turn against themselves, especially among experts (e.g. Grey, 2013, p. 69; Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 73). Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 73) state that

attempts to lead cultural phenomena are “an exercise in futility”. They continue: “Leaders do not create culture; it emerges from the collective social interaction of groups and communities.” One of the interviewees in this study is in line with Jackson and Parry:

*And then the fact that **we are the culture**, that create those [cultural factors] for our part. (3/1:25:04)*

The importance of understanding expertise and its key features is the main result of this study. Also, from the perspective of experts, with a view to future teleworking solutions, one interviewee simplifies the following:

*So, this has been this sort of **independent expert work**, you can affect what you do and when and where. That is an important intrinsic value that I appreciate in this operational model. And it has been fulfilled constantly. **It has not changed. And it is important that it does not change.** (3/14:32)*

4.4.3 Workplace atmosphere and expertise

Expertise is not static, nor is it born, developed, or thriving in a vacuum. It is in constant interaction with its environment and its circumstances, its context. One of the most important ingredients in the context is culture (e.g., Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 68-70; Schneider et al., 2012). It has been noted above that the again ascending organizational culture theory fits poorly into daily working conditions (page 93). For that reason, this study has focused on where the organizational culture initially originated, the organizational climate. More ordinary terms to this are the workplace atmosphere and the workplace spirit. The second main category became workplace atmosphere and expertise.

Expertise needs an atmosphere that supports it, but the experts themselves influence the atmosphere. It is also affected by the organization as a resource and coordinator of activities, as well as by all the fellow actors. Telecommuting has become a new factor in the context of experiencing work, whose longer-term effects are only being predicted. The expertise and the work atmosphere in this study have shaped each other so that the work atmosphere is favourable for job satisfaction and high work motivation. The

favourable characteristics of the atmosphere are at least: *collegiality, openness, fairness, trustfulness, inclusiveness, conflict handling ability, equality, interaction between members.*

When there are many favourable characteristics, the more conspicuous is the state of one characteristic that is important to expert teams: the atmosphere is clearly perceived as more passive than creative. The interdependence of motivational factors and atmosphere is also shown here. The interviews revealed that interaction with colleagues and social relations were not highly valued as motivational factors at all, but when discussing the changes cause by telecommuting, the situation was different: teleworking had highlighted the decline in interaction with its disadvantages. As the diagram on page 106 shows, natural situations of cooperation and interaction are linked to feedback and creativity. All of these contribute to building a favourable atmosphere that, according to this study, is undermined by creativity.

4.4.4 Effects of telecommuting – no drama

The third main category was given the name “effects of telecommuting on experiencing work and workplace atmosphere”. Expectations of radical changes in work and working life caused by telecommuting, based on public opinion and media coverage, generally melted completely in this study. Changes caused by telecommuting were asked not only in the interviews but also in the complementary form. The best results on the effects of telecommuting were given by the discussion on the continuation of telework, when the pandemic situation allows returning to the office. Much more positive than negative aspects were seen in telecommuting, of course with some individual emphasis differences. The greatest appreciation was given to the increase in the freedom of organizing one’s own work, the autonomy. Another significant positive factor was the time “saved” on commute to do other things. Also, the comfort of casualness in dressing and the liberation of place, e.g. by working from a summer cottage, was a pleasant factor. The risk of “seclusion” was included as a drawback. Social relations were said to have suffered,

which was also reflected in the feedback and the new ideas, i.e. creativity. Above all, the opportunities provided by the so-called natural meetings to catch up and at the same time exchange opinions on interesting work matters were almost exhausted. The interviewees said that work performance had either improved or remained unchanged.

Most of the speculation was caused by the issue remotely or at the office. The position of the interviewees in this study was unambiguous: hybrid, i.e. part of the working days teleworking from home and part at the office. No one had an absolute stand on what the ratio between telework and office work should be; the numbers 2 + 3 and 3 + 2 were thrown most in the air. Flexibility was also preferred here: the ratio could vary from week to week.

The underlying factor of the position on the telecommuting solutions was the inviolability of expertise: whatever the solution, it must not undermine expertise, and the expert teams should play a key role in the solution. This is what one of the daily life actors says – and culminates the most important result of this study.

So, this has been this sort of independent expert work, you can affect what you do and when and where. That is an important intrinsic value that I appreciate in this operational model. And it has been fulfilled constantly. It has not changed. And it is important that it does not change. (3/14:32)

5 Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

Based on the purpose of the thesis and the research question, interpretivism was selected as the theoretical basis of the research, constructivism being its most central element: knowledge is context and time-bound, idiographic. In interpretivism the data is not waiting for the capable researcher, but instead it is required to get as close as possible to the people for which information is desired (Bell & Thorpe, 2013, p. 10-11, 46-49; Gehman et al., 2018). The study, and in particular its interviews with their interpretations, showed how interpretivist research directs a critical approach to effectively propagated mass surveys, but also to the generalizability of valid research. Its own chapter is the alleged public opinion, in which the formation and strengthening, hegemony-seeking, discourses play a significant role, that rely on researchers and researched knowledge with appropriate selection to increase credibility.

Among the mass surveys emerged the perhaps best-resourced research institute in Finland, The Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA. The latest value and attitude survey on the meaning of work, conducted since the 1980s, was published in 2019. The results of the surveys were published e.g. with the following headlines: “For Finns, the most important meaning of work comes from money” and “The meaning of work for Finns: money, social duty, self-development and sense of community” (EVA, 2019). According to the media release, the second most important meaning of work for Finns after money is the sense of duty: in 2019 more than 55 percent believed that work is everyone’s duty, compared to 36 percent in 2010. Therefore, the sense of duty would have risen by about twenty percentage points in less than ten years. Interestingly, according to the survey, only 22 percent would go to work even if they didn’t need the money.

This study calls for caution in generalizing the EVA’s surveys, as prominently as the media them markets. In this study, money is not at the forefront as a source of meaningfulness of work, nor as a job satisfaction and motivation factor. Salary is needed for living, but it

is clearly a hygiene factor (Herzberg's two-factor theory). An even clearer difference concerns working in the case of not needing money. According to EVA, only 22 percent would work in this case, but none of the interviewees would stop working, although someone would change their current hobby into a job. The sense of duty was the second most important meaning in EVA's survey, in this survey it did not ignite at all. Interpretation confirmed the idea that duty is part of expertise, self-evident.

The theoretical starting points for job satisfaction, motivation and the meaningfulness of work are based on the theories initiated by the most well-known researchers in the field, from Maslow (1943) to Herzberg (1968), to Oldham and Hackman (1974) ending at the present time i.a. Deci and Ryan (2000), Fowler (2014), Martela and Pessi (2018) and Hakanen (2021). Even all the oldest above-mentioned theories are still relevant and controversial in the field. Eighty years after Maslow's main article, Bridgman and Cummings (2021) discussed the scientific legacy of Maslow in their book, showing that Maslow and his well-known name has ruthlessly been exploited by transforming his ideas into a more commercially viable form. The most important of Bridgman's and Cummings' findings is that Maslow's original thinking is very similar to the current motivation theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fowler, 2014; Hakanen, 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018). The pyramid that has become a "trademark" of Maslow's theory and has since been criticized is not his own creation (Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 41-53; cf. Luoma-Aho, 2021).

The underlying research literature is relatively unambiguous that the most relevant factors of job satisfaction and motivation, as well as the meaningfulness of work, are autonomy, possibility to challenge yourself, feedback, salary, sense of community and self-development with slightly varying terms (Maslow, Herzberg, Oldham & Hackman, Emery & Thorsrud, Hacker, Richter, Volpert, Deci & Ryan etc.). The literature in question and their research are recognized in the scientific world, but their conclusions should not be generalized either. Surprisingly, in the interviews in this study and their interpretation, the feedback was not a characteristic of expertise and was not even considered important in experiencing work. It was encouraging to note during the research that

Hakanen (2021) and Mönkkönen (2022) also paid attention to the problematic nature of feedback in Finnish working life. Hakanen and Mönkkönen see that feedback is a “foreign species” in Finnish working culture in general, although situation-aware feedback given in the right way could have a positive effect on the workplace atmosphere, learning and thus also on productivity. This study supports the views of Hakanen and Mönkkönen.

Another surprise was the sense of community that, despite its popularity, was not inspiring in this study. Community has its place, but no rush from teleworking to the office arose from the need for community in the context of this study. The situation had been similar before telecommuting, and is now during telecommuting, and does not settle the standpoint of actors on office work versus hybrid. The discourses that construct public opinion were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. According to recent media writings, there is a discourse about restoring the honour of community after the corona pandemic and teleworking. The danger is, that in the struggle between discourses, populist will gain hegemony, i.e. those who see that successful interaction between people requires a strong sense of community, although it has not been properly studied in Finnish working life and, above all, what it is in each context and its various professional groups, teams, etc. The interviewees in this study were more or less satisfied with communality. Rather, there was a fear that, under the pressure from public opinion, “forced communalization” would begin, posing a threat to the organically developed community of the team experts. Finnish experts have also emphasized sense of community, without defining it in more detail, i.a. Martela and Pessi (2018) – relying on foreign sources. Finland’s second largest newspaper wrote in its editorial on May 1, 2022: “Labour day [May 1] after the end of the pandemic winter is a celebration of joy and community.” The interviewees in this study mainly smile at such celebrations, as they have the pieces of expertise more or less in place without the fuss on sense of community.

The looming end of the pandemic had increased interest in already fading cultural science: *How to Sustain Your Organization’s Culture when Everyone is Remote* (Howard-Grenville, 2020), *Organizational Culture and Covid-19* (Spicer, 2020), *How to Sustain the*

Organizational Culture in Teams (Economic Life, 2021) etc. Based on the literature and the media, it was expected that organizational culture as an important element in the context of experiencing work would be an interesting theme. But the third surprise of the results was that there was no debate about the organization culture, it seemed to be far from daily life and containing too sublime matters. The study returned to the organizational climate from which organizational culture once originated (Schneider et al., 2012; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). As we got closer to the everyday work, the theme changed into workplace atmosphere (Lindroth, 1990). In contrast to culture, the workplace atmosphere interested and showed that the management, research and the so-called financial journals tend to try to dictate what the rank and file should think about it. One interviewee stated: "And then the fact that we are the culture, that create those [cultural factors] for our part." Researchers Jackson and Parry (2011, p. 73) state the same thing: "Leaders do not create culture, it emerges from the collective social interaction of groups and communities." Organizational culture has its place in the so-called formal speech, but at the everyday level, speeches are concretized at work, speeches and work are interdependent factors. The reluctance of experts is partly explained by the fact that there is a threat in culture (Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 73): "If the organization only want to hire those who live and breathe the espoused values, what place is there for the sceptics and the non-believers?" Often the culture detached from the daily life lives its own "official" live, while the field creates its own culture. The fundamental question is whether organizational culture is what is presented in internal and external communication, or whether this formal culture is merely a consultant-stylized desire of management (Bridgman & Cummings, 2021, p. 70-76; Palmer & Hardy, 2000, p. 120).

5.2 Managerial implications

The study showed that the level of motivation and job satisfaction in the target organization is high. Teleworking has had little or no effect on experiencing work, maybe by some indicators a slight negative trend can be noticed. Some kind of critical point may

be after the pandemic “ends”, and a more permanent solution to the relation between telework and office work is decided. The upcoming solution also occupies the minds of the participants in the study, and the contributions and comments from the interviews could assist management when the decisions are made. The discussions around the issue were the most rewarding of the interviews and the opinions spontaneous, which gave rise to a strong feeling that the upcoming solution is perceived as very important. For those making the decisions the research gives a clear clue: even more important than the content of the decision is how the decision is made (Nurmi, 2022).

Solutions to telecommuting in organizations should take into account the interdependence of matters. In this study, the most relevant result from experiencing work and job satisfaction has been named expertise, whose components were selected of autonomy, competence and development, as well as the team and its workplace atmosphere. Expertise also has an emotional dimension: it involves professional pride familiar from many professions (Volpert, 1990). If the above-mentioned basic components of expertise are perceived as violated in the solutions, problems are in the offing, and often the kind that cannot be solved e.g. by increasing salary (cf. Herzberg’s motivation and hygiene factors; Nurmi, 2022; Talouselämä, 2021). Solutions for telecommuting thus extend their impact on motivation and job satisfaction as a whole.

Throughout the study, the constructionist nature of the organization has been emphasized, i.e. the organization is built on the meanings given to it by its members (Cuncliffe, 2009, p. 24-25). In the interviews, the organization was often not mentioned, also the management only when discussing telecommuting decisions. The organization is perhaps distant and faceless from the actor of daily life, which teleworking may further emphasize. Instead, the team or group etc. featured much more. As teams have developed organically well-functioning in the target organization, they could act as a link to increase cohesion between the individual expert and the organization, if the teams and their self-direction is “legitimized”, respecting expertise and freely enough (Hakanen 2021; Nurmi, 2022). This connection could make it possible to enhance the feedback that is lacking

with the chain: *management* <--> *team* <--> *expert*. An established team could also help to improve the poorly rated creativity, with team leaders already playing an important role according to the interviews. Based on the “legitimacy” of teams, the superior could be an even more clear pillar of the daily life and protect the continuity of work, as the project and team leaders change.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

Telecommuting with its implications requires further research, and it is like conducted around the world. It should be noted, however, that it is only about two years since the beginning of the pandemic and the large-scale teleworking phase, which is a short time for permanent effects to appear. While familiarizing with the literature of this study it also appeared that a large proportion of those so-called studies are large-scale mass surveys conducted in countries with such different conditions and social and working life structures that the applicability of the survey results is questionable.

This result most clearly highlighted by this study concerns communality, which is at the forefront of motivation and job satisfaction among theorist in the field, according to e.g. Volpert (1990), Fowler (2014), Martela and Pessi (2018), EVA (2019) and Hakanen (2021). In the interviews of this study, communality was very poorly received, unlike in previous studies. Now that we are returning, at least partly, to office work, communality has also been taken up as an argument. Finland’s second largest daily newspaper wrote appealingly in favour of office work and headlined 1.5.2022: “The work is meant to be done together.” In the writing, the end of telecommuting is called a celebration of communality, and communality is seen as the cornerstone of economic activity. Martela and Pessi (2018) also write enthusiastically about communality. The editor of *Talouselämä* (Economic Life) asks about the success of returning to the office by pondering (30.7.2021): “What is the significance of work community?” In surveys conducted in many organizations, the hybrid model has been the most popular. Nurmi states (2021): “Hybrid work has probably come to stay.” There are well-marketed opinions supported by the surveys,

but they are rather contradictory. There is yet no scientific information regarding the issue. Also based on this study, there is a need for multidisciplinary basic research on sense of community as a motivation and job satisfaction factor, a source of meaningfulness in work, and a basis for productivity. Organizational research alone is not enough, psychological and possibly sociological research are also needed. The topic is also very important for the organization, even urgent.

The second proposal, which is considered by almost all the best-known researchers in the field to be more important than communality, is the feedback. Like communality, the feedback did not inspire the interviewees of this study, and here this research is not alone. The lack of feedback in Finnish working life has provoked discussion among researchers. Hakanen (2017) has written a relevant article: "Feedback is the smallest big thing in working life." According to Hakanen, there is a major lack of appreciation and feedback in Finnish workplaces. Mönkkönen (2022) believes that feedback culture is not a natural part of Finnish work culture. This study also proves that generations in Finland are reproducing a weak feedback culture. Telecommuting at least does not improve the possibilities of giving natural so-called micro-feedback when meeting in the hallway, while having a cup of coffee or lunch, or between work, etc. (Hakanen, 2017; Nurmi, 2022). Proper basic research on feedback in general, and in the conditions of telecommuting in particular, would provide a basis for organizations to conduct context-specific applied research.

5.4 Limitations

The number of people interviewed to obtain the data was relatively small, but the aim was the thick description of the themes indicated by the theoretical framework and the issues raised by the interviewees regarding the research question. The reserved about 1,5 hours for interviews proved to be suitable, and a longer conversation during the working hours would not have been reasonable anymore. There are also limits to the concentration of both parties in the interview and the possibility to repetitive answers

and discussion. It turned out that even highly educated need time to comprehend the meaning of unfamiliar concepts and, in some cases, a longer period of time might have deepened some matters.

The pandemic situation with its restrictions has existed throughout the study and the situation has not yet stabilized. As a result, the time to assess the lasting effects of telecommuting is too short. The findings of this study illustrate the current situation, but their viability needs to be re-examined when the pandemic situation dwindles. The shift from previous “traditional” work to telecommuting was so unexpected, that when the new normal of work is reached, possibly the hybrid, the opinions might change and therefore require comparison.

According to the purpose of this study and the research question the perspective is of the employees, in this case the experts, therefore the study lacks the perspective of the organization / employer. Meeting the aims of the organization and the experts is the area where power, trust and control, the invisible forces, play a crucial role. Within the scope of this study, it was not possible to address this dynamic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Script of the interview

Haastattelun käsikirjoitus – Aktia

Alkujutustelua, tavoite luoda rento keskusteluilmapiiri, pieni tutustuminen haastateltavaan, painotus että kyseessä enemmänkin keskustelu kuin haastattelu

Lyhyt kuvaus haastattelun rakenteesta: alkuun että Aktia ei ole osallinen haastatteluun vaan vastaukset ovat omaan käyttöön (Aktia näkee yhteenvedon, vastaajat eivät ole tunnistettavissa), kysymyksiä asteikolla 1-10, asioiden luokittelua tärkeysjärjestykseen, ”vapaa keskustelua” vastauksista

Perustiedot haastateltavasta: Nimi, ikä?, työnkuva tällä hetkellä (yksikkö, titteli jne.), kauan firma, karkeasti tausta ja työhistoria, aiempi kokemus etätyöstä

Työtyytyväisyys- ja motivaatiotekijät

Painotetaan että tällä hetkellä puhutaan nimenomaan etätyöstä eikä ns. perinteisestä työstä.

Kysymys 1. Kuinka tyytyväinen olet työhösi tällä hetkellä asteikolla 1-10? (1 huono, 10 paras)

Mihin asioihin olet tyytyväinen työssä? Onko jotain asiaa mikä vaivaa/mihin et ole tyytyväinen tällä hetkellä työssä?

Kysymys 2. Listaa tärkeysjärjestykseen seuraavat asiat työssä: **autonomia** (riittävä vapaus työssä, sopivasti kontrollia), **asiallinen palaute** (tunnustusta hyvin tehdystä työstä, riittävät neuvot mitä/miten asiat pitää tehdä), **työn haasteellisuus** (mahdollisuus kehittyä ja haastaa itseään), **työyhteisö ja sen sosiaaliset suhteet** (kollegat, yhteisön tunne, sosiaalisuuden merkitys päivittäisessä työssä) ja **palkka ja muut taloudelliset tekijät** (rahalinen palkkio työstä, muut edut)

Keskustelua vastausten järjestyksestä: Miksi kyseinen järjestys? Onko jonkin vaihtoehdon tärkeys korostunut nyt etätyön aikana (esim. sosiaalisuuden kaipaus, palautteen puute, liikaa haasteita tehdä työ ”normaalisti”)

Jatkoa kysymykseen 2. Millä tasolla koet edellä käytyjen asioiden (yksitellen läpi: **autonomia, asiallinen palaute, työn haasteellisuus, työyhteisö ja sen sosiaaliset suhteet, palkka ja muut taloudelliset tekijät**) olevan tällä hetkellä työssäsi asteikolla 1-10? (tavoite keskustella aina jokaisen kohdan jälkeen miksi kyseinen vastaus)

Apukysymyksiä:

Autonomia: Onko työn vapaus ja vastuu kasvanut? Onko näitä liikaa/sopivasti? Tuleeko työssä joskus vaikea/ahdistava tilanne vastaan, jota et koe hallitsevasi? Saatko apua esihenkilöiltä, kollegoilta ja organisaatioilta tukea näissä tilanteissa.

Asiallinen palaute: Saatko yhtä paljon palautetta ja kiitosta työstä?

Haasteellisuus/kehittyminen: Oliko työn tekeminen helpompaa ennen etätyötä? Oletko päässyt mielestäsi ”helpommalla” vai päinvastoin verrattuna muihin firmassa (myynti vs konttori)? Oletko kehittynyt/oppinut uusia asioita etätyön ansiosta?

Työyhteisö ja sen sosiaaliset suhteet: Viihdytkö paremmin omissa oloissa vai tiiviisti osana työyhteisöä? Onko työkavereiden tärkeys korostunut? Päivittäiset juttutuokiot ja kuulumisten vaihtamiset? Työasioiden helpompi läpikäynti juttelun lomassa?

Palkka ja muut taloudelliset tekijät (melko haastava aihe, jotenkin sulavasti): Vastaako palkkatasosi mielestäsi työn mahdollisesti lisääntyneitä haasteita? (tarkoitus ei ole udella palkkaa, vaan lähinnä että kokeeko haastateltava, että etätyön pitäisi näkyä palkassa?)

Kysymys 3. Tehdään aikamatka takaisin konttorille. Onko jokin edellä käydyistä asioista muuttunut etätyöhön siirtymisen takia? (Mikäli näihin on saatu jo osittain vastauksia, yritetään aiempia vastauksia sivuuttaen saada lisätietoja syistä)

Kuinka tyytyväinen olit työhösi ennen etätyöhön siirtymistä? Miksi etätyö on vaikuttanut positiivisesti/negatiivisesti työhön? Käydään yksitellen läpi, miten **autonomia, asiallinen palaute, työn haasteellisuus, työyhteisö ja sen sosiaaliset suhteet, palkka ja muut taloudelliset tekijät** ovat muuttuneet etätyön takia.

Työn merkityksellisyys

Termin avaaminen: Merkityksellisyydellä tarkoitetaan yleisimmällä tasolla arvokkuutta, työssä on läsnä jotakin itsessään arvokasta. Työ ei siis ole pelkkä väline toimeentulon takaamiseksi. Arvokkuuden saavuttamiseksi tarvitaan hyvää tuottava päämäärä eli mahdollisuus tehdä työnsä kautta jotakin hyvää ja mahdollisuus toteuttaa itseään. Eli työ itsessään luo arvoa tekijälle, joka synnyttää sisäisen palon ja motivaation omaan työhön, joka johtaa paneutuneempaan ja laadukkaampaan jälkeen.

Kysymys 4. Mitä työ merkitsee sinulle? (Miksi käyt töissä? Tuleeko mieleen jotain yksittäisiä asioita, jotka työssä ovat erityisen tärkeitä sinulle? Materialistinen merkitys vs työn sisällöstä muodostuva merkitys?)

Jatkokysymys: Kävisitkö töissä, jos et tarvitsisi rahaa?

Kysymys 5. Listaa järjestykseen minkä takia käyt töissä: **Toimeentulon lähde** (palkka), **elämän turvallinen kehikko** (turvallisuus, jotain minkä ympärille rakentaa), **sosiaaliset suhteet ja verkostot** (kollegat, työympäristö, vuorovaikutus), **itsensä toteuttaminen ja kehittäminen** (oppiminen, tehdä jotain mistä tykkää, kehittyä ihmisenä), **velvollisuudentunne** (velvollisuus yhteiskunnan jäsenenä, ”kaikkien pitää tehdä töitä”)

Keskustelua vaihtoehtoista, miksi kyseinen järjestys? Kerro lyhyesti EVA:n kyselyn tuloksista (65% keino rahoittaa vapaa-aika, 55% yhteiskunnan jäsenen velvollisuus (v. 2010 vain 36%), itsensä kehittäminen ja sosiaalisuus selvästi perässä näitä). Herääkö uusia ajatuksia?

Kysymys 6. Koetko oman työsi olevan merkityksellistä? Saatko työstä irti jotain sellaista, joka tuo lisäarvoa elämään? Uskotko sellaisen työpaikan olevan edes olemassa, joka luo aitoa merkityksellisyyden tunnetta sinulle?

Esim. Kumpi ääripää mielummin: Merkityksellinen työ huonolla palkalla vs. työ joka ei kiinnosta eikä tuo lisäarvoa mutta hyvä palkka?

Organisaatioilmasto

Termin avaaminen: Organisaatioilmastoa kutsutaan arjessa usein työpaikan hengeksi. Se on se yleinen tunneperäinen ilmapiiri, atmosfääri, joka vallitsee organisaatiossa. Kukaan sitä ei ole konkreettisesti nähnyt, kuullut, haistanut, koskenut eikä maistanut, mutta kaikki osaavat sanoa, onko organisaation ilmapiiri, henki, hyvä vai huono. Organisaatioilmasto on mysteerinen, salaperäinen sosiaalinen voima, joka näkymättömänä ohjaa josakin määrin kaikkia toimia ja kanssakäymistä organisaatiossa, se määrittää, kuinka me tehdään hommia tässä organisaatiossa – tai tällä osastolla, tässä yksikössä jne. Organisaatioilmaston yksi kummallisuus on se, että ihminen tajuaa sen merkityksen vasta, kun esim. on joutunut vaihtamaan työpaikkaa!

Säävertaus: Organisaatioilmastoa selitetään usein sään avulla, koska meidän tunneperäisten käsitysten syntyminen työympäristöstä on verrattavissa ulkona olevaan säähän. Ihmisen mielialaan ja hyvinvointiin vaikuttaa usein onko ulkona aurinkoinen ja lämmin ilma vai pimeä loskasää. Tämä sama pätee organisaatioilmastoon; parempi ilmapiiri vaikuttaa usein positiivisesti motivoituneisuuteen ja sitä kautta työn laatuun ja tuottavuuteen. Sään, eli tässä tapauksessa organisaatioilmaston voi nähdä, tuntea ja havaita, mutta sään ja sen ilmiöiden takana olevaa ilmastoa, eli organisaatiokulttuuria, on selvästi vaikeampi havaita.

Organisaatioilmastoa voi lähestyä joillakin ominaisuuksilla ja niiden ääripäiden avulla voi arvioida omia käsityksiä ilmapiiristä.

Kysymys 7. Miten arvioisit kyseiset tekijät työssäsi/millainen työpaikan henki on asteikolla 1-10? (Nimenomaan organisaatiotasolla eikä yksikön sisällä)

sulkeutunut (1) – avoin (10)

kyräilevä (1) – reilu (10)

passivoiva (1) (välinpitämätön ehdotuksille) – luova (10)

epäilevä/epäluuloinen (1) – luottamuksellinen (10) (tehdään kuten sovitaan eikä kyttäillä)

Kysymys 8. Onko jokin edellä mainituista sellainen, jota Aktia mielestäsi yrittää tietoisesti parantaa koko ajan? Saako joku edellä mainituista mielestäsi liian vähän huomiota ja johon pitäisi panostaa enemmän?

Kysymys 9. Onko mielestäsi etätyö jollakin tavalla muuttanut työilmapiiriä? Onko jokin näistä edellä mainituista parantunut tai huonontunut etätyöhön siirtymisen seurauksena?

Kysymys 10. Saatko organisaatioilmastosta mielestäsi riittävästi tukea työssäsi? Mitä mielestäsi voisi tehdä hengelle ja kuinka?

Haastattelun lopetus ja viimeiset kysymykset

Muutama ajankohtainen yleiskysymys organisaatiossa hiljattain olleiden YT-neuvotteluiden ja sen jälkeen henkilöstöannin vaikutuksiin.

Kysymys 11. Millainen suhde sinulla on Aktiaan tällä hetkellä? Vaikuttivatko jo päättyneet YT-neuvottelut sinun mielipiteeseesi Aktiasta työnantajana? Koitko suorituspaineita tai vaikuttivat neuvottelut jotenkin muuten negatiivisesti työhösi? Esim. asteikolla 1 (ei vaikutusta)-10 (vaikutti merkittävästi).

Kysymys 12. Vaikuttiko henkilöstöanti jotenkin sinuun? Koitko sen olevan hyvä tapa sioututtaa työntekijöitä ja motivoida tekemään parempaa tulosta?

Viimeinen kysymys nyt kun laajasta etätyöstä luovutaan/ollaan luopumassa.

Kysymys 13. Miten haluaisit tehdä töitä tulevaisuudessa? Haluatko palata täysin konttorille, hybridimalli vai täysi etätyö? Mitä mieltä olet Aktia juuri tekemistä linjauksista asian suhteen? Kuunnellaanko työntekijöitä tarpeeksi?

Lisäkysymyksiä edelliseen. Jos ei vielä ole kunnolla tullut puheeksi/ilmi: Millaisia tunteuksia etätyö on yleisesti herättänyt? Onko tämä ollut haastavaa aikaa / oletko nauttinut siitä? Onko kodin ja työn yhdistäminen ollut haastavaa? Onko etätyö tasa-arvoistanut vai eriarvoistanut työntekijöitä?

Mitkä fiilikset haastattelusta jäi? Oliko tästä jotain ”hyötyä”? Saitko purettua työhön liittyviä huolia/murheita? Mitä mieltä olit haastattelun toteutuksesta? Saitko puhua vapaasti, tuntuiko tämä enemmän vapaalta keskustelulta kuin haastattelulta?

Kannattaako näitä kysyä: Vaikka haastattelu onkin vain omaan käyttöön, haluaisitko että Aktia saisi haastattelusta tutkijan yhteenvedon ja kommentit vastauksista nimettömänä luettavaksi, jotta voisi reagoida niihin ja parantaa työn kokemista ja organisaatioilmastoa? Uskotko että Aktiasta tulisi parempi työpaikka, jos ilmenneisiin ongelmakohtiin reagoitaisiin?

Appendix 2. Complementary form

Haastattelujen täydennyslomake

Väinö Lintula – gradu (1/2022)

1. Työn, kodin ja vapaa-ajan yhdistäminen etätöiden aikana

	Muutos etätöiden aikana/seurauksena Heikentynyt vs. parantunut
Liikunnan määrä ja yleismotivaatio liikuntaa kohtaan	<input type="text"/>
Terveellinen ja säännöllinen ateriointi (työpäivän aikana & ulkopuolella)	<input type="text"/>
Työn ja kodin välinen yhteys (mm. työn ja perheen yhdistäminen, arjen sujuvuus, työn ja vapaa-ajan erottaminen toisistaan)	<input type="text"/>
"Fiilis" työntekoa kohtaan (mm. motivaatio herätä töihin, työpäivän keston tuntu, keskittymiskyky/-halu työpäivän aikana)	<input type="text"/>

2. Työn kokeminen ja palaute

Oman työn hallinta (=kontrolli): tunne, että hallitsen oman työni vaadittavan aikataulun ja osaamiseni suhteen	Ennen pandemiaa (1-10): <input type="text"/>
	Pandemian aikana (1-10): <input type="text"/>
Työn aiheuttaman kuorimittavuuden (ml. aikataullinen paine) taso nyt, ja muutos etätöiden aikana	Taso nyt (1-10): <input type="text"/>
	Muutos etätöiden aikana: <input type="text"/>
Pääsääntöinen palautteen lähde, ja saadun rakentavan palautteen vaikutus motivoituneisuuteen työtä kohtaan	Palautteen lähde: <input type="text"/>
	Vaikutus motivoituneisuuteen (1-10): <input type="text"/>
Onko työpaikan henki organisaatiota yhdistävänä tekijänä muuttunut etätöiden aikana	<input type="text"/>

Miten hyvin sinua "oikeasti" kuunnellaan (aloitteet, ideat), ja otetaanko sinun sanomiset vakavasti vastaan	Taso nyt (1-10): <input type="text"/>
	Muutos etätyön aikana: <input type="text"/>
Minkälaiseksi koet etemismahdollisuudet työssäsi (pysty- tai vaakasuunnassa, esim. siirtyminen itselle mielekkäämpiin tehtäviin)	Taso nyt (1-10): <input type="text"/>

3. Välittömimmän työyhteisön (tiimin tms.) työilmapiirin tila

	Tila tällä hetkellä Huonohko - hyvä	Etätyön aiheuttama muutos Negatiivinen - positiivinen
Tuki, apu ja opetus kollegoilta	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Yhteisön toiminnan käsittely yhdessä	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Vuorovaikutus yhteisön jäsenten kesken	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tiedonkulku organisaatiosta yhteisöön	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tiedonkulku yhteisön sisällä	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Todelliset</u> osallistumis- ja vaikuttamismahdollisuudet töiden järjestelyyn ja yhteisön suunnitelmiin	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tasapuolisuus työyhteisössä (mm. "suuret egot" eivät tyrannisoi, ketään ei kiusata, ketään ei suljeta ulkopuolelle)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Avoimuus (ei juoruilla selän takana)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kyky käsitellä mahdollisia ristiriitoja rakentavasti	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>