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Getting to Know Each Other
A Study on the Relationships Between Co-workers

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Abstract

This thesis explores the strategies of familiarising the employees to each other, and the effects of that on the employee well-being and performance of Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma Oy, a Finnish software as a service and consultancy company of seven employees.

This thesis employs three research methodologies. Phenomenological reduction, participatory action research (PAR), and eidetic reduction are used in different stages of the thesis.

The literature review consists of a metacontextual framework based on the associated research themes. These themes include interpersonal ties and group dynamics from multiple viewpoints and disciplines. The process of the literature review ended up being exploratory analysis.

During the study, the employees reported enhanced work atmosphere and commitment due to interpersonal connections being strengthened. Higher commitment to co-workers led the employees to modulate their connections to others effectively leading to a better overall team output.

The author recommends three distinct strategies for small high-complexity companies to benefit from the phenomena resulting from employees getting to know each other.

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores how getting to know each other in the work-life context of a company with seven employees affects the employee well-being and company performance. The goal is to develop the working life of the employees of the commissioner. Research material was collected in workshops, surveys, interviews, spontaneous discussions, observation, and self-reflection of the author. Participatory action research (PAR) principles were deployed in the development phase. The methodology for analysing the material is derived from phenomenology.

The research on the outcomes of co-employees getting to know each other better is sparce and the effects it can have on the performance of the company and the well-being of the employees is almost completely unexplored. This thesis explores the possibility of making the work-life and company performance reach new level in a company, where all the usual improvements and many not so obvious ones, like free of charge massages, have already been done.

In human relations, there are essential differences in the quality and depth of familiarity through the context of relationship. Typically, the closest relationships are found in the confines of domesticity. Work life rarely results in a truly close relationship of friendship type. A notable counterexample might be some military units, with limited connections outside. Most work life settings appear to promote an acquaintance type of contacts.

As in all relationships, when it comes to relations with co-workers, misunderstandings and non-understandings of conversations are regular (Hirst et al. 1994). For example, one might assume to know more than they do. Recently, the author did dive right into that fallacy by assuming to "know" everyone in the company of employment. That assumption turned out to be false. These type of false judgements can be attributed partially to disjunction and conjunction fallacies affecting the ability to recollect memories (Nakamura & Brainerd 2017). In addition, "know" is in parentheses as the ability to know another human being is debated in the literature. For a further analysis see Chapter 3.

This leads to the theme of this research and the basis for the research problem described in Chapter 2.4. What is the best way to get to know each other in work life team, and how it effects the performance of the team?

From the literature review, the research on the substance of knowing each other seems structurally avoided. Some research is done on the problems and benefits of knowing each other from the bilateral relationships' internal motivations standpoint. Theories about interpersonal neurobiology (see Cozolino 2014, 41-58) mention problems and benefits of knowing another human being, but the benefits are usually seen from the individual viewpoint. I will elaborate the interpersonal neurobiology and other psychological theories, and how they relate to my goals in Chapters 3 and 4. Philosophy, alternatively, deals with questions like contextualism, ignorance, and aspiration, that is in fact something that each of us do with other people regularly. A long-held problem in philosophy is the possibility of transcendence from one's own mind (see Remes 2007, 239-253). In this context transcendence means the ability to see world from other persons perspective.

Why is this important? First, I speculate that it is virtuous to know a person when closely affiliated. Be that a forced, or voluntary affiliation. Second, I speculate a community functions better when there is *epistemic closeness* with others. *Epistemic closeness* is a term the author uses in this thesis to describe a reciprocal identification and subsequent knowing of affiliated people's personalities, histories, aspirations, and values.

This thesis is divided to eight parts. After this introduction, the implementation of the thesis is discussed in Chapter 2 and its subchapters. The theoretical framework is presented in Chapters 3 and 4 and their subchapters. As the theory of human experience concerning knowing another human being is not unified, the theoretical framework is assembled from different disciplines and can be considered metacontextual exploration. In Chapter 5 the principal company is presented as it was prior to this research. This starting point is analysed in

Chapter 6 and its subchapters by pulling together the reflections from the research material. Chapter 7 presents the action plan devised for the systematic upkeep and development of the benefits received through this research, whereas Chapter 8 includes the description and the assessment of the development process and conclusions.

2 EXECUTION OF THE THESIS

This research and development project came to be a part and an extension of an ongoing development process at the commissioner, Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma Oy. The overall stage of the company was a mature small company with exemplary capacity for earnings and tribal commitment from the employees. As examined through the employee surveys and development interviews, the stage of the company was nearing the fifth tribal stage "life is great" as described in Logan et al. (2008). The author is a co-founder of the commissioner and acted as Chief Executive Officer during most of the research period. This partiality was considered by the self-reflection of the author before and during the data collection and analysis. The employees were informed about the possible use of their work and other output as the basis for this research in advance. All the employees gave explicit permission to continue with the execution aware of the consequences of the said permission. Research-ethical questions were reviewed and discussed with the employees multiple times during the research.

2.1 Purpose of the thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to explore and expand the boundaries of a desirable work life of the principal company. The purpose of answering the proposed research questions is to provide a clear and intuitive view on the ways and effects of deepening the *transcendental* intersubjective relationships between co-workers. *Transcendentalism* refers to an ability to actively perceive another human being with intentionality and to form a conception of that person as Immanuel Kant proposed it in his Critique of Pure Reason (2009). *Transcendental intersubjectivity* is a term Edmund Husserl (1982, 84) uses to describe the constitution of one person's ego inside the mind of another person.

The analysis performed in this thesis explores the possibility of finding objective significance of better reciprocal knowing of the group. The *term epistemic closeness* was coined to describe the phenomenon in question. The study of this phenomenon is significant because of the following reasons:

1. By participating in the research, employees can research their own modes of operation in accordance with co-workers. According to Moustakas (1994, 108), phenomenological research gives participants a status as co-researchers. Van Kaam (1966, 325-326) describes phenomenological research enabling co-experiences between participants, giving them a gradually deepening understanding of other participants' world. According to Rahman (2008) the central thinking in participatory action research is the subjects' unification with the actions taken in the research. These viewpoints are enabling individual adjustments by participants to their own modus operandi.
2. By modifying their modus operandi, the employees can expand their knowledge by interacting with the world in new and novel ways. This new outlook can affect the organisational climate to promote innovation and creativity. Ekvall (1996, 107-108) describes the dimensions that enable or interfere with an open innovative culture, which rises the prominent themes of trust, openness, dynamism, and liveliness. The author expects to encounter significant improvement on the mentioned dimensions.

2.2 Limitations of the scope

Next presented are the limitations set to this thesis. As a general principle, this inquiry is limited to those features of human relations that are not evident in everyday discourse but affect the result of human relations. It is also necessary to understand that these limitations of the scope are set from the "standard perspective" of understanding, and as such can be discussed in relation to other matters. Dimensions of knowing each other are so myriad, that one could easily end up in chaos without restrictions (Adler & Van Doren 1972, 207).

As the commissioner does not employ non-human workers, this thesis does not consider the relationships between human - non-human and non-human - non-human intelligences. Nevertheless, it is advisable to consider the possibility of non-human co-workers to partake in the team. Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the more prominent, and at least partially actualised form of non-human co-workers. That can be seen for example with Google Translate's AI enhanced

translations (Lewis-Kraus 2016). In this case, one needs to broaden the standard definition of a co-worker to a "domain-limited intelligence" as Nick Bostrom (2014, 93) names the AI tools currently available.

This thesis is not about communication. Communication in general and competences needed for interpersonal communication are regarded here as a critical part of knowing each other. Team communication has been widely studied from different viewpoints, but according to Horila (2018, 15-17), interpersonal communication competencies in working life teams have not been studied extensively. Social competence and interpersonal communication competence are nearly associated, or even synonymous terms to a communication competence, but at this point it suffices to say that the social competence does not include competencies of reading, writing and media literacy.

This thesis is not about information literacy or the ability to understand communication. Bruce (1997) explains information literacy as of being a precursor and enabler to learning. This has a direct connection to the ability of a person to understand communication, and thus to learn from it. Nevertheless, information literacy seems not to be generally accepted as a necessary requirement for learning. For Wilder (2005) the amount and structure of the information is a non-issue, whereas Williams (2006) highlights the need for education to be fluent in assimilating information into everyday experience. For this study it is assumed that all participants are sufficiently capable of understanding the communication.

This thesis is not about personality types. There are several frameworks and systems for categorising people including DISC-analysis, OCEAN, and MBTI. These frameworks are commonly used when evaluating the suitability of a person to a task or a position. In the context of this thesis they are ways of collecting information from another human being, as was done in the final workshop.

This thesis is not about knowledge management or knowledge management systems as these relate more to the professional information creation and flow

rather than the knowledge between people of people. This knowledge-based view has been a rising trend since at least 1959 when Edith Penrose published "The Theory of the Growth of the Firm" (Alavi & Leidner 2001, 107). For Penrose, the question was about the efficient use of those resources, and she held a view that *knowledge is separate from the transmission of that knowledge* (Penrose & Pitelis 2009, 118). Even though the knowledge management is not the theme here, the Penrose's view is kept throughout this thesis. Information itself and ways of transmitting information are different problems altogether and need different kinds of frameworks to be dealt with.

On the nature and chosen methodologies of this thesis, these limitations act more of a guideline for the exploration of the subject matter in exploring the boundaries of knowing each other. It can be even said that the guidelines to measure the width and length of the map still unexplored; the path taken and the choices made during the research shed a dim light on only a fraction of the complete picture still under the shadow of obscurity. Even though there has been some progress towards the envisioned framework, "Map is not the territory", even here, as stated by Alfred Korzybski (1933) describing the problematic relation between the utterance and the actual occurrence or phenomenon in the world. "The word is not the thing" is another formulation of the same idea. In the framework of this thesis this refers to the *human inability to produce and subsequently understand words describing the experiences* associated with the epistemic closeness.

2.3 Significance

Five of the seven members of the research group are advanced in their co-operation, working methods, team structure, and output. This well-developed and effective structure is due to continuous development of the working methods and a long history shared by the group. The author is also part of this group. Two of the team members are more recent additions. They are still forging their place in the group. The performance has stayed high, but as the group changes during the four phases of group development, some undesired effects on the job satisfaction have been reported. Forming, storming, norming, and performing are the four phases of Tuckman's (1965) group development model. These are

described as the mandatory phases each small group will go through on their way to a functional whole.

High performance for several years has enabled the group to actively seek and develop the best practices in everyday work. It is not wrong to say the "easy fixes" have been implemented successfully. Continuous improvement plays a significant role in keeping the team up to the high standard of operations (Miinalainen 2018). As the future of the business is always in jeopardy of stagnation or failure, new and novel ways of improving the team performance are in high demand.

Bessant et al. (2001) propose that incremental continuous improvement is challenging as it is displayed by the high failure rate when adopting kaizen or other frameworks for continuous improvement. The principal company and especially the group in question had been performing at high levels for several years when the study started (Pölönen 2017). Many of the proposals from the leadership to improve the work and performance have not had a measurable success or, in few special cases, they have caused the performance to worsen.

The most significant failures were the original push to adopt the OKR/KPI framework from top to bottom, and the inability to launch the new bonus model after discontinuing the previous one. OKR is an acronym for Objects and Key Results, and KPI stands for Key Performance Indicators. They are elements of the leadership and development system presented by Doerr (2018). Commitment from the employees was not achieved because the linkage from the top-level objectives to the individual performance indicators was not sufficiently clear, according to the employees when asked about the adoption of the OKR/KPI project (Lesonen 2018). As the company is used to continuous development, many of the failed attempts are brushed off easily and the operations are continued as usual.

The team level performance has been studied extensively, and many sectoral and generic models have been created as stated by Forrester and Drexler (1999)

(1999). Bessant et al. (2001, 68) remind us that the company and team level improvement can be achieved by activating employees to a higher level of involvement in the innovation process. The company has adopted a leadership principle of shared power and responsibility; in which the function of the leader is to provide support for the employees and develop prerequisites of future success. This model is widely supported in the company as it creates an environment where business challenges and conflicts can be solved efficiently. In addition, the decisions are made by the employee, who is most familiar with the matter.

This is important as De Dreu and Weingart (2003) showed in a meta-analysis of twenty-eight studies the detrimental effects of conflict for employees' wellbeing and organisational performance. De Dreu and Gelfand (2012) explicate that the sources of conflicts are many. They also provide a practicable definition of conflict as an opposition to one's interests, norms, values, opinions, and viewpoints (ibid, 22). Previously the group had the same education, same gender, and mainly same values. Conflicts were minor and far apart. New group members brought diversity to the group in their educational background, gender, and other variables. Notably, differences in the educational background can bring problems in the social validation and sociocognitive conflicts (ibid, 19).

The intergroup interaction faced a conflict when a female was introduced to the group. Previously the vernacular was crude, but imperceptibly so. It was evident from the start that this locution was at a crossroads when subjected to a female co-worker, who, nevertheless, was not herself rattled by the vulgarity of the speech (Hirvo, 2019). Yet, as the cohesiveness of the group diminishes, the sense of the shared purpose and sense of satisfaction towards the group diminishes as well (Kiweewa et al. 2013). These sources of conflict, losing of the group cohesion, and formalisation of the process of group formation were strong motives to initiate this research.

From these starting points the significance, and the worth of this study comes from the inclusive nature of the methods of improvement and the novelty of

exploiting them. It appears there is a whole new level of possibilities developing organisations with the methods herein employed.

2.4   Study design

When this thesis was contemplated, the author was reading The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (2001). Studying the effects of getting to know each other was the guiding principle, and *epistemic closeness* was already the concept to be defined. In the book, there is an aged general, Ardalyon Ivolgin, a drunkard and a pathological liar, who meets a young woman, Vera Lukianovna, a daughter of another drunkard and a liar, Lebedev, at a social event. The following excerpts are from that meeting in Part II, Chapter VI.

> *"… But... you seem to be looking at me with some surprise — may I introduce myself — General Ivolgin — I carried you in my arms as a baby —"*

The general does not remember ever carrying Vera in his arms, but he still claims so. Then few other participants remember the general had done so. Everybody present is somewhat baffled about the coincidence. The way the general operates in this situation seems comparable to what most of us do daily: when we are not exerting our mental energy in effort to act and react wisely. The story continues after a while:

> *The poor general had merely made the remark about having carried Aglaya in his arms because he always did so begin a conversation with young people. But it happened that this time he had hit upon the truth, though he had himself entirely forgotten the fact. But when Adelaida and Aglaya recalled the episode of the pigeon, his mind became filled with memories, and it is impossible to describe how this poor old man, usually half drunk, was moved by the recollection.*

As the general realises, he has hit upon the truth, we see both a fascinating and a relatable mental event unfolding, where a trigger can open a full chest of memories and recollections. These events in general are what motivated this thesis. Then the general exclaims in exultation:

"I remember — I remember it all!" he cried. "I was captain then. You were such a lovely little thing — Nina Alexandrovna! — Gania, listen! I was received then by General Epanchin."

This realisation of the general brings about another curious mental process. The truth he "knew" to be a lie would mark him as a liar; the innocent exclamation of joy, when he remembers the events, is not, controversially, covered in shame, but in delight. These processes should be understood in the context of knowing each other as they affect the outcomes of every intercourse in the workplace. For example, if a close colleague forgets an integral part of others persona or tastes, the other might be offended by this if the culture of the workplace allows this.

As stated in the introduction, there is a tradition of continuous improvement in the principal company. From the Idiot, the study design incorporates the elements of remembering, knowing, shared reality, and the feeling of the individuals as the main mental processes of human interaction. The formulation of the study design leans heavily on the employees' habit of improving themselves, their work, their team, and the financial performance of the company. The voluntary participation of the employees as co-researchers was promoted.

Research and development (R&D) of the company has not been formalised to a significant degree. Most initiatives are built up with an ad-hoc setup, even though **the company's main driver of success is R&D.** Strong emphasis has been on individual contributors' ability to promote their own initiatives and sell their own development plans for others to get excited about the prospect of getting better. The Idiot and the loosely defined structure of the R&D of the company led to study the effects of *epistemic closeness* is evaluated during an active development initiative (participatory action research) and then refined in exploratory descriptive analysis (eidetic phenomenological research). This led to the formulation of the research problem as:

What is the worth of learning to know one's group members?

The presented research problem contains the viewpoints of individual humane benefits and financial performance of the company. From the research problem three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the effective methods of getting to know each other?
2. How does the feeling of knowing each other affect individuals?
3. How does the feeling of knowing each other affect the performance of the company?

In the preliminary study design phase, some possibilities, and threats of knowing each other were listed by the participants of the study. These lists were not meant to be comprehensive, but to act as guidelines in the search for answers to the research problem (Table 1).

Table 1. Possibilities and threats found in the preliminary discussions with the employees (Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma 2018).

Possibilities	Threats
aspiration	*diversity*
contractualism	*contextualism*
logical dynamics and non-monotonic	*moral truths and moral disagreement*
logic	*ignorance*
leisure and idleness	*blame*
forgiveness	*sexuality*
welfare functions	*discursive dilemma*
responsibility	*social choice power*
epistemic vigilance	*language and power*
collective action and emergentism	*social construction and credibility*
ignorant knowledge	*causation*
metacognition and logic of knowledge	*semantic minimalism*
prosociality and altruism	*logical fallacies*
Adam Smith's moral sentiments	*vagueness*
(impartial spectator)	*anarchism*
gratitude	*pejorative expressions*
categorical imperative	*individualism*
meditation	*jumping to conclusions*

thinking twice	*epistemic oppression*
Joshua Knobe's true self	*beliefs in reasoning*
epistemic decision theory.	*question-sensitivity of belief.*

It is not the aim and scope of this thesis to answer all these questions; the author merely seeks to find the truth as it is opening to the study group intuitively and without theorising. This journey can be described as exploratory analysis. With this, the findings of this research will give some guidelines and ideas for the reader to perceive their own truths right now, right here.

To create the framework for this research, the author designed a development program aimed at promoting the employees' reciprocal knowing of each other. The development program concentrated on the values and aspirations of the employees towards the future state of the company and was transformational as such. The main theme was co-creation of strategy as it seemed to provide the needed framework joining the individual essences to the tangible reality of the firm. The development program was synchronised with the research in a way that enabled bilateral deepening of the understanding between the tangible and the essence. The product of this setup was the *hermeneutic circle* enabling measurable improvements in the study group's performance.

The findings of this study have been reported where and when they have emerged. This style of reporting findings was chosen as different study phases looked at the phenomenon from different perspectives thus revealing new and aspects of the subject. This style of reporting findings also supports the description of the journey taken during the research from mostly ignorant position to collective awakening of the participants to the significance of the studied phenomenon. In Chapter 8.1 there is a summary of the collected findings.

2.5   Methodology

The methodology of this thesis is trifold. The first part was phenomenological study of the *lifeworld* of the author employing *phenomenological reduction* to identify and withhold judgement on the pre-understanding about the subject. The

result was the *bracketing* of the authors pre-understanding. Data for this part was collected by the author's reflection. This methodology aimed at reducing the authors otherwise disproportioned influence on the research. Main parts of this phase were conducted before the second part was started. Some realisations and reflections were added during the later stages of the study without affecting the integrity of the original. The report on this process can be found from Chapter 6.1.

The second part is the participatory action research (PAR) that was deployed to develop the day-to-day operations and job satisfaction in the principal company by including all the employees in the development process. This part took place in the first half of 2019. The process was guided by the results in each of the workshops. The data collection was multimodal, including workshops, discussions, interviews, and questionnaires. This methodology is discussed after the next subchapter.

The third part returned to the phenomenology. The author had in-depth interviews with four participants. Those interviews and the material gathered in the previous phases was analysed to gain understanding and uncover the truths about the research subject. *Eidetic reduction* was employed here. This methodology aimed at identifying the effects of the getting to know each other. Liminal findings of PAR and eidetic reduction are presented and discussed across the Chapters 6.2 and 6.3.

2.5.1 Phenomenology and phenomenological reduction

> *What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that we must continue to ask this question half a century after Husserl's first works. Nonetheless, it is far from being resolved. Phenomenology is the study of essences, and it holds that all problems amount to defining essences, such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness. And yet phenomenology is also a philosophy that places essences back within existence and thinks that the only way to understand man and the world is by beginning from their "facticity."* Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012).

It is not easy define phenomenology as Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues. It is not a single unified methodology, and it did not start as such in the first place. The phenomenological tradition sees the world as being "already there" meaning for

the world to exists it does not need reflection, but to understand the world we need to examine its structures free of prejudices. At its origin, it was not meant to be a research method outside philosophy, but it has evolved from the early schools of thought to include a variety of research methods. Form these standpoints describing the history and defining the main concepts in the chosen method is essential before discussing the deployment of the method in the context of this thesis. (Spiegelberg 2012; Merleau-Ponty 2012; Porter & Cohen 2013.)

Edmund Husserl founded Phenomenology (Beyer 2018) as an answer to "naturalism" that he described to the sciences ignoring the experience of the subject in contrast to the measurable empirical findings of the researchers (Pulkkinen 2010, 25-27). Churchill and Wertz (2015, 275) interpret Husserl attempting to develop science beyond the constraints of the physical world by researching human experience as an equal field to the natural sciences. Husserl (2017, 29-31) interrelates these "Sciences of Matters of Fact", and "Eidetic Sciences" by stating that any subject of any factual science includes eidos or essence, and vice versa every essence is correlated to a group of factual subjects as isolated cases. When talking about *eidetic* or *eidos*, Husserl (2017, 22-23) refers to the essence behind any subject or group of subjects in the real world, while still maintaining the inseparable nature between the eidos and the real-world subject.

To Husserl, the natural sciences does not represent the nature as it represents itself to us. Husserl states in his Logical Investigations Volume 1 (2001, 102, 168) "we must go back to the 'things themselves'". Doing that the researcher is aiming to exclude his intuitions from the analysis of the meaning of the words. Husserl states (2017, 14) it is particularly laborious to absorb the essence of phenomenology and relate it to other sciences. *Extensive and particular studies are needed to enable successful conduct of phenomenological analysis* (ibid, 15). This is because the researcher is always examining the research subject through his own experiences. When combining this with the phenomenological claim (Farina 2014, 50) that a human being cannot be the object of research as other

physical subject can be, but reveal oneself as an intuitive interpreter between the experiencer and the experienced object, it becomes evident, that methods of removing the effect of the researcher's own lived experience on the analysis are crucial to the success of the research.

From that seemingly straightforward, but laborious viewpoint of Husserl, phenomenology has been divided and interpreted time and again resulting in various schools of methodology, some of which were started by Husserl himself at different stages of his career (Farina, 2014, 51). Himanka (2019, 17), when talking about phenomenological reduction, reflects the possibility of doing research without doing science, as phenomenology is not trying to find scientific results. Pulkkinen (2010, 41-44) describes phenomenology and its findings as not intended to have a finite end but give a glimpse to the researched *lifeworlds* at their current state.

Farina (2014, 50) reflects on this ambivalence of phenomenology by pointing out its endless innovative capacity; this is true to the extent that rather than a method, it is more *a style of thought*. Without going into the details of the different schools of phenomenology, we can identify three distinctive methodological approaches. The methodological approach chosen is ***descriptive phenomenology*** compared *interpretive phenomenology* or *hermeneutic phenomenology* (Porter & Cohen 2013). Descriptive phenomenology aims to describe the essential structures of experiences by looking at phenomena, whereas interpretive and hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to explain the human experience by interpreting those structures (ibid). Descriptive phenomenology is used for health care and human services (Porter & Cohen 2013). To the author's knowledge descriptive phenomenology is little used in research of business administration so far.

The origin of descriptive phenomenological methodology is in Husserl's *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch. Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (Ideas: General introduction to Pure Phenomenology) (2017; Porter 1998). Third Section of the

Ideas is "*Procedure of pure phenomenology in respect of methods and problems".* Contrary to the title of that section, there is truly little on how to conduct a phenomenological research. Same is true for the rest of the book and all other presentations in *Husserliana*, a complete works project of Husserl. For the lack of methodological guidance in Husserl's corpus, more precise methods have been designed by others like Van Kaam (1959), Colaizzi (1978), Omery (1983), Giorgi (1985) Moustakas (1994), Porter (1998), Laine (2018) etc. Laine (2018) describes phenomenological methodology being altered every time when engaged in a new research; the individuality and the distinctiveness of the researcher, the subject, and the situation all are affecting the choices the researcher has to make during the research.

Also, the terms and concepts of phenomenology are interpreted and reinterpreted by Husserl and others multiple times over and are in constant conflict in the literature. Therefore, it is crucial to define the concepts here the way they are understood in the scope of this thesis. The most relevant core concepts of phenomenology are presented next.

Natural attitude is the attitude we all live in without doubting its validity or origin (Lehtinen 2017; Käufer and Chemero 2015, 43.)

Epoché is the description of the experience exactly as it presents itself without analysing it. It is the necessary middle step between the *natural attitude* and the *lifeworld*. (Husserl 1982.)

Lifeworld describes the immediately experienced that is the basis for all scientific enterprises. It is the self-evident and granted in the world that can be experienced by multiple people together. It is the background of the cultural knowledge that is taken for granted. Lifeworld is the basis for *the phenomenological reduction*. In Ideas (Husserl 2017) *natural attitude* is used as a precursor for the lifeworld, that is introduced in *the Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Husserl 2011) (Spiegelberg 2012; Husserl 2011; Käufer & Chemero 2015, 43.)

Phenomenological reduction is the "purification" of the experience so it can be contemplated without the burden of scientific view. It enables us to mistrust the given, so we can see the phenomena as they are presented to us. (Lehtinen 2017; Husserl 2017; Spiegelberg 2012.)

Eidetic reduction is the act of generalizing the of the purified experience of multiple *lifeworlds* so that they can be viewed as general ideas rather than individual experiences. The process of eidetic reduction is sequential and goes from deeply individual to "purely general". (Cunningham 1976; Rissanen 2016.)

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the version of phenomenology devised by Martin Heidegger, where the focus of study is not on understanding beings and phenomena, but in *Dasein* which is "the situated meaning of a human in the world". (Heidegger 2010; Laverty 2003.)

Hermeneutic circle is the process where the researcher incorporates the the expressions of the informant into his own premonition with critical self-reflection and seeks unification of the expressions of the other with their own intuition. (Heidegger 2010; Laine 2008; Laverty 2003.)

As stated previously, the first methodology of this thesis is the phenomenological reduction of the author's lifeworld. According to Himanka (2019, 7) it is the true starting point when doing phenomenological research. He describes phenomenological reduction as a way of educating oneself, rather than learning new facts (ibid, 16). At the same time, he points out that the task of accomplishing reduction has proven to be a formidable task (ibid, 7).

Naïve intuition is the starting point of every phenomenological research; this is the stage where the researcher transcends natural attitude and starts to see the lifeworld as a subject to be researched (Rissanen 2016, 25; Husserl 2011). This is necessary first step, as even the seemingly rational starting point does not protect us from the natural attitude, which would make the critical self-reflection

impossible (Himanka, 2019, 17). Husserl advised not to look for results in his texts, but to enable the reader to struggle with the problems presented in them (ibid, 18). The outcome of the reduction is therefore not a "result" but a challenge to make their own reduction on the subject.

The method of phenomenological reduction in this thesis is based on the authors interpretation of the principles Husserl presented in his Ideas (2017) and that is the basis for the following presentation. The deconstruction and reconstruction needed for this reduction took eight distinct steps as shown in Figure 1.

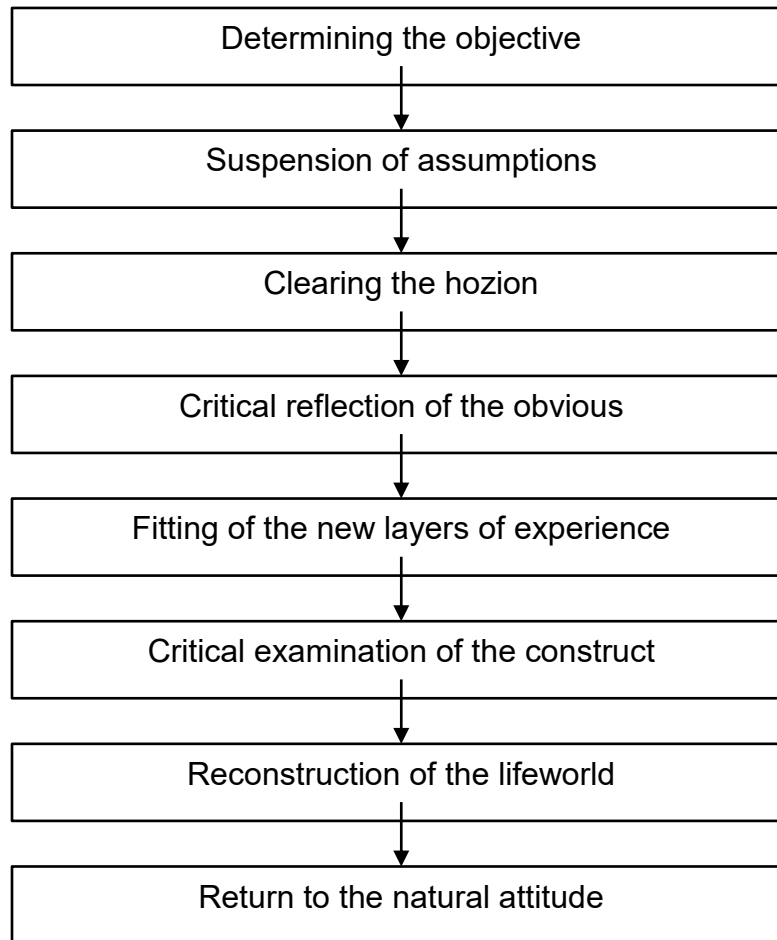| Determining the objective |
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| Reconstruction of the lifeworld |
| ↓ |
| Return to the natural attitude |

Figure 1. The process of phenomenological reduction in this thesis.

The starting point for the phenomenological reduction in this case was to find the object of the reduction. From the research problem rose the need to analyse the ways of gaining, retaining, organising, and using the information available to me from another person. The chosen object is expansive for the scope of this study,

so the author decided to let the process of intuition to guide the selection of perspectives during the act of reduction.

Then the authors assumptions were suspended. In this step the author sought for the point of origin for the phenomenon of knowing another person. This point of origin was reached when the intentionality of the author was set on this sole purpose in the "horizon of the experience". The horizon of the experience is the place inside the mind where all prejudices and suppositions are cast aside to find the pure essence of the contemplated matter.

The horizon of the experience was then critically cleared with of all the other affecting structures and phenomena so that only the point of origin for the studied phenomenon was revealed by the authors perception.

This cleared horizon then offered the field for critical reflection of the phenomenon. The reflection started by the intuitively obvious and added nuances and new perspectives when the experience was thoroughly portrayed. At this stage, the author struggled to keep the horizon of the experience cleared of everything but the essential.

Every new layer built by new nuances and perspectives where then critically examined for the place in the construct in the horizon of the experience. If the layer dovetailed with the construct it was added there without further critique. If the layer did not fit, it was deconstructed and scrutinized for unessential and unfitting elements before constructing it back as a new fitting layer.

After the initial construct was developed it was then critically examined as an entity. At this stage of the authors reflection, every layer or part was juxtaposed with every other layer and part. Validity of the logical structure was confirmed by this step.

Then the construct was subjected to the process of reconstruction of the lifeworld around it. The reconstruction took place piece by piece, first by subjecting the

construct to easily assimilated parts of the lifeworld, like the exchange of the roles of the author and the other person.

After the reconstruction of the lifeworld, the result was then examined in the natural attitude to establish the validity of the findings in the general knowledge. To establish some generalizability in the wider experience, the author got feedback from outsiders. This was the last step of the phenomenological reduction.

By performing phenomenological reduction as the first step of the research, the author was able to have precise tools of reflection and intuition at his disposal, when in interaction with the research group. The phenomenological reduction performed took into consideration only the lifeworld of the author and the scope of it is limited in the depth and width. Other viewpoints and some generalizability can be found from the eidetic reduction. The process for that is presented in the subchapter following the next.

2.5.2 Participatory action research methodology

> *The best way to understand and gain knowledge about any phenomenon is by trying to change it in its naturally occurring contexts.* Kurt Lewin (1951).

The claim Lewin constructs has a basis in everyday experience. It is manifested as a resistance to change. It seems like protectionism. One can even find it in everyday vernacular of any organisation facing a need to change. Understanding of a phenomenon rests heavily on experience; in a group, this experience is by default shared, and thus the success of any such endeavour rests on the ability of the group to perform the transformative act. These transformations tend to become complex as each individual contributor is taking the experience in from unique viewpoint.

Chevalier and Buckles (2013) draw a map of PAR, displayed in Figure 2, consisting of the social plane (participatory), the plane of experience (action), and the plane of mind (research). They attach key challenges to each plane in adopting PAR. The social plane has faced the challenge of the accelerating

globalisation and the myriad of conflicts rising from social diversity. In the case of this thesis, the author sees the participation as a strength for the culture of the firm is supportive of participation. On the plane of the experience, there can be seen problems with "hard-tools" of scientific method. The inclusiveness and intimacy of the research will suffer resulting in poor buy-in from the participants, if the approach is not sensitive for the thoughts and feelings of the participants. The author sees this problem as partially solved by designing the research in collaboration with the participants. The main problem considering the plane of mind is the inherent resistance against the results and change the science could bring forth. The key question here is the possibility of dialogue between the engaged researcher and the participants, so that both will be heard. In this thesis, the solution leans on the ability of the author to truly listen and act in a respectful manner towards the participants. (Chevalier & Buckles 2013, 9-10.)
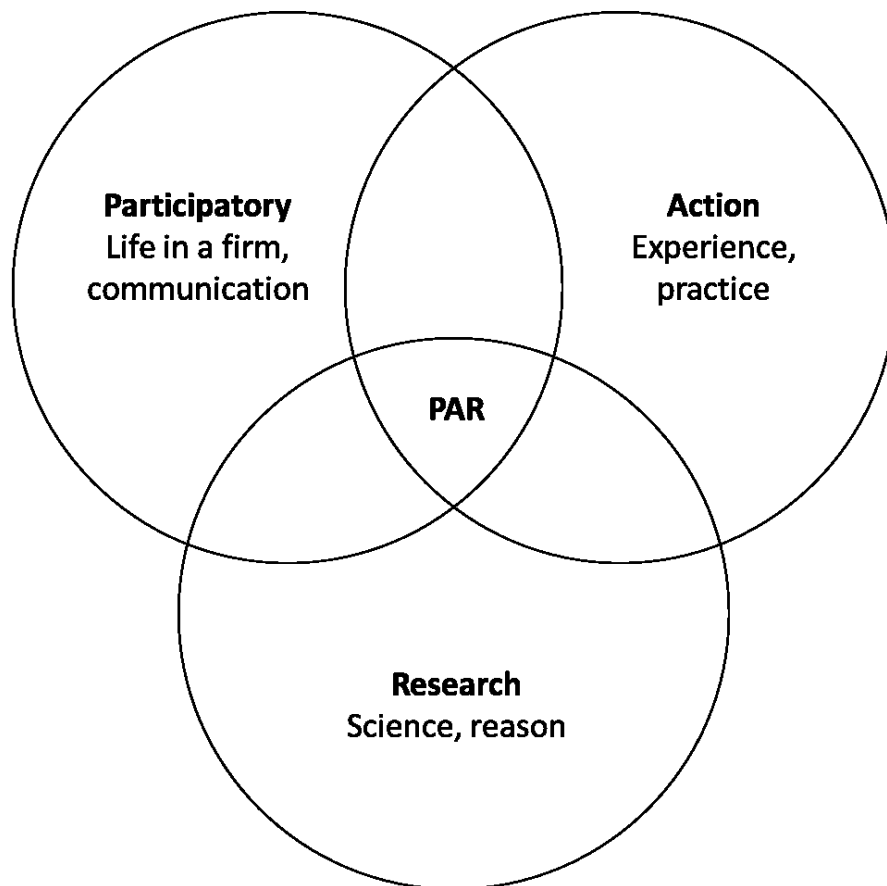

Figure 2. The planes of the PAR adapted from Chevalier & Buckles (2013).

Form these standpoints, PAR was chosen as the methodology for the field study due to its capability to unearth the needs and wishes of the participants during the process of the research (MacDonald 2012; Lawson 2015, 6). The other reason affecting the choice was the realisation of the enormity of the research task. As the chosen research problem is hardly known in the research, the conjoined process of research and creation could give relevant platform to expand the research subject in the future research. This is supported by the ability of PAR to give wider access to information by engaging the participants (Mackenzie et al. 2012, 12). The third reason was the culture of the commissioner. As the employees were used to participating in all the projects aimed at developing the work environment, the mental leap from business as usual to PAR was almost non-existent. PAR is designed to give opportunities for co-learning and reflection and thus support the success of the initiative (ibid).

McIntyre (2008) describes PAR as a: "cyclical process of exploration, knowledge construction, and action at different moments throughout the research process." The cyclicity of PAR research is the key element here, as the research problem does not have a unified theory to lean on. The same element of gradual deepening of understanding can be found from the methodology of phenomenology. In addition, the PAR research and descriptive phenomenology fit well together as both methodologies call for understanding of the other people in a way that requires surrender for the task and the lifeworlds of the group. When searching for this vulnerable place in the interconnected experience, we can start to understand the group's aspirations beyond the horizon of our own. For this purpose, the designed project of co-creation of strategy gave a robust platform.

Lawson et al. (2015, 1) instate PAR as a methodology capable of presenting problems-as-opportunities. They also remind of the vulnerable position of the research group compared to the researcher (ibid, 2). If the process is not done correctly, this can lead to the inability of unearthing the viewpoints and aspirations of the participants. During this study, the standard for participation was set as low as possible and all participants' voices were listened. Methods

used to this end included anonymous and intimate small teamwork as well as one on one meetings between the author and the employees.

According to McIntyre (2008), Feminist studies has been a key contributor to PAR; the feminist agenda has brought unseen, unheard, and marginalised to the front of the participatory action research. As such, the PAR methodology was chosen to unearth the experiences and wishes of all the participants in a way that respects individual space and simultaneously enables entanglement of lifeworlds of the participants.

PAR is not a strict set of tools and guidelines, rather it is an ever-changing and evolving methodology (Chevalier & Buckles 2019). It can be described as a mindset rather than a rule book. This is quite a similar viewpoint as Farina's (2014) description of phenomenology as a "style of thought". Chambers also points out that a good theory is in constant coevolution with practice. This can be achieved in a reflective practice and critical reflection. Consequently, this type of interplay between theory and practice has led to a deficit in explication of theory, where it is implicitly constructed via research projects. This results in the pluralistic practice of PAR, where method theorists struggle to keep up with field practitioners. (Chambers 2008.)

This problem of implicit knowledge is evident also in research projects themselves. Usually, the researcher has considerably more knowledge on method, process, and end results than the participants or co-researchers. Explication of the method, process and sought for result somewhat mitigates this problem. There is also the possibility of participants' unwillingness to participate or participate in suboptimal level. The researcher must act as a facilitator and reagent in the process. These kinds of empowering processes require changes in behaviours, approaches and attitudes of the participants. As such, the capacity and output of the researcher, as an appreciative partner and supporter in the process, sets high requirements throughout the process. (Chambers 2008.)

The author involved the co-researchers in the formulation of the specific steps of the PAR. As a result of this cocreation, the process became cyclical and self-evolving journey to unearth truths to solve the research problem. The critical self-reflection of the author was needed to understand and explicate the effects of the group dynamics so that they would not skew the results of the study. As most of the group members had been familiar for a length of time, the ideas flow intersubjectively during most of the interaction, creating a situation where the breakdown of ideas in a way that would enable the observer to attach any single meaning to any participant is virtually impossible. Figure 3 depicts the process emerged from these premises.

The author presented the research subject to the co-researchers in then current form. Research ethical questions were discussed and the initial buy-in from the co-researchers was attained. The framing of the co-creation was discussed, and workshops were chosen as the preferred method of research. This was partially due to the ability to incorporate the workshops to the bi-weekly "development day" structure the company had adopted before. The theme of the first workshop was decided.

The author designed the workshop structure so, that it would enable organisational learning. This involved a complete transparency to all the material and plans produced as well as constant and intermittent feedback loops built into the structure. The orientation for the workshops started, when the author sent info about the workshop around week before the event. The content of the info was actively discussed in the company chat before the workshop. In the workshop co-creation tools were used and notes were taken by the chosen co-researcher. Right after the workshop a feedback questionnaire was sent to the participants.

After each workshop, the author analysed all the material and feedback gathered before, during, and after the workshop. The results were then presented to the whole group. From that, either the author or some of the co-researchers proposed the subject for the next workshop and it was jointly decided. There were total of four workshops during the research.

The final workshop was held as a seminar to present and discuss the accomplishments of the project. The ways of integrating the results to everyday work were discussed and required changes to the processes were implemented.

Iterative workshops
Deepening of knowledge
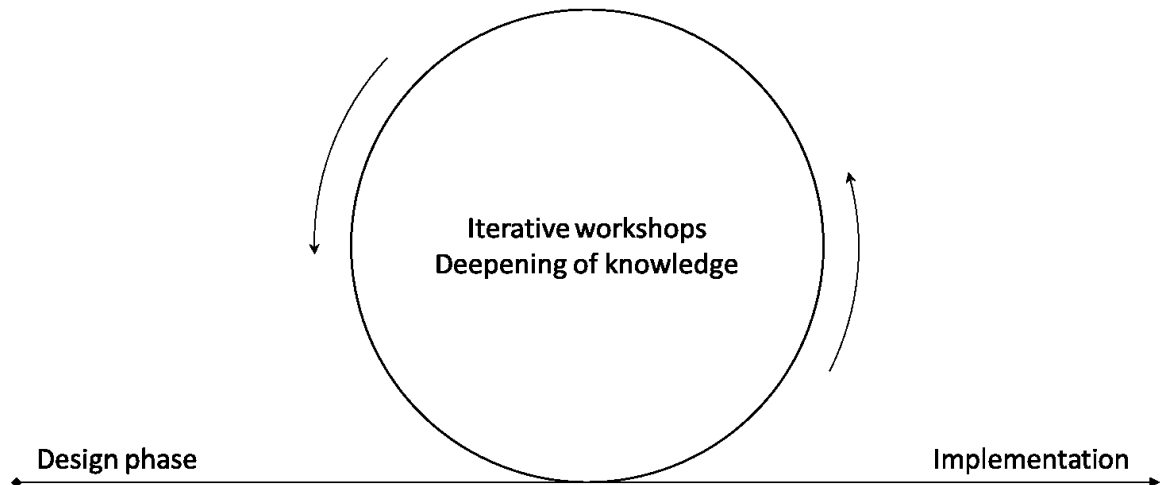
Design phase

Implementation

Figure 3. The PAR process created for this research.

Methods used during the PAR phase evolved throughout the whole process based on the co-creation of the study. The details of these different workshops and the methods employed therein are presented and discussed in the Chapter 6.2 and subchapter.

2.5.3 Eidetic reduction methodology

The third method is the *eidetic reduction* of the *lifeworlds* of the employees of the commissioner. Whereas phenomenological reduction aims to find the essence of experience from a single point of view, eidetic reduction uses variation of the premises, or multiple observers to find generalities from the experience. According to Husserl (2017) *eidetic reduction* examines multiple *lifeworlds* or variations of the examples found on those lifeworlds to find commonalities in the experiences.

As the author did not have prior experience employing phenomenological methodology, the groundwork before the analysis entailed a thorough familiarisation with the plurality of available methods. According to Tuomi and

Sarajärvi (2018), some methods in phenomenology are fundamental and thus focused on the technical completion of the analysis; other methods are more liberal and without ready set rules for the analysis. In wider context, Gentles et al. (2016) point out there is no unified methodology for *systematic methods overview* for qualitative research methods.

The author aimed to constitute the essence of the phenomenological methodology in a way that promoted self-discovery and organisational learning. Laine (2018) supports this view by stating that in the core of phenomenological study are experiences, meanings, and communality. Husserl himself encourage these views in his works *Logische Untersuchungen 1 & 2* (Logical Investigations, vol, 1 & 2) and *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (Ideas: General introduction to Pure Phenomenology). The phenomenology was an always changing and evolving journey to Husserl, in which many of the ideas were reformulated and many forgotten during the years.

This led to a situation where there was never any explicit formulation of the method for eidetic reduction in his writings. Pulkkinen (2010, 38-39) describes Husserl's method of the eidetic reduction as free variation of the same experience by the researcher. Husserl (2017, 60) keeps eidetic reduction mostly in the field of the imagination of the author but makes remarks on the ability of other people to have the same capability of imagining. This gave his followers the ability to expand the methodology into communal direction. There is a possibility of finding more general truths about the experiences, when combining the imagination and experiences of multiple informants. In this study it is advisable to use the pool of knowledge and experience of all the employees to find commonalities in their field of experience.

For the eidetic reduction, the author chose a method proposed by Laine (2018). Two key elements of the method are: firstly, critical self-understanding of the researcher, i.e. the requirement to expand the lifeworld of the researcher to allow the receptivity of understanding for the informant's experience; secondly

hermeneutic circle, describing the dialogue between the researcher and the research material to allow for gradual deepening of understanding. This gradual deepening cannot be rushed as the unification and aggregation of the information needs to happen without forcing. This requires both active thinking and subconscious synthesis of the available information.

The analysis for one informant contains three distinct steps, of which the second step is closely related to the phenomenological reduction described in the Chapter 2.5.1:

1. The description, i.e. formulating the research raw material, where necessary, to standard language, without losing the "voice" of the informant.
2. The analysis, i.e. finding intuitive descriptions for meaningful expressions.
3. The synthesis, i.e. formulating general picture from meaningful expressions, where relationships of those expressions are set in a meaningful structure. (Laine 2018.)

The analysis represented above is only valid when researching one informant. To gain meaningful results from multi-informant research, each step before synthesis must be reproduced with each informant separately. In the synthesis phase, the researcher can softly start to discover common or overlapping meaningful expressions from the material of multiple informants. Here the emphasis is on the individual experience as described in the phenomenological tradition. The interpretation cannot therefore be "forcefully" generalised to a group larger than an individual. However, if such generalisations are gently found, they can be produced, and they can be valid. (Laine 2018.)

The hermeneutic circle in Figure 4 illustrates the contradiction that arises between the informant's expression and the researcher's premonition and interpretation. Of particular importance is the critical reflection of the researcher's own lifeworld. In Table 2 there is a selection of the eidetic reduction done on the interview material gathered for this research.

Critical reflection → The researcher's premonition

Critical reflection → Interpretation 1

Critical reflection → Interpretation hypothesis

Critical reflection → estimate: what the other has meant by her expression

The expression of informant

proofing

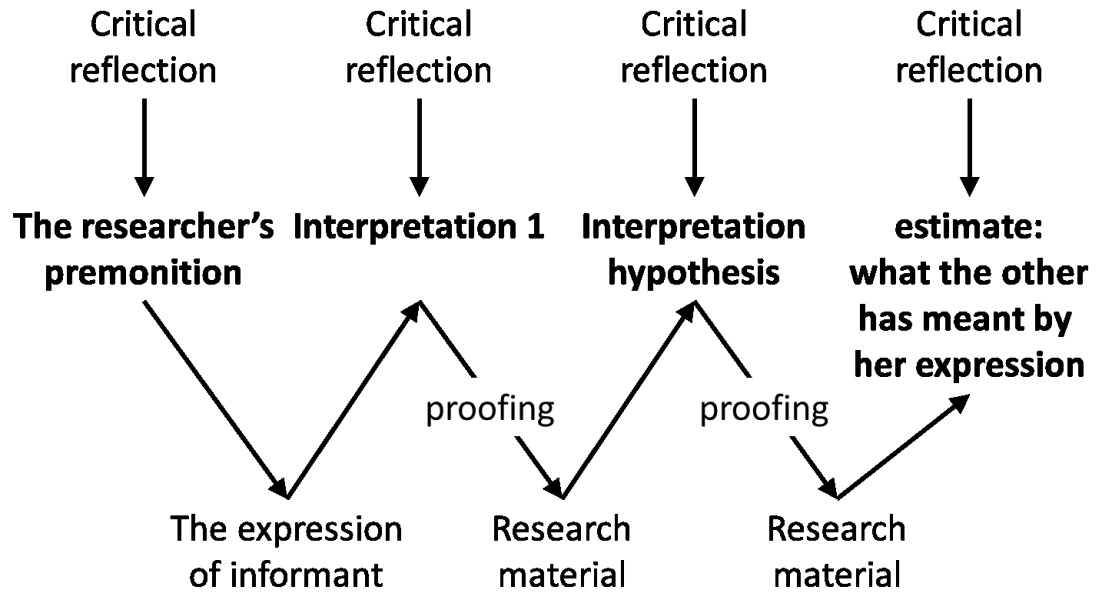Research material

proofing

Research material

Figure 4: Hermeneutic circle as presented in Laine's (2008) analysis model. Translation by author.

As a result, there is a description of the researched phenomenon, that all informants can agree with it. This does not mean that only such aggregated descriptions that match with every informants' accounts should be included. Rather, the synthesis should bring forth recognisable artefacts. These artefacts should then enable for the group to have common understanding of the phenomenon to steer their actions to desired direction. This in turn should influence the modus operandi of the participants.

Table 2: Excerpt from an eidetic reduction performed in this study of the reports of two informants related to the effects of an "atypical" workplace of employment.

	Informant 1	Informant 2
Interview pursuing experiences	*This is again a much smaller outfit than that, here again it's the same type as if for leisure, spending time together. It's by no means self-evident that this is the case when you think about the other jobs you've had. I would not be able to look at that co-worker for a minute if not forced. It brings a different nuance to that job. When you come here, from time to time, it doesn't look or sound like we're at work.*	*Like how I would imagine the relationships in a bigger firm is that you might almost know someone. And then there are this kind of smaller firms, where we have known for a long time and it has evolved to something like a companion. […] that I have started to spend time at the office five years ago. Before that I was just give the list and told to go and have fun while working in the field.*
General language expression, ie description	Smaller work community is more relaxed and enables spending time with co-workers. Our workplace is quite far from typical place of work.	In the current work community, it has been possible to get to know co-workers, which is easier than in the larger work community.

		Spending time in the office has changed attitudes towards work.
Analysis, division into meanings (interpretation 1)	- Difference between small and large work community - Meaning of being together - Something different than "ordinary workplace"	- It has been possible to get to know co-workers in a small work community - Meaning of being together - Attitude towards work is more relaxed
interpretation analysis (comparison of analysis against original data)	- The informality of the work community is not automatic (this hypothesis required special critical reflection from the researcher) - Meaning of the workplace is highlighted if it is not "ordinary"	- The perception of work has been shaped through active membership in the work community - A small work community allows for meaningful experience in addition to the content of the work

3 INTERPERSONALITY

As the goal of this study is to understand the effects of knowing each other on the performance of the company and the well-being of the employees, this theoretical framework aims to clarify these matters. The three chosen research questions are the driving force behind the selection of the themes for this literature review. To that end, this and the following chapter present research of literature concerning the prerequisites, enablers, and inhibitors (this chapter) and outcomes (Chapter 4) of epistemic closeness.

As this thesis seeks to answer these questions without a unified thematic body of research, the source literature ranges through multiple disciplines of academia, presenting this section as an *explorative analysis* to create a *metacontextual framework*. The source material for this literature review was searched from the databases and libraries of Helsinki University, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, ResearchGate, Google Scholar and Google Books. The author also acquired a lot of source books from various internet vendors.

As a method of creating this framework, syntopical reading was employed as described by Mortimer Adler in his book "How to Read a Book". Syntopical reading is used for the type of reading where one reads many sources and can construct an analysis of the subject matter that is not present in any of the source

material by itself (Adler & Doren 1972, 16). As syntopical reading invites the researcher to come to conclusions that are not obvious or prevalent in the source material, those conclusions might not be what the original author intended. In the context of this thesis, the creation of a metacontextual framework requires establishing new and unforeseen connections from the source material. The author regarded this as appropriate, as some of the best results in business and science are outcomes of moving an established idea to another domain.

A sociologist and media scholar Nicholas A. John has written a book "The Age of Sharing" (2016) that deals with a recent trend of "sharing" on the social networks. In an interview about the book with Tal Zalmanovich (John 2017), he ponders upon a person's true self in relation to sharing. He wonders if there is such a thing as "true self" to be shared. Then how one is to know another if there might not be a true self to share? The building of this framework started by defining and trying to answer that question.

The literature concerning interpersonal ties ranges from attempts to define the qualities of bilateral human relationships to network analyses of a considerable portion of humankind. In the framework of this study, the strength and quality of interpersonal ties can be used to measure the depth of epistemic closeness. On the intimate side, for example, Cocking and Kennett (1998) argue that the intrinsic value of friendship is through the virtues of individuals, without the requirement of duties to be fulfilled and rewards to be gained. Ugander et al. (2011) stand on the other end of the spectrum with their network analysis on the social media users all around the world. They also state that the emergence of social networking services has irrevocably changed the way social sciences research human relationships.

More than 50 years ago, Milgram (1967, 66) stated that degrees of separation between two people can sometimes be more about social remoteness than physical distance. In 1969, he continued with Travers by suggesting the effect of key individuals in the forming of connections between groups. All these connections can be portrayed with versions of Moreno's (1953, 96) sociogram,

intended to be a tool for studying and measuring the interpersonal relationships of more than two people. These sociograms can be created by interviewing or observing members of the studied group. In this presentation (Figure 5), arrows points to the persons (a number inside a circle), who would like to be consulted in the situation, where a decision was to be made. A line with a perpendicular line indicates a two-way choice. Persons without a line were not chosen and did not choose anybody.
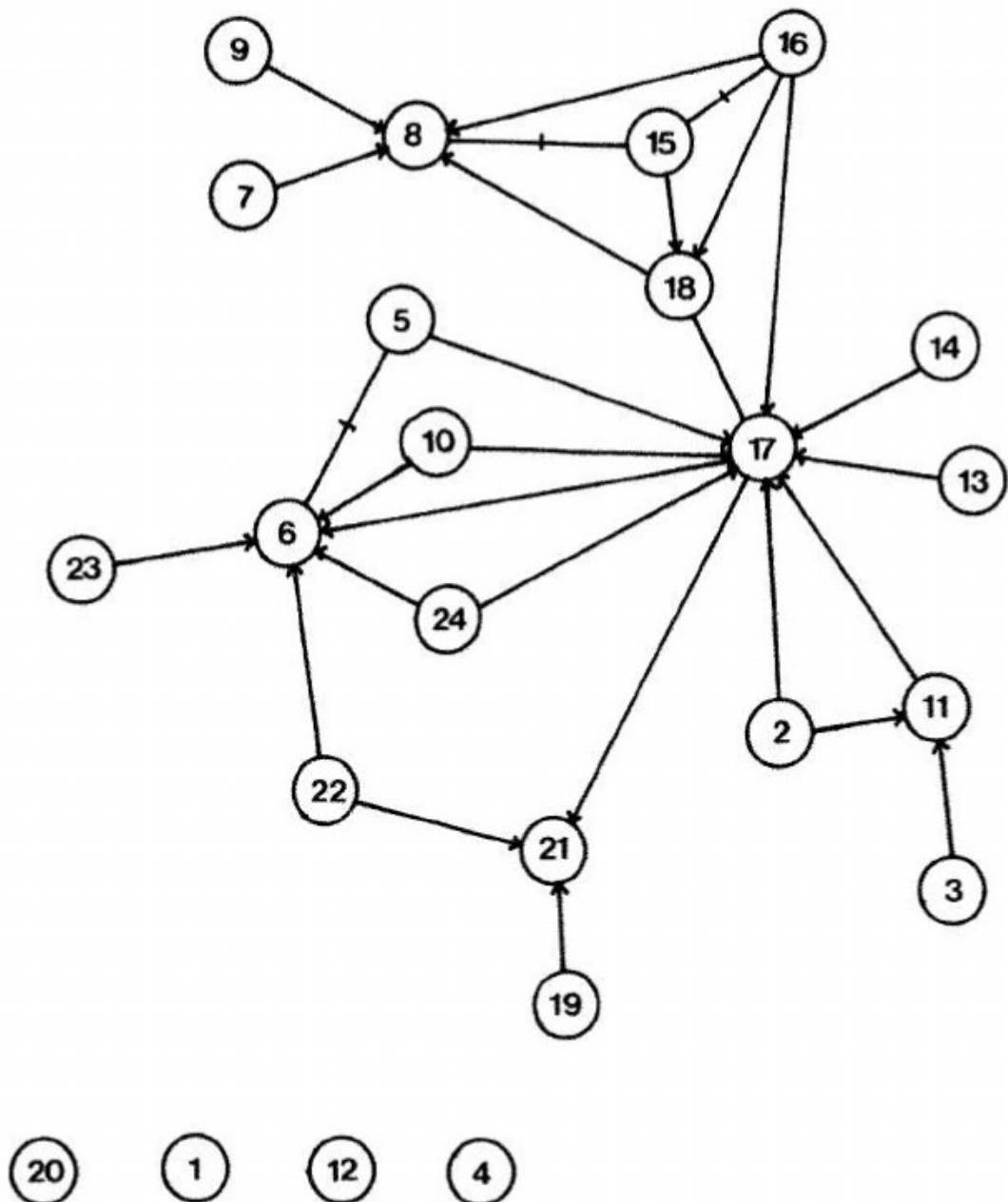

Figure 5. Example of a sociogram from Moreno (1987, 180).

One of the proponents of sociograms is Granovetter (1973, 1361), who divides interpersonal ties to absent, weak, and strong ones. According to him, the strength of a tie is related to a potential impact on the network of people. Absent ties are not impactful, strong ties provide an insignificant impact, and weak ties permit the most impact on the network, as they provide little overlap in the circles of acquaintances between the groups.

The hypothesis on weak ties has wide support, but it has also received a fair amount of critique. Krackhardt (2003, 216) notes the absence of a clear measurement of a tie strength. Granovetter's original definition is: "The strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie". Marsden and Campbell (1984) gave one possible solution by developing a framework for the tie strength measurement. They propose (ibid, 409) that the tie strength can be calculated using predictors (like kinship statuses and measures of social distance), and indicators (like closeness and confiding). In their study (ibid, 498), the best predictor of the tie strength was the emotional intensity of a relationship.

Until the recent years, the working hypothesis has been the strong tie relationships are more likely to be trusted with intimate knowledge. Small (2017, 151) proposes that, after all, weak- tie confidants might be more likely to be trusted with sensitive information. This is due to the following facts: first of all the availability and the pursued cognitive empathy of a weak-tie confidants, and secondly the avoidance of the strong tie confidants due to the possible burden for the relationship, and finally the quick, in the moment decisions. His findings imply a new complexity for the research on interpersonal connections.

In the scope of this study, these ties and networks provide a much-needed structure. The most intriguing finding here is the idea that the strengthening of a tie leads to a diminished network effects. This can be interpreted so that the better employees know each other, the less innovation happens. This has

interesting implications to the aspiration of acquainting employees to each other. From these interpersonal ties we move to examine the possibility of a common perception. There the common endeavour is the creator of ties and source of knowing each other.

> *"Perception and action are inextricably linked processes, and together form the basis of every aspect of our experience of and interaction with the world. Of particular importance are the interactions humans have with each other. These require complex, concurrent processes for perceiving the actions of the self and other."* Campbell & Cunnington (2017, 195).

Compared to the definition by Campbell & Cunnington above, Descartes (2009, 44) realisation "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) effectively makes everybody else outliers to one's own perception. Wittgenstein (1921, 5.62-5.63) continues this thought by stating that the world is merely the experiencer's own and thus *"the life is the world"*. The discussion about the possibility and implications of interpersonal experience is multifaceted and cross-disciplinary. It seems the statements from Descartes and Wittgenstein are contradicted persuasively by more recent studies from the natural sciences and philosophy. In the framework of this study, the common perception *acts as a unifying force* between the living worlds of the group members.

Neuroscience has had a say on the matter of common perception. Monkey's mirror neurons (Di Pellegrino et al. 1992; 177-178; Gallese & Goldman 1998) can literally "mirror" the effect to the the observer as if the said observer did the activity. Decety et al. (1994, 602) were the first to study the possibility of the mirroring system existing in humans. They found that some activation happened when perceiving a (representation of a) hand performing gestures in a three-dimensional virtual reality system. Instead, they did not get a proof of the "mirror system" existing in humans (Rizzolatti et al. 2002). One of the reasons for this might have been the use of an artificial approximation of a human hand, rather than an actual human subject (ibid).

More recently, a meta-analysis by Fox et al. (2016) concluded that there was a significant correlation between the observation and the neural activation implying

the human mirroring system. They also determined there was no difference between the use of an object movement compared to the biological action (human movement), refuting the assumption that an artificial object would not provoke a reaction. Another meta-analysis by Molenberghs et al. (2012) suggested a network of human brain regions responsible for mirroring in a biological level. These findings promote the exciting idea of the human mirroring capability being built in the system, rather than it being a cultural and social phenomenon. We appear interconnected by default. All in all, the mirror neurons and mirroring system seems a way of *transference* without a cognitive effort.

When discussing mirroring, we concentrate on the biological, cultural, and social interactions happening in different systems. These systems are hierarchical at points and conjunctive in others. In some cases, there appears no visible relation at all. These relations and sequences of processes have been defined and redefined in philosophy since the antiquity, for example in Aristotle's four causes (Aristotle Posterior Analytics; Aristotle Physics; Falcon 2019; Adamson 2011).

To connect the dots between mirroring, interpersonal ties, and common perception there is a need to define how these systems are built from the ground up in our interaction. There emergence is a compelling concept, whereby combining different elements the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. Durkheim (2002) emphasises the self-evidence of emergence in a physical world, as the atoms that are the constituent parts of everything are themselves inanimate. Through emergence, the atoms form the cells that in turn constitute a brain able to form thoughts all impossible to the parts of that brain. These supervenient layers in the physical world can be understood intuitively, but when it comes the possibility of emergence between individual human beings, the discussion has not reached a satisfying end. Debate is between the chance of such non-reductionism that states it is impossible to find parts of the whole from the individuals' judgements, and the reductionist view that states all group results can be found from individual premises of that group.

Broad (1925) outlined an idea of emergence as a form of group-cognition comparable to individual cognition of a person. Walmsley (2015) described it displaying properties that cannot be found from its parts, thus pronouncing it a new emergent entity. Flanagan (2018) on the other rejects the possibility of non-reductionism by stating the impossibility of group agency as both wholly rational and reducible to individual attitudes. This denial of non-reductionism bases itself on the difference between aggregation of judgement between individuals as an explicable process compared to individuals solely private access to her own attitudes. Non-reductionism and group agency are alluring concepts in their innate intuitiveness. It is not rare to hear the saying: "See the forest for the trees". It appears to connect the emergence with mundane experience.

Whether or not emergence is happening in human interaction, the amount and quality of connections between group members affect the result of the interaction. Therefore, I argue that this is also affected by the cohesion of the group. Cohesion is in turn affected by dynamics and the structures formed in the group (Evans and Jarvis 1980). In this framework, cohesion is the force affecting the motivation of the group members to *learn from each other*. Festinger et al. (1950) comprised the group cohesion of two factors: the attractiveness of the group and the group's ability to help its members to reach their goals, uniting them as a "total field of forces". This has been challenged, for example, by Gross & Martin (1952) as too wide a definition and defined cohesion as "the resistance of a group to disruptive forces". In doing so, they narrowed the viewpoint to the group's ability to react to outside effects. This and other "force field" definitions are challenged by Murdack (1989), who claims they cannot be operationalised to be validated.

Piper et al. (1983) turned studied group cohesion with the questionnaire presented to nine groups of participants after five meetings held under the study. Their finding was that commitment to a group is a meaningful predictor of cohesion through the participants' answers. Mullen and Copper (1994) operationalised the assumptions on cohesiveness with performance. One of their findings was that cohesiveness was more prominent when measured by group

members' perceptions compared to the experimental inductions of cohesiveness. They theorise cohesion is easier to measure through the performance than vice versa. Thus, the endeavours to enhance performance by creating more coherent groups might not be of much use.

Cota et al. (1995a, 1995b) argue the structure of the cohesion is essential in defining its implications. Thus far all the presented models and definitions have been unidimensional. They take into consideration only one axle: whether the group has cohesion or does not. Landecker (1951) divides cohesiveness into four distinct types of integrations: cultural, normative, communicative, and functional. Cultural integration describes group consistency to the standards of the group; normative integration describes the adhesiveness to those standards; communicative integration describes the group's ability to exchange meaning (cf. chapter 2.2, on information literacy); functional integration describing the interconnectedness of the group through exchange of services. Hagstrom & Selvin (1965) proposed *social satisfaction* and *sociometric cohesion* as an aid of interpreting different aspects of group cohesion. Social satisfaction involves the satisfaction with the group and general satisfaction to life (ibid, 35). Sociometric cohesion describes the number of best friends in the group, as well as length of membership and seeking of advice from the group (ibid, 35-36). They came to these two dimensions by employing explorative factor analysis of 20 college living groups with 19 possible indicators of cohesiveness. Social satisfaction and social cohesion both explained cohesiveness but did not correlate strongly in the analysis. In this study, we observe the same phenomenon of more than one explanatory dimension of cohesion. Cota et al. (1995b) divides the cohesive factors into primary and secondary dimensions; primary dimensions can describe the group cohesion on most, if not all, groups, whereas the secondary dimensions can be found only from certain types of groups.

As displayed here, the interpersonal sphere must be studied from multiple angles and viewpoints if our goal is to create a framework for understanding the effects of these connections. In Chapter 6 These themes and viewpoints are exposed to the work life context of the commissioner.

4 GROUP DYNAMICS

In addition to interpersonal relations, group dynamics are in a significant role when assessing the outcomes of group endeavours. Based on that, this chapter studies the group dynamics from two different viewpoints. We discuss the effects of upper echelons theory (UET) in the company as most of the employees have significant decision power and responsibility for the overall company business, rather than just their own work. The said decision power is enhanced by the employee stock provided for most. We also talk about collective intelligence, and its precursors, and effects. Both are heavily influenced by the diversity of the workforce and thus we set the arena by discussing shortly about diversity.

The body of research on the effects of diversity in a workplace is vast in the social sciences, as explicated by Chugh and Brief (2008). This has not always been so, as Golembiewski (1995, 1) shows by stating that most researchers before 1995 preferred to avoid the whole issue altogether. After 1995, the effects of diversity have been studied at an accelerating pace and the field has expanded into more fine-grained topics like inclusion, exclusion, identities, different genres, sexual orientations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, disabilities, and religions (Bendl et al. 2015). For this presentation, simplification of diversity to being just one operational variable serves the purpose of acknowledging the effect it has on the group dynamics and performance. For example, in UET, the increasing amount of diversity generates better performance. Nevertheless, there are arguments against the benefits of more diversity. Both standpoints are discussed in this chapter.

Hambrick & Mason (1984) predicted in UET that the diversity of the top management team is a partial predictor of organisational performance. Hambrick (2007) demonstrated this effect to be stronger than predicted. Recent meta-analysis on entrepreneurial team composition effects transferred from the UET framework by Jin et al. (2017) presents three results in support of more diversity:

1. Aggregated entrepreneurial team positively affected new venture performance, of which the skills and knowledge of everyone added to the common pool.
2. Heterogeneity was a positive predictor of new venture performance; thus, a more diverse group usually means better performance.
3. New ventures benefit from larger team sizes, that enable more diversity.

Counter perspective for the benefits of diversity comes in a form of prejudice, hostility, misperceptions, misunderstandings, and parochialism. Allport et al. (1979, 265) describe the problem aptly in this parable:

> *See that man over there?*
> *Yes.*
> *Well, I hate him.*
> *But you don't know him.*
> *That's why I hate him.*

This problem has been visible in the commissioning organisation as well. Many of the recruits that were somewhat different from most of the workforce were treated in a manner not suitable for an inclusive organisation (Miinalainen, 2018). Jenkins (2014, 104) argues that identification of others is always about seeing similarities too, even if the others are perceived to be different from the self. He continues (ibid, 105-106) by differentiating between the explicit collectivity and the ignorant collectivity, where people can belong to the same group without realising it. By assimilating the third idea (ibid, 108) of the people belonging only to the groups they feel to be part of gives us hope of embracing new divergent people to our workforce.

Intuition plays an interesting role in accepting new people to the group. Even though Freud (2008) exclaimed intuition to be illusion and unable to tell anything outside of person's inner life, more recent studies (Lieberman 2000) indicate that fully conscious analytic decisions get better, if intuition is considered a valid source of information. This is due to the inclusion of relevant unconscious discriminatory information and boosted confidence of the decision makers (Lufityanto et al. 2016, 11). In this case, intuition acts as a barrier for the new group members to be accepted. For the group to perform well, the acceptance of diversity is just the prerequisite. Common perception of previous chapter and

inclusiveness of the group are also just precursors for the well performing group. Collective intelligence and collective action are the needed ingredients for the group to accomplish any substantial tasks well.

Collective intelligence is strongly associated with a group's ability to perform. Associate Professor of Organisational Behavior and Theory from Carnegie Mellon University, Anita Williams Woolley has researched collective intelligence for over 20 years. Her most cited paper states that the collective intelligence of the whole group is a much stronger predictor of success than individual abilities (Woolley et al. 2010). Collective intelligence requires effective coordination, capacity for collaboration, and a task well suited for group performance (Woolley et al. 2015, 143-144). With a wrong task, design, or goal, collective intelligence becomes a burden instead of a performance enhancer (Locke et al. 2014). In his seminal book, *Group process and productivity*, Steiner (1972) adds to this disadvantage a *process loss,* that is the result of poorly defined and implemented procedures. This is a familiar disadvantage to the employees, as most of the processes had to be redefined several times during the different phases of the company.

Several models describe optimal task designs, but most widely adopted is Steiner's taxonomy of tasks (ibid). It describes five interdependent types of tasks that can be combined in different ways by the group members. These interdependent types are, as elucidated in Forsyth (2018, 321):

1. *Additive,* in which each group member's individual input can be added to the whole, to maximise output of the group, like a tug of war.
2. *Compensatory,* in which each group member will have a say to average the group's solution, like an estimate of the workload of a coding task.
3. *Disjunctive,* in which one person's action or answer is picked as the group's choice, like selecting the fastest runner of the group.
4. *Conjunctive,* in which the whole group performs at the level of the lowest performing member, like running in a group.
5. *Discretionary,* in which the group can decide on the combination of the individual inputs, like voting for the best answer.

Discretionary category has been deemed as unimportant by some researchers; possibly because it is a combination of the other types (Woolley et al. 2015, 145). In addition to these types, Steiner (1972) divided tasks to *unitary* and *divisible.* Unitary tasks are such that cannot be divided to be worked on separately. Either the group works on the task simultaneously, or some watch as some or one watches while the others work. Divisible tasks, on the other hand, can be meaningfully divided into subtasks and performed separately to be combined to the result later.

Group performance varies also with the type of processes the group members must engage in to complete the task. Larson (2010, 29) claims that even relatively small changes in the task at hand can alter the performance dramatically. Shaw (1963) divided the task dimensions affecting the result into six categories: *task difficulty, solution multiplicity, cooperation requirements, intellectual-manipulative requirements, population familiarity,* and i*ntrinsic interest.* These categories were derived from the empirical experience of Shaw, and they seem universally valid. When comparing these dimensions to the feedback from the workshop tasks in this study, the principal promoters were intellectual-manipulative and solution multiplicity requirements, which promoted the participation of the group members, whereas intrinsic interest and population familiarity were inhibiting factors. Shaw (ibid) regarded the last two dimensions as weak predictors of the group performance in general, but his research setup tested only quick and easily assessed tasks; whereas strategy creation is a multidimensional and deeply intertwined problem, and thus might be more affected by the group's intrinsic interests, and the familiarity with the problem.

For another take on task division, McGrath (1984) presented a task circumplex containing four categories of different team interaction processes. These team interaction processes were derived from interpersonal circumplex, which describes interpersonal character traits in the dimensions of agency (assertiveness, power, dominance, etc.) and communion (compassion, affiliation, love, etc.) (Ghaed & Gallo 2006; Myllyniemi 1982; Wiggins 1996). McGrath's model includes these interaction processes:

1. Generate tasks
2. Choose tasks or decision-making tasks
3. Negotiate tasks
4. Execute tasks

When comprising a view on all these different divisions of tasks and duties, there seems to be a common understanding between the theories about how tasks can and should be divided. Division between active and passive participation makes group members either agents of or passive observers. Types of tasks have multiple proposed divisions, but the most prominent ones are combined action and complementary action. The difference between the two is that combined action can be performed by one individual but is sped up by addition of other individuals, where complementary action might require multiple persons input, but in any case the quality and/or speed of work is enhanced more than in combined action tasks.

For the combined action, the size of the group plays a significant role, as the efficiency and output of the work is greatly enhanced by adding new individuals to the group up until a limit. The size of the group is also a factor in collective intelligence. Littlepage and Silbiger (1992) found out that the larger group size benefited the performance up to 10 people, which was the maximum group size in the study. They also suggested that the recognition of an individual's expertise is an important factor in performance. Upper echelons theory (UET) is concerned of recognition of individual's expertise from the power and effectiveness standpoint. Even thought UET is mostly concerned about the influence of top management and the CEO, the implications are visible also in the empowered company where responsibility and power go hand in hand. To understand these implications, we need to see the effects that changes in the variables can bring.
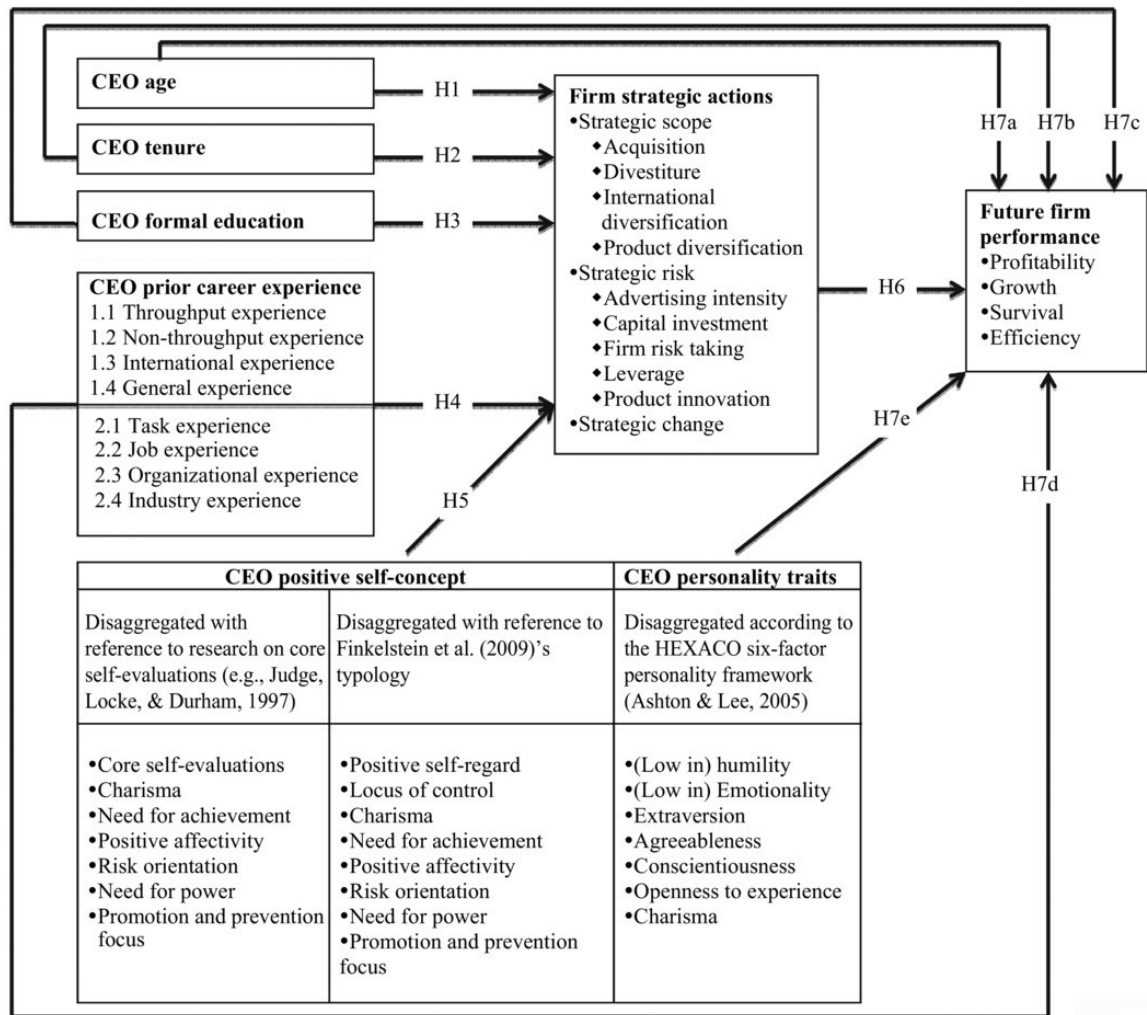
Figure 6. Effect of the CEO to the performance of the company (Wang et al. 2015).

Significant meta-analytical investigation into the CEO's role in the business performance was conducted by Wang et al. (2015). In the study, they found 308 studies mostly confirming the significance of the CEO for the performance. The characteristics that were found to have a strong connection to the businesses performance included age, tenure, formal education, and prior career experience as presented in Figure 6. Of those, the research group found a longer tenure to be of burden to the strategic leadership of the company in contrast to the positive impact it had on the performance. As the author is also the cofounder and the CEO and has been in leading positions in the firm for seven years, there is an evident risk of strategic stagnation. The setup of this research mitigates the effects of the possibly stagnant strategic leadership in the commissioning company. One final contributing factor, that we are going to incorporate into this framework is the effect of motivation.

To frame motivation conversation, Ganta (2014, 221) tells us that better motivation leads to better productivity. This goes for both individuals and groups (ibid, 222). Scheffer and Heckhausen (2008) point out, that personal traits can explain the level of motivation as well as its direction. Some of us might be stimulated by work setting and thus have a trait of liking work because the professional acts bring enjoyment to that person (ibid, 43). Beckmann and Heckhausen (2008) discuss the possibility of situational determinants or outside stimuli as an explanation for motivation. Drive is the motivation to get things done and it can be directed by drive stimuli, i.e. reward and punishment (ibid, 74). In a group setting things get more complex as we can see next.

Kerr and Bruun (1983) used the term free-rider effects for situations where participants exert less effort when they feel like their effort for the whole task is not sorely needed. They found out that as the group size increases the individual motivation towards the task was also diminished. There was also difference between the motivation of high-ability and low-ability members behaviour. Low-ability individuals worked harder when performing conjunctive tasks, whereas high-ability individuals worked harder on disjunctive tasks (ibid, 91). These findings promote the idea of recruiting high-ability individuals for demanding group tasks in smaller group settings would yield best results performance wise. Free-riding effects would diminish in such a setting.

On the other hand, there is evidence to contrary, where high and low performers would gain from each other. Forsyth (2018, 327) describes the *Köhler effect*, in which the performance of the inferior group members gets a boost from higher performers. Most compelling findings, so far, for Köhler effect revolve around conjunctive physical task with a group of two individuals (Kerr et al. 2005). Some correlation can be demonstrated for knowledge work as well when talking about increased motivation for the task performance (Hertel et al. 2000).

I argue that Köhler effect has been evident in the expert services team of the commissioner. Every employee is exposed to an analytical presentation of the

performance of the company. Excerpt from the present dashboard can be seen in Figure 7. From that dashboard each employee can deduct their own level of performance compared to the average. This knowledge has led poorer performers to actively develop their abilities to perform at the level or above the average. Here, the performance boost can be measured, with high accuracy, by the revenue and number of performed actions. In this case there is also a monetary compensation after a certain threshold number of commissions have performed in each month, so the motivational effects of group setting cannot be uncoupled from the extrinsic motivation of money.
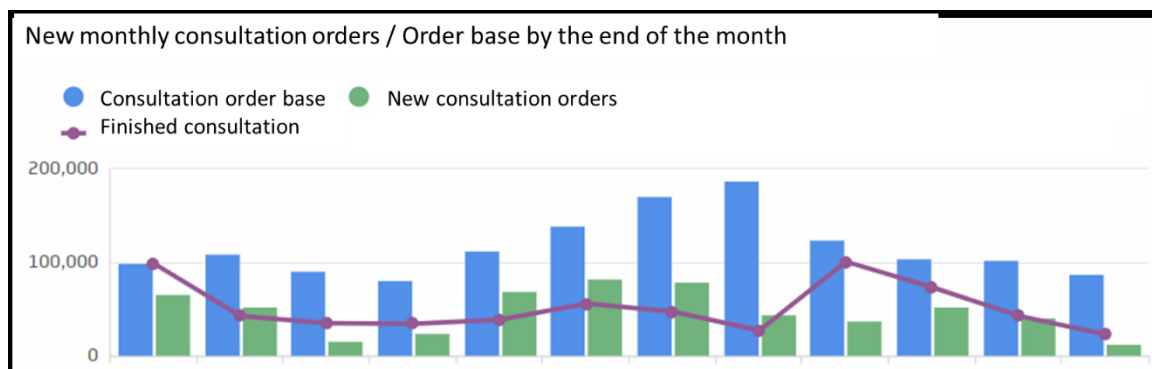

Figure 7. Excerpt of the company analytics describing average performance of expert service employees. (Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma Oy, 2020)

To tie this and the previous chapters together Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed in their highly sited work "The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation" that belongingness, or the need to form and maintain human bonds is strong internal motivation for most human beings. They claim that need for interpersonal connections carry so much weigh in our survival and reproductive instincts that we are forced to seek connection to others. They also hypothesise that this need is deeply linked to our ability for intelligent thought. For the closest companions, the memories are categorised as being part of that person and of that relationship, and for the weaker contacts the memories are organised based on the attribute categories like duties and preferences (ibid, 503). This promotes the idea that the level of epistemic closeness also modifies the whole relationship, not just in amount, but in kind as well.

In summary, this metacontextual framework knitted together recognised prerequisites and outcomes of getting to know each other better in a work-life context deemed most important by the author. The essence of this framework derives from the multidisciplinary context, where different disciplines are connected by the paths of least resistance. The exploratory nature of this literature review meant, that a lot of interesting opportunities had to be left out, and many themes had to be abbreviated. In the next chapter we move on to explore the commissioner's structure and operations and then match this framework to that context in Chapter 6.

5   COMMISSIONER OF THE THESIS

The commissioner of this thesis is Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma Oy, a small, seven employee company located in Helsinki, Finland. The company was established in 2005. The current owners bought the company in 2012 and stared a new business. The main product is a consultation driven Software as a Service (SaaS) platform enabling a design of emergency rescue plans for buildings and companies.

5.1   Basis for development

Pelsu Pelastussuunnitelma Oy was established by a group of four entrepreneurs including three students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences (UAS). The original registered name was HHF Turvallisuus Oy (Kauppalehti 2020). They studied safety and security with the aim of becoming Bachelors of Business Administration (BBA). The fourth person was a father of one of them with a previous background in business. The author was not among these people. Their aim was to build a website capable of generating compulsory emergency plans based on then current, now repealed, Finnish Rescue Act (9 §, 468/2003) for their customers for free. It was mandatory to design an emergency plan, for example, if one owned a dwelling with more than four apartments. The finance of the said business would then come from advertisements. No fees were to be collected from the designers of the said emergency plans. (Halkosaari, 2012.)

The company registered the web-domain name www.pelastussuunnitelma.fi in December 2004, even before the final registration of the business-ID in January 2005 (Viestintävirasto, 2016, YTJ, 2018). Soon it became clear to the owners that the design of complete web services for the emergency plan creation would be impossible from the resource perspective. They then settled to design a resource page, not unlike wikis, for emergency planning. The company was set to hiatus for an undefined period. (Halkosaari, 2012.)

The author, (the entrepreneur at the company since 2012) met his soon to be co-entrepreneur, Okko Kouvalainen, while studying in Safety and Security degree programme in Laurea UAS. The author was an entrepreneur with his former company Raavus Oy (YTJ 2020). The company was never a success, but it sparked a fire for entrepreneurship.

In September 2011, Okko came to visit the author and started to talk about how he lost a deal for his employer on the emergency plans design to a company which had a software service for generating and updating the plans. The customer's decision was based on the perceived value of that software service compared to established PDF-documentation, usually given to a customer as a rescue plan. Okko came to the author for consultation on the matter as the author was somewhat familiar with the technologies involved in creating a self-service web application. Business possibilities were tangible, as there was a recent reformulation of the Rescue Act (Pelastuslaki 379/2011) demanding new or improved emergency plans for at least 147 000 premises (Official Statistics of Finland 2020). The change in the legislation created a huge market demand.

The entrepreneurs started to build a company around the same basic idea as the HHF Turvallisuus Oy had done six years earlier. The difference in the business logic was that the company was going to charge customers for the usage of the software. After a brief investigation, Liiqu Oy was chosen to build the application. The entrepreneurs found out about the HHF Turvallisuus Oy and the ownership of the domain name www.pelastussuunnitelma.fi. The owners of the HHF Turvallisuus Oy were contacted with the intent on buying the domain name for

the business as the domain would be easy to place high on search engines for its direct correlation with the term in the Rescue Act. After an intense period of discussion, there was an agreement on buying the whole company. The former owners were looking for a way to liquidate their assets. This transaction took place in January 2012. The ownership of the company was then divided between the author, Okko, and Liiqu Oy. The city of Mikkeli was chosen as the company's registered office as the author was living there, and the business support was considerably better there than in the city of Helsinki where Okko resided. We had offices in both cities until a partial exit in 2015.

The development of the product started at the time of transaction. Minimum Viable Product (MVP) was released in April 2012. MVP includes only the essential functionality of a product enabling optimal learning for the product team to develop the MVP into a product with a market fit, optimising the parts along the way (Ries 2009). The first version was intended as an online self-use platform for the residential building customers. The entrepreneurs aimed to keep their careers and simply add income by the self-service software. The goal for the first year was to generate 70000 euros in revenue. It did not gain much interest in the customers as a self-use product. Instead, the prospect customers reached out to the company demanding consultation on the design of the rescue plans. As the entrepreneurs were not mentally ready to start full-time, an outside consultant, Eero Lesonen, was used for the design of the rescue plans. In the end of May, Okko started as a full-time entrepreneur with the goal of selling enough services to employ a safety expert as a consultant for the customers. In June 2012 Arttu Vesterinen started as a sales representative for the company. In two months, the order base was enough for the employment of the first safety expert, Joachim Miinalainen, who started in August 2012.

The expansion of the order base led the company to hire its second safety expert, Juha Vilén in August 2012. A job description of the safety experts was the design of rescue plan documents for the customers on their premises around Finland. The author started as a full-time entrepreneur in October 2012. The back office was established when Inka Vanhanen was employed as the head of back

office in October 2012. In June 2013, the organisation had thirteen employees including the entrepreneurs. The original revenue goal was exceeded over tenfold in the first fiscal year.

The MVP had developed to be a full-fledged platform for the rescue plan creation and in March 2013, the first rescue plan for commercial premises was added as Tuma-building in Mikkeli was designed. The company kept developing the software and other aspects of the company continuously resulting in honourable mention in Ohto Awards in 2013 (Finnsecurity 2020). Further development led to two awards in 2014. The first award in Growth Open (Kasvuopen) when the company won South Savo Growth Track (Kasvupolku) (Partio 2014). The second award was received as a London establishment package from "Take That Tech to UK" competition held by UK Trade & Investment Finland during the Slush start-up event (UKTI 2014). The prize, "London Establishment Package", included free office space, free marketing, and sales support in the UK market (ibid).

The company went through a set of changes in the leadership style before the research period began. A lean start-up framework was employed from the start as the company was designed to be a side project for the entrepreneurs. Blank (2013) describes these principles as *Business Model Canvasing*, in which the elements of value creation for customers and the company in question are established to be tested; *Customer Development*, in which the company engages the customers to build the product and the company with a direct link to the value they receive from that relationship; *Agile Development*, aimed at developing the product and the company with the shortest possible cycle compared to the more traditional cycle of innovation, development and commercialisation. No significant commitments were made before the company had an acceptable understanding of the value of the proposed actions.
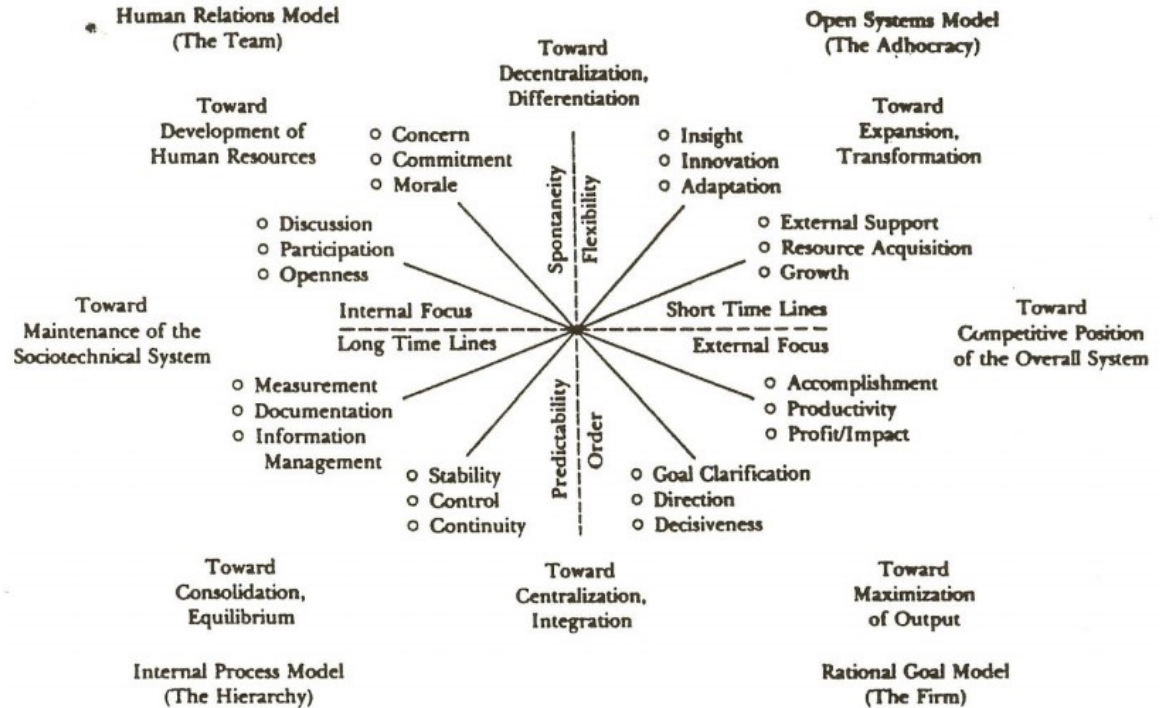
Figure 8. Competing Values Culture Framework (Denison & Spreitzer 1991).

Denison and Spreitzer (1991, 3) give an overview of the *competing values framework* in Figure 8 fitting the organisational development the principal company faced. Two dimensions of this framework include change (flexibility and spontaneity) – stability (control and order) as the first axis, and the second axis is of demands created by internal organisation – external environment. Four quadrants of this framework include the following:

1. *Group culture* (upper left quadrant), where tightly knit nit group can perform in an environment supporting belonging, confidence, and contribution. This is the quadrant, where the principal company started at, when the employees and the entrepreneurs knew each other even before the establishment of the company. This shared understanding was then the appropriate culture and the leadership was an intangible part of working together as a team. This lasted until the end of 2012 when the first previously unknown employees were recruited.
2. *Developmental Culture* (upper right quadrant), where the focus changes from internal group culture to the external environment and to the needs it brings. Growth, creativity, and adaptability to the operating environment are the main drivers. This was fitting for the principal company, from the first unknown hires until the size and the complexity of the company grew to thirteen employees and five functional domains in the summer 2013.
3. *Hierarchical Culture* (lower left quadrant) emphasises internal efficiency, uniformity, harmonisation, and assessment. The principal company employed classical hierarchy as the organisation principle to establish-well

defined roles and connections between teams. This lasted until the end of 2013.

4. *Rational Culture* (lower right quadrant) is about goal setting and fulfilment, productivity, and performance. This type of culture emphasises well-defined objectives, with leadership supporting structure and encouraging productivity. The principal company ventured into rational culture to escape problematic hierarchical structure, that had determined an establishment of a team of one employee (resale). This, so far, the most complex and demanding change in leadership culture, was supported by the Finnish government agency for innovation funding (Tekes).

The effort needed to change the leadership style from an authoritarian hierarchical model to a self-guiding model was extensive. The project lasted the year 2014. During the project all the employees were mentored and coached on the leadership of their own work. This included workshops on the sharing of responsibility and authority. As Jabe & Kuusela (2013) explicate, methods of employing authority differ from person to person and between organisations through the cultural factors. The empowerment of the employees demanded a lot more than the author originally estimated. Nudging the authority where the responsibility resided, to the hands of the employees, was atypical for the company. None of the employees had experienced anything similar during their previous employments. The end goal of the project was the disintegration of the continuum of the supervisor-subordinate, the ability to divide the responsibility and create leadership as a support function for the whole organisation, rather than the authoritative top-to-bottom relationship between the entrepreneurs and the employees.

Leadership has always been part of the human culture and it has usually been embodied in one *man* (Grint 2011, 3). Outcomes of different leadership styles have been discussed as long (ibid). For Sun Tzu (1990), Machiavelli (2001), Marx (1999a; 1999b; 1999c), Taylor (1919), and many others the leadership is a set of rules to be followed. Contemporary literature recognises the possibility of multiple leadership styles and sets of actions to be beneficial.

At the end of 2014 there were 18 employees in the company and an average of seven outsourced software developers from Fast Monkeys Oy. Entrepreneurs

were looking for possibilities to cut on the outsourced services budget as it heavily undermined the profitability of the company. After some initial planning, Fast Monkeys proposed a partial exit for the entrepreneurs and committed to transfer all the development resources to the commissioning company. This transaction was completed in December 2014. Afterwards the former entrepreneurs continued as directors alongside the new directors from Fast Monkeys. In the spring 2015, the author was named the Chief Business Development Officer with responsibility over the Pelsu product and safety specialist team.

During the yearly development discussions, the perceived management and leadership style of the company was discussed with all the employees. After the change in the controlling ownership of the company, safety experts felt left out of the everyday communication of the firm with diminished opportunities to influence the direction their work and the Pelsu product were going (Miinalainen 2018). Their feelings can be verified by several examples of the company wide decision making, including the employee option and share plans, which initially were downgrading for the safety specialist team. This change in the management and leadership style required the author to work as an interpreter and messenger between the safety specialist and the company.

To the author, it soon became clear that the duty of messenger and interpreter resulted in smoother operations and less friction between different teams in the company. During the years leading to this study, the culture of the company became more divided as the Pelsu-team was building separate culture from the rest of the teams. This was also much due to separate offices for these two parts. After the demerger of the company in the summer of 2018, this burden of separate cultures became a positive resource for the Pelsu-team, as it had had time to develop the processes and ways of working as a distinct unit for few years leading to the demerger.

As a result of the demerger and new organisational structure, the strategy of the company was not up to date. From that premise, this study incorporated the

strategic development as a background and an enabler for us to handle the research problem. Next chapter will match the commissioner to the theoretical framework by describing the use and end results of the chosen research methodologies

6 THE PREMISE AND ANALYSES

This section describes the way the study was conducted and presents the findings of the study. The first part of this chapter follows the study of the author's own mind reached through the phenomenological reduction. In that part, the author seeks to describe and expand the horizon of what can be known of another human being and what are the consequences thereto. The reader is advised to keep in mind the nature of this chapter as a study of essences reduced from all naturalistic presuppositions and judgements concerning the phenomenon under scrutiny. This acts as prologue for the development of working life conducted in the second part and as a guidance for the third part, in which eidetic reduction is utilised.

The second part concentrates on the participatory action research (PAR) conducted with the employees, who acted as co-researchers'. The background and theme for the PAR-phase was the co-development of the strategy of the commissioner. The strategy was chosen as the theme as the basic blocks, like values, culture, mission, and vision wanted to be derived from the employees' aspirations and sentiments. Data sources for this part include notes, transcriptions, and questionnaires from the workshops, in which employee relations were developed, the interviews conducted, and the discussions held with the employees during the years 2018 and 2019. This part includes a description of the process followed during the strategy development with detailed description of the workshops and discussions.

The third part includes the eidetic reduction performed on the material gathered during the PAR phase. Eidetic reduction was used for this part, as it is suitable for finding generally valid truths from the lifeworlds of multiple persons. The main findings and recommendations are also found from that part.

6.1   Phenomenological reduction

This phenomenological reduction was performed on **the author's own lifeworld** after gathering most of the research data but before analysing it. Only minor technicalities were amended after the other analyses. This phasing was chosen for it permitted the epoché of the authors own biases and assumptions before reviewing and analysing other data. The following presentation considers the possible ways to gain knowledge on another person and the effects of different situations, events and human processes that influence it.

By revealing and studying the construct of another person (or the Other) in my perception, I see a type of mirroring of that person's wholeness attached to my own self-construct. What I can feel, see, hear, and judge the Other can feel, see, hear, and judge as well. By this mirroring I can tentatively feel connection to the Other. It seems I do not need to know anything (else) than the humanity of the Other. There is no need for additional knowledge on my part of the Other when acknowledging the inherent tentative connection to her, or anybody else. Therefore, I can say: I know humanity, and I am in harmony with that humanity.

When I vary the preliminary construct of perception to see someone, I know, now the possibility of disagreement rises. I have more than inherent knowledge of her humanity, and thus I see the mirroring as a crude representation of the actual essence of the humanity in the Other. Other than the highest categories (among others: physicality, mentality, and power of thought) of the Other's humanity differ from my own. I still have connection to the nuances of other's life by the power of empathy, but this is not concrete enough to say: I know her.

Before attempting to find the ability to gain additional knowledge, I must pursue the possibility of insight into the being of the Other from my own horizon; I seek the understanding of the possibility of connection to these nuanced aspects of the Other's psyche. *This perceived similarity of experiences* seems to help me understand the other better. Now, the difference between *understanding* and *knowing* proposes a difficulty.

Understanding seems to rise out of empathetic connection, where knowing seems to promote search for empathetic connection. Thus, understanding is a preliminary requirement to knowing. Simultaneously, knowing appears to deepen the understanding of the Other. This effect presents itself as a spiral, where both are needed to promote either. This effect appears impeded by my unwillingness to understand the Other. So, to work, the spiral needs my willing and active participation. Is the same true for the Other as well?

When I am trying to reach the understanding of the Other, the content of my perception relies on the delivery of content from her. I cannot understand something not given to me. Thus, the willing participation of the Other is needed for the spiral to work. Another impeding factor is the truthiness of the delivery and content. If the Other is untruthful in the content or medium of the message, the spiral is hampered. Willing participation of both parties is consequently required.

Then, by seeking to understand and consequently know the Other, my emotions partake in the act. These should be split into two categories: emotions I feel despite the Other in my perception, and emotions rise in me when having her in my perception. Modification of both categories of emotions are inevitable. When my attention is directed to the Other, my basic emotions can be diminished, or reinforced. In some cases, I can feel an emotion fleeing from my perception altogether. The category of rising emotions is modified by my basic emotions, but the identification of these modifications is obscured by some effect.

When emotions rise in me, I cannot verify the purity of those rising emotions. This seems to come from the descending nature of most emotions and the initial location of the representation of those emotions in the *vague or ambiguous part in my horizon of perception*. It is even more challenging to perceive the emotions of the Other in the moment of confluence. By observing and sensing the modification of the emotions of the Other, I can construct an initial and crude understanding of the emotional landscape of her. It becomes only marginally easier when the Other vocally utters significations of her emotions: I cannot be

sure I understand and feel the experience the Other is having. Still, the sharing and understanding of emotions appears important for knowing her.

My *emotions* modify the spiral formed by *understanding* and *knowing*. From the viewpoint of experience, this spiral now has three elements affecting the result. It is evident that these elements have different cycles. Understanding can happen almost instantaneously or take years. Feelings rise and are modified with the intention I set on the presence. This will take at least seconds and can keep on modifying for hours or days. In some instances, *remembrance* can bring emotions to the focus of my perception even after years or lifetime of lived experience. Conversely, knowing in its deeper than "knowing humanity" - meaning, will take hours, days, and ultimately years, without ever reaching the status of completeness. Therefore, by *remembrance*, I can draw three different ranges of velocities of the elements of the spiral.

Faltering human capacity to remember leads to another modifier. As my ability to remember is deteriorating, the ability to bring forth the understanding, knowing, and emotions is diminished. When I apply this to the Other, I might be sure of having known an aspect of her being (or the effect her being had on my experience), but now be unable to bring forth the recollection. I can ameliorate this deterioration of memory by using the strategies at my disposal for gaining new knowledge and understanding about the being of the Other. This strategy can hinder the evolution of the spiral, as I or the Other can see these strategies as faltering amendment to my original inability to remember her.

There is a significant possibility that one of us is unwilling to get to know the other; or one of us is hiding their being from perception. Some level of recognition still happens as the obvious humanity cannot be hidden from me. Or if it is hidden, then there are no prerequisites for the spiral of knowing. *This* willingness appears to be the fourth modifier of the spiral. If I am inclined to get to know the Other, and the other is willing to share her being, the result is growing understanding.

I do not know yet, what are the aspects or facets of the Other's being I should know to know her. This presents a problem to the experiencing self. As a social human, I need recognition, connection, and understanding from the Other. These aspects are tied to the context of my experience and the type of the relationship I attempt to have with the Other. In my experience, the objectives at work are different from the objectives at home. If there is disparity with the goals of the parties, the spiral is hindered. There is also a possibility of breaking the spiral with dissenting aspirations of the parties. We do not give all of ourselves to anybody, not even to ourselves. It is impossible as even the most acute reflection of our own being brings forth two obstacles. The resulting reflection is a new entity that would need a reflection of its own to be perceived. Some aspects of my psyche are so obscure and convoluted I cannot shed light to them myself. Let us set aside these problems and assume the willing participation and common aspirations of the parties to get to know each other.

Physicality is the basis for her being in the world. As such, the first aspect of knowing another is to see her physicality. The vessel of her being cannot be separated from what she is. Therefore, one part of knowing her is to know what she is physically. This appears true also when there is no physical contact or proximity with the Other. Aspects of her physicality can differ from the stereotype I have constructed of a human. She might not have a right leg, or she might have only half of a stereotypical brain. Other of these aspects can become evident in my perception when observing her; the other might not become clear to me ever. Then again, the missing leg gives rise to a shock as I need to adjust my paradigm of a person's physicality, where missing half of the brain is something easily adjusted to. Now it is evident that something perceived with physical senses does not have as robust buffers as something given to me indirectly.

A human being is a sum of all her parts. If I seek to know somebody, I must have a model of those parts and their connections. Physicality, or physical being in the world, is the obvious starting point. It is not at all obvious what follows physicality, other than it might be something mental or spiritual. My access to the Other's spirituality is usually only through her willing mind, and as such the representation

of her spirituality in my experience is constructed from her narrative and my observation. This appears not to require long term memory from my part. Thus, her mental image projected to my field of observation is one way of knowing her.

The continuous willing expression of her being to my experience, and my ability to remember parts the layers of previous expressions in conjunction with "here and now" is creating an image or "mirroring" of her being to my nature. This mirroring enables me to wear her skin for a fleeting moment if we both are open enough for this type of transference. This vulnerable position feels like the primus motor for my ability to feel compassion towards her. A repeated and prolonged empathetic connection with the Other establishes an ability for lasting compassion, turning the connection in time from utility to being. This leads me to consider *time* as the line on which the spiral is travelling one-dimensionally without a hope of returning or stopping as in Figure 9.
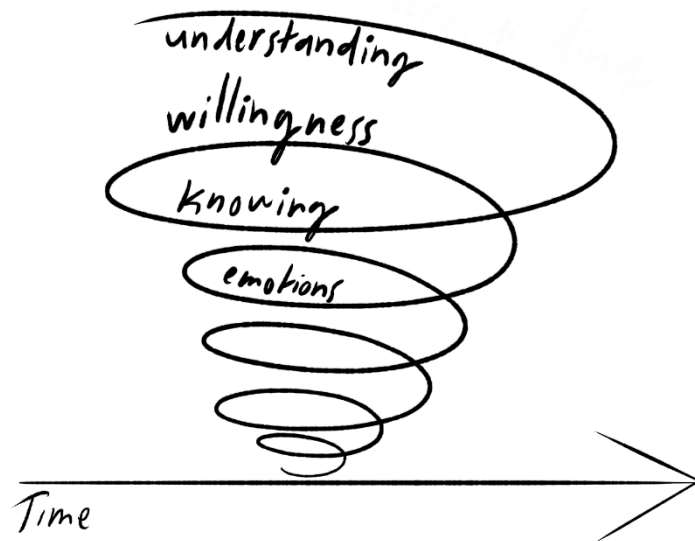

Figure 9. Now we have a spiral consisting of understanding, knowing, emotions, and willingness, travelling the line of time into eternity.

6.2   Workshops and discussions

In this subchapter I go through the participatory action research phase based on the research problem. In the pursuit of developing our workplace, we had a series of five workshops for the whole company and multiple informal discussions.

The goal of these workshops was to design the strategy and to get to know each other through formal and informal methods, and to get feedback on the experiences of the participants right after the workshops. The author participated in three of the five workshops. The workshops in which the author was not present were held in between the other workshops. These two workshops tested the employees' ability to take ownership of the process while the author was not present. Notes and feedback from all the workshops were collected and preliminary analysed before the next workshop. Each of the subsequent workshops were built around the feedback and the analysis of the previous ones.

In the first workshop we discussed the values of the employees and how they could be used as a basis for company values. From that we co-created an *emergent strategy* for the company during the subsequent workshops and discussions. For the first, Workshops were framed as strategy work because of the lack of explicated strategy came up during the development discussions in December 2018 (Piiparinen 2018; Hirvo 2018). The employees felt that the strategy should be formulated by the leadership. Nevertheless, commitment was achieved through these workshops for the whole company to participate in the strategy creation. For the second, the strategic framework was used as the explicit framing of the workshops as "getting to know each other" would not have been as tangible. Based on the authors experience intangible goals do not receive hoped for commitment from the employees.

These workshops and discussions enabled the author to gather relevant data for the subsequent analysis presented in Chapter 6.3. In addition to the material presented here, one on one interviews were conducted four of the employees.

6.2.1 Discussion about potato chips, October 2018

One day, as usual, I went to our office game room to talk with the employees as they were playing NHL 18 on PlayStation. After a lengthy discussion about my thesis and knowing each other, they tasked me with this imaginary task of buying a bag of potato chips to one of the employees. The following is the scenario narrated.

I knew that the employee had specific taste on potato chips, but I could not bring forth the type of potato chips required of me. I said, I would call the said employee to find out the employee's preference. I was taken that change away as the employee did not have a phone at hand. My next strategy was to buy a collection of chips. It was dismissed by telling me I had money only for one bag. Then I proposed calling other employees to find out if they knew the correct type of potato chips. It was dismissed by saying there was a complete blockage of all the cell phone connections. That led me to ponder on strategies for pleasing the refined taste of my colleague. First strategy I employed was narrowing down the option pool by recollecting everything I remembered about what the employee did not like about potato chips. That led me to dismiss sour cream and onion type of potato chips. My next strategy was to widen the search parameters by considering other foods the employee liked and see if that would help me. For example, the employee likes schnitzels, mayonnaise, and French fries. From there I could deduce, a preference of seasoned food. At this point I guessed if the correct choice would be barbecue potato chips, but I did not give out my guess. The last strategy that I employed, was regression toward the mean i.e. what would be the probable choice of potato chips. That led me to pick salted potato chips as they are the most popular in Finland (Tuominen 2017). The employee's potato chips of choice are Taffel Kartanon perunalastu Original without any sauce. It is considered a premium version of the most common type of potato chips in Finland.

This discussion and spontaneous thought experiment lead me to a personal crisis of not knowing my work mates as well as I thought I did. I started to investigate what could be done to remedy my ignorance. This thesis research problem was devised based on the reflection of this discussion.

6.2.2 Discussion about moments of fright, November 2018

We had five of the seven employees present at the office. I brought a cake and chocolates to the office and invited all to have a coffee. First, we had a brief discussion about the production pipeline for the month and expected consultancy

revenue. As usual, we were joking about the subject in addition to discussing the matter seriously. This time some jokes were aimed at other team members present. To me it seemed like none of the jokes were derogatory or hurtful. When we got the production issues settled, the discussion moved to the most frightful moments of our lives. In many ways this is a typical discussion to have in our company.

First P1 told about her memory of military exercise where a conscript fired a rifle to a tree right next to where P1 was located. P2 continued with a story about how on many occasions she had been wedged almost out of the driveway in a ring road at the same junction. P2 told us about the heightened feeling of mortality. P3 told about wall climbing accident, where P3 fell almost ten meters before a fellow climber could catch the rope about a meter before P3 hit the floor. P4 had no story to tell. A joke was made about P4 being not capable of fear. P5 told us that the moments of fright P5 has had would not compare to the situations of the other employees. P3 suggested as a joke, that the moment P5 heard about the pregnancy of her spouse would be the most frightful moment of P5's life. Brief consideration for that possibility was given, but no definitive conclusion was reached.

This represents a typical non-work-related discussion of the employees at the office. Some of the employees are more willing to share personal stories and feelings. The willingness to share increased dramatically during the study period.

6.2.3 First Workshop, February 2019

Six of seven employees attended the first workshop. During the first workshop the seventh employee was still working from another office and was not included in the "Expert Services Days" held bi-weekly. After the first workshop we decided to include everybody and changed the name to the development day. The workshop was held at the company office.

The first workshop was aimed at getting to know each other by examining our personal values and then building on those the company values. As the values

are integral part of business strategy (Johnson et al. 2014, 108-109), we discussed the concept of strategy formulation from the ground up during our communal breakfast. The concept was met with positive tone, even though one member expressed a mild disbelief of such ground up strategy working. The other participants swiftly corrected him.

After that, we went through three elements of the strategy work; Values, mission and vision were introduced. Rest of the strategic framework was left for the subsequent workshops. Few of the participants were unfamiliar with the propositions behind the elements. It was decided that a brief introduction was in order. During the introduction, which consisted of my brief monologue and few short videos, we reached a preliminary common understanding of said aspects of the strategy.

We started our workshop with the values. In my past, I have witnessed cases where conflicting values have been the main driving force of failing strategy. Prime example of failing strategy with conflicting values is International Security Afghan Force (ISAF) -mission (2001-2014) in Afghanistan, where I attended during 2007-2008. This is corroborated by Lundberg's (2017) dissertation on the conflicting healthcare values and military objectives.

In contrast, I have witnessed how common and explicit values help people to come together behind an insuperable obstacle and surmount it with what seems like a light effort. My initial success with Raavus Oy is one example of this, of which I did my bachelor's thesis (Kirsi 2010) I gave a speech about the importance of the company values being based on the individual values. Discord between the two would inevitably lead to abandonment of the company values (Posner 2010; Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite 2017a; Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite 2017b). After my speech and a concise discussion, I handed out number of small papers to every attendee and directed everybody to write their preferred values of the company, one on each paper. The amount of values was not limited. Everybody wrote three or four values.

After that we placed all the values on the table and grouped them thematically. We had a long and interesting debate about what would be the appropriate categories for the values. Everybody wrote at least one value linked to a group of other values by other people. My own viewpoint was the farthest away from the common conception. Despite that, I did find a group of values, that fitted with my own values. Everybody was given chance to narrate their own thoughts and justifications for each of the groups and individual values, one group at the time. The discussion took over an hour; All the while one participant held a record of what was said. Underneath are the four identified groups of values:

1. Openness, transparency, environment
   - Share with the customers what is done and how (methods, tools)
   - Keep customers up to date on the order (automation, messages about status)
   - Environment: moving by car, teleworking, pre-releases and sharing to avoid unnecessary driving (customer status progress)
   - Sustainability and corporate responsibility
   - Internal transparency (expert days, information sharing)
2. Fairness, honesty, trustworthiness
   - Sharing information about our own work and methods with the customers
   - Informing customers on how to do things by themselves (this is no secret science)
   - Material and information are available to the customer
   - Hand up as the sign of error.
3. Expertise, renewal, challenging status quo, *problem-solving*
   - Behaviour, business-like character
   - Knowledge, skills, know-how
   - Let us do what we know
   - (what new can and should you learn?)
4. Easy going atmosphere, human-oriented, communal spirit, *problem-solving*, customer service
   - We have a good time → good for the customer (progress).
     - Attitude towards work
     - Relevant work → Goals
   - Things that are weighty can be discussed and it is good to be at the workplace → goals can be achieved
   - A person with a problem (client or employee) is met with compassion → tackling the problem
   - Taking different perspectives into consideration
   - Fairness

We decided to leave the values to simmer for a few weeks as we would have an opportunity to review them at the following development day. The values workshop took the whole, forenoon and we decided not to go further with the strategy work. Before closing the workshop, we had a more comprehensive conversation about the elements of the strategy and their relations. My own background enabled me to answer most of the questions during the conversation. In addition, I promised to send self-learn material to everybody before the next workshop.

After the workshop I sent a short anonymous questionnaire for the participants. Answers to the questionnaire are discussed in the next subchapter. The questions included the following:

1. How important is the strategy work in your opinion? (five-point scale)
2. How successful was the workshop? (five-point scale)
3. Which of the of values is the most important to you? (Multiple choice)
4. What new did you learn about your co-workers? (Free paragraph text)
5. How would you develop the routine for the next workshop? (Free paragraph text)

The main result and takeaway of the first workshop was the existing cohesion between the co-workers work-related values and the strong desire to adapt and attach to the common values.

6.2.4 Second workshop, February 2019

Two weeks after the first workshop other employees held the second workshop without me at the company office. The basic principles were the same as in the first workshop. Communal breakfast was served, this time by Joachim. Some cocktails were provided with the breakfast. During the breakfast discussion was centred around operative situation and the last weeks tasks of each employee. This catching up served as the basis for the relaxed atmosphere enabling the sought for openness among the employees.

The questionnaire sent after the first workshop received mainly positive feedback. All the participants held the subject of the workshop either as important or very important (four or five on a one to five scale) with the average of 4,33. The average for the success of the workshop was 3,83 on five point scale. Free form answers promoted pre-workshop tasks and preparatory information sent before the next workshop. One participant was interested in condensing the amount of time used to get more done during the workshops. On the other hand, one of the participants brought up the benefits of unhurried and decluttered work during the first workshop. One of the participants anticipated the result to be easily implemented to the everyday work.

Based on the feedback from the first workshop and the fact that I was not going to be present I prepared this workshop to be as on the point as possible with a clear goal. The only goal was to pick the main values, one from each value group, from the list prepared in the first workshop and explain the choices. I sent this task with two outside video links explaining the values as part of the company strategy a week before the workshop. The participants picked the top values and developed explanations to each as is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Company values harmonised with individual values.

Expertise	Transparency
We work to be the best in our field with our knowledge, skills, and competencies; we will correct errors without a separate order, instruction, or request.	We do not cover up what we do but give to all interested all the information we have; we keep our client up to date on their work orders; we also share our information within our company.
Integrity	**Human-orientation**
We do not claim to know something we do not know; we do not act behind backs, and we are not afraid to admit our mistakes – that is the only way we can grow.	It is good to come to us but staying is even better; if you ever leave us, you do it with a longing mind.

The employees had proposed, when planning these development days, a tournament of NHL 19 on PlayStation. After the lunch, the rest of the day was spent on playing. The problem with this is that one of the employees is not interested in playing and is therefore left out of this unifying experience. The feedback from this workshop was gathered during the next week by interviewing the participants. Effects of this are further explored in Chapter 6.3.

6.2.5 Third workshop, March 2019

Two weeks after the second workshop we gathered again to a development day. All but one employee attended the workshop. The theme of the workshop was chosen to be co-creation of mission statement based on the feedback from the last workshop. The employee not able to attend sent his thoughts on the matter to me the previous day. Those ideas were incorporated to the discussion during the workshop. Before the workshop I had sent the following primer to everybody as guided by the feedback gathered during the first workshop:

"A mission is a statement by a company about the purpose of its own existence. It is one of the most unchanging elements of strategy work, so it, like the values, should describe the existing situation. Of course, if what already exists is downright bad, then values and mission must strive to create the conditions for change. In our case, however, it may be best to stick in condensing and clarifying current thoughts. Attached is Simon Sinek's golden circle (Figure 10) in which "Why" is in the middle because it creates the meaning for the existence, then comes "How" and only after that comes "What". The idea here is to build the company's services and products, i.e. "What", on top of how we operate so that we can differentiate ourselves from other companies in the industry to our advantage. "Why" is the reason for our existence."

WHAT

Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services

HOW

Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

WHY

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.
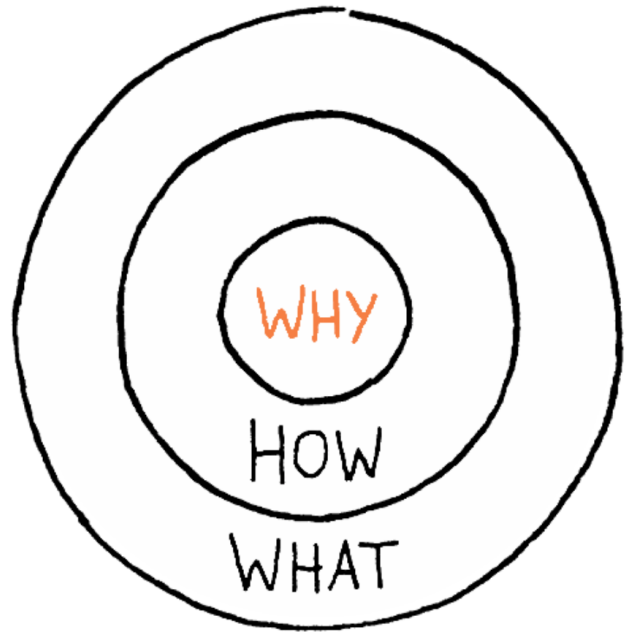
WHY
HOW
WHAT

Figure 10. The Golden Circle by Simon Sinek (2011) as presented by Chaffey (2020).

For the start, we went through the values chosen the last time, and decided they described our intent well enough. One realisation here was it might be beneficial to stick to intuition and the original ideas, instead of trying to elevate the whole discussion to a plane, where the group would feel out of place. This problem was brought up in the feedback of the second workshop as the employees were seeking for a concrete roadmap to be deployed during and after the development.

As this was the second workshop, in which a new dimension of the strategy was created, every employee where familiar working in such a workshop. One of the main lessons learned from the first workshop was to familiarise the employees to the subject matter before the workshop, so the process would be faster to initiate. This pre-understanding of the world is one of the main ideas of Martin Heidegger's (2010; Mulhall 1996) hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy. I took here the chance of analysing the effects of different levels of pre-understanding in me and the participants. Nyström & Dahlberg (2001) pointed out Heidegger's connotation of interpretation as the basis for all understanding as raising the question, whether objective interpretation is at all possible. They propose historicity, the understanding and incorporation of the researcher's own

past, as a solution to move closer to objective interpretation. This fit well to the theme of our joint development and to my self-learning goals.

To this end, I employed the method explicated by Dahlager & Fredslund (2008, 178-180) as a decontextualization and recontextualization. Which is presented next:

1. I did the first part of the analysis during the workshop by taking comprehensive notes during the events as they unfolded. This first step is called *general impression*, and it consists of the intake of the content.
2. The second step, called *identifying meaning-bearing units* happened immediately after the workshop and it is the part, where the content is split into small enough parts to be deemed meaningful or not, and the categorised into themes.
3. Third step, *operationalisation*, was continued directly after the second. Categories divided into themes are then examined and properties of the units are critically compared. If common properties are found, meaning-bearing units can be joined, or if more categories are found from the units, then they can be further divided.
4. Fourth step is *recontextualization and hermeneutic interpretation,* and it consists of structuring the content as *a network of relevancy* (reformulation of the author).

During the last step I could identify the connections between the experiences of the pre-understanding compared to the refined understanding in the end of the workshop as presented in Figure 11. Results of the analysis are discussed in the chapter 6.3.

Individuals' conception of mission had gained significant improvement compared to the first workshop one month previous. Previously the most unclear was the relation between the mission and the rest of the strategic framework. After everybody had had a change to familiarise themselves to the intended framework of the strategy from the material sent after the first workshop, we were able to change the focus from clearing underlying assumptions to jointly develop the mission of the firm. It was decided the mission should promote the well-developed current business in the future compared to the transformative mission that would have been the other option. The mission should contain enough

information to link it to the future operating environment, as well as to the values of the firm.
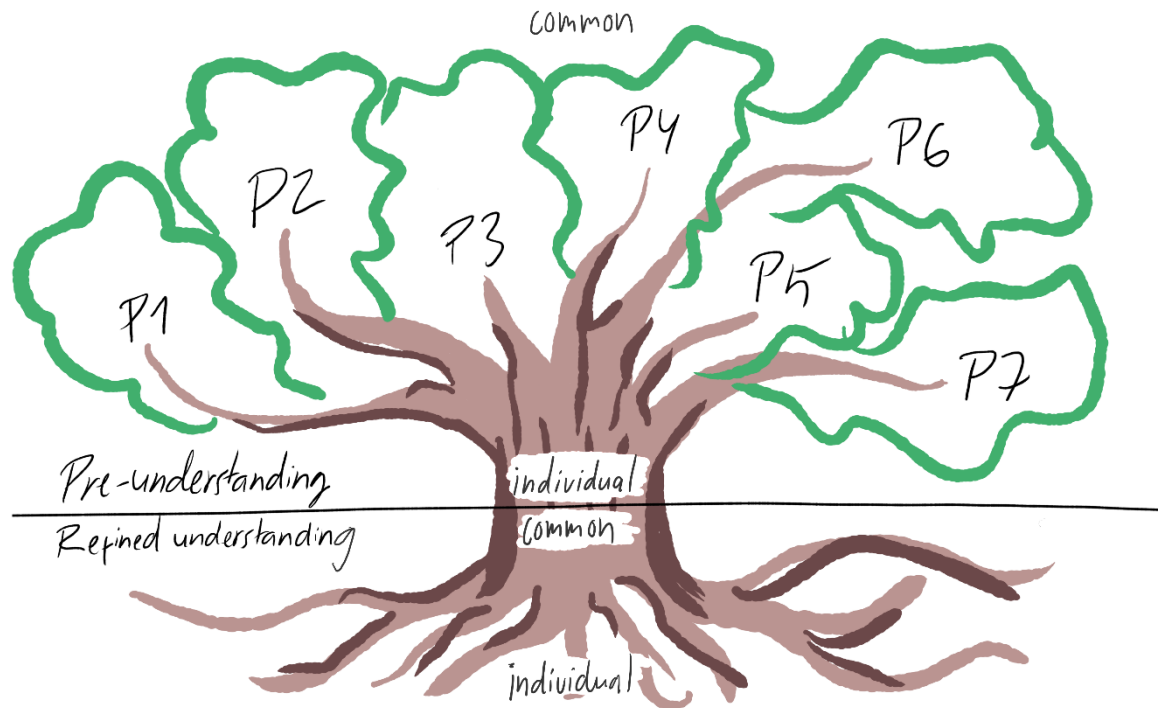

Figure 11. Representation of the individuals pre-understanding merging into common refined understanding and its subsequent and inevitable branching to the individual understanding.

The same technique was employed here as in the first workshop. First everybody wrote down their ideas on small papers, one idea per paper. We were looking for brief, one sentence descriptions compared to the more eloquent presentations. Then we went through all the ideas and grouped them based on the themes in a group discussion. Then these groups were discussed, and each employee had a chance to describe their ideas to validate the links created during the grouping phase. After the initial grouping and refining, we had a break. After the break we started to discuss the up- and downsides of the proposed sentences. Following is the list of all the original proposals with identified problems:

5. To deliver a complete rescue plan that pleases all stakeholders
   - Too courting
   - The rescue plan does not go far enough about the products we offer
6. To give expert help and ease of management
   - Of what management? Safety and security of property
   - Good crystallization
7. To provide quality property security services easily and quickly

- Could be briefer and more concise
- Security products is a good overview of the products

8. To make our customers' lives safe with an easy-to-use website
    - Life is possibly too broad, taking the life and death to the hands of the company
    - Websites and online services are a bit problematic as well

9. To provide high quality and transparent security planning to make our customers' lives easier
    - Transparency raised questions
    - Just security planning or something?

10. To provide the highest quality safety services
    - Safety is not a familiar term to everyone
    - Safety covers way more than our solution, should we focus?

At this point the latest, one of the original descriptions rose as the standard of which all the other ideas were compared to. The sentence was: **Expert help and ease of management.** The main concern of the group was if the sentence was specific enough for the company. Many joint attempts were made to include more company specific info to the sentence. Company has been specialised in the safety business, but then safety seemed too narrow view on our offering. Soon the group concluded that all new proposals were too insignificant to fit the mission. In the end, no changes were made, and the original proposal was chosen to be our mission. We also recognised the possibility of enhancing the mission in the future by including company and product specific perspective. Once again, we decided to leave the final verdict to the next workshop.

The speed of which we were able to complete the mission enabled us to continue with the formulation of the vision. As we were not prepared for the formulation of the vision, we started off by and watching videos about the subject. After that we opened a free discussion on the vision and continued with the same small-paper method. Each of the participants were allowed a maximum of four papers. The ideas were presented by the authors and then discussed in the group. One of the proposals gained such a support that we took it as a basis for our vision. The proposal was: **Incomparable option**. The author explained it by saying: no one needs to go and look for another option once they have met us. This resonated well with all, but once again some amendments were proposed. The

amendments included … as a workplace, … as a service provider, and … for growth. Each of the proposals were left to simmer until the last workshop.

We had a feedback discussion immediately afterwards. After the initial stiffness during the first workshop starting the joined development of strategy, every employee felt engaged and even empowered. The possibility to engage in the process of strategy creation – being able to mould the workplace – was perceived as a highly motivating factor by the attendees. One of the attendees mentioned the power of inspirational leadership as a motivating factor. This was appropriate, as Conger (1991, 31) describes one of the critical roles of inspirational leadership to be skilful in the formulation of the organisations mission. Here the collaborative effort resulted in our ability to be inspirational.

As after the first workshop, a questionnaire was sent right after this one too. It included the questions as follows:

1. Did we succeed in forming a common opinion on the mission? (five-point scale)
2. Were the workshop arrangements successful? (five-point scale)
3. How would you develop the chosen mission: "Expert help and ease of management"? (free paragraph text)
4. What new did you learn from your colleagues' views? (free paragraph text)
5. How would you develop the working arrangements for the next workshop? (free paragraph text)
6. Do you have any other thoughts related to the topic? (free paragraph text)

Answers to the questionnaire are discussed in the next subchapter.

6.2.6 Fourth workshop, March 2019

The fourth workshop was held two weeks after the third. The author was not able to attend this workshop. From the process point of view, these workshop days without the author seemed to bring new and lively ideas to the discussion, even though the premeditated content and target level was somewhat limited compared to the three workshops the author facilitated.

The results of the questionnaire from the third workshop were presented to all before this workshop. The questionnaire sent after the third workshop received somewhat positive feedback. Regarding the success of forming a common opinion on the mission, three answered "neither agree nor disagree" and three answered "agree" for the average of 3,5. Here we can see, that finding the common understanding for the mission was perceived somewhat harder than for the vision. The question about workshop arrangements resulted in the average of 3,83, that happened to be the same result as with the first workshop.

Third, free text question about the development of the chose mission "Expert help and ease of management" divided the participants to those two who would not change anything and four, who were willing to expand the mission statement or turn it into a slogan with more comprehensive mission statement. The answers reflected well the discussion had in the previous workshop. Fourth, free text question "What new did you learn from your colleagues' views?" received five answers stating that the unity of ideas is significant between the employees, even though these thoughts are not often shared. One answer called for more "adventurous spirits" from the co-workers.

Fifth, free text question asked for improvement ideas for the next workshop. Proposed problems to be solved included two requests for better handling of time during the workshop as most of the time was spent on discussing the different elements of strategy and their relations. One participant felt that there was a problem with perception of the mission's place in the strategy. These different perceived development areas showed the author the large gap between the readiness of the participants to understand and formulate strategy. Last, free thoughts question did not yield any responses.

From the answers of the fifth question the author proposed this fourth workshop to concentrate on bringing everybody up to same level of knowledge regarding the principles of strategy creation. As the subject is vast and multifaceted, the proposed method aimed to simplify the subject. This was done by preparing a pre-read and pre-watch package for the participants on the aspects of strategy,

where the ones more knowledgeable could skim through most of the material and the people less familiar with the subject would be able to learn the basics in a streamlined fashion. After sending this package to all the employees, the author proposed a round-table discussion find a common ground to prepare for the final workshop.

The participants did have a discussion during the brunch and reportedly were happy with the concept. The author shortly interviewed all the participants afterwards during the same day to gain understanding on the quality and depth of the conversation. There seemed to be some confusion and contradicting information on the subject still for few of the participants. Most of the participants reported to know at least some thoughts of the co-workers better after this workshop. Next subchapter concludes the series of workshops with a seminar held offsite.

6.2.7   Fifth workshop, March 2019

The fifth and final workshop was held at a conference hotel and it was named "seminar" for the effect and. It took four hours from 8.30 to 12.30 with breakfast and lunch included. All employees attended the seminar. The author prepared the presentations and tasks so that the participants did not have to prepare for the event. This was done to gain relaxed atmosphere even though the venue was unfamiliar for most participants.

The agenda for the seminar was published when the seminar started. The first presentation included the now finished basic elements of our new strategy. Values, mission statement and vision were all included with a list of five next steps to be performed to bring the strategy to life in our everyday work-life. These tasks included:

1. We figure out the things that require improvement for us to be worthy of our values
2. We each write out what it means to me to act according to our mission
3. We define the tasks by which we reach our vision
4. We learn to communicate the core points of our strategy to the customer

    5. We find out what resources are needed to achieve these things.

The second task was performed right at the spot by everyone. The results were discussed, and ideas were shared. All agreed that acting according to the mission should be left so that every employee can shape their actions based on their specific job and situation. That enabled us to have a common mission, but multiple personal expressions for it. This felt right as the goal of getting to know each other better would benefit greatly when we can see the different expression of the same mission in our co-workers.

The next tasks on the agenda was the "Unknown leader" test (Lundberg 2005). It gives Myers-Briggs type indicator with description on the type. Everybody performed the test, and the results of individuals were discussed. The author had presupposed results for all participants. When the real results were compared to the presupposed results, not one got the same result. As there are sixteen possible personality types in the test, the probability of hitting the same result randomly is 3,9%, but still the results were mostly surprising for the author. Everybody seemed to enjoy the test and the discussion we had about it.

The last item was the status update on this research project. The author presented the theoretical framework in its then current state, the result of the phenomenological reduction and initial results of the first four workshops. Interviews and eidetic reduction were not discussed as they were still under development. The discussion that ensued the presentation showed great signs of inclusiveness and tact from all the employees. After the last item, the team had lunch together and participated the general meeting of the principal company in the nearby headquarters of the parent company. The general meeting seemed like a fitting end to the workshops as most employees received dividends. The author did not send feedback survey after this workshop as the feedback for the whole process was to be gathered during the interviews.

The effects of this participatory action research started to really show during the last workshop, where the level of familiarity was greater than in any other

gathering before. This was mostly due to the approval and inclusion of our two newest members, who were not afraid to joke about during the seminar. The effects between the older employees were more subtle, but still visible. The respect for the co-worker's personal space and limits of interaction enhanced throughout the project with a pace that would have never been possible without such an intensive set of workshops. Next chapter incorporates the employee interviews to the results of these workshops.

6.3 Eidetic reduction

This chapter describes and analyses the interviews with some reflection on the observations on the workshops and phenomenological reduction presented in Chapters 6.1 and 6.2. Four of the six employees were interviewed. All the chosen interviewees had worked at the company at least five years. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, the native language of all the interviewees. The author has translated the excepts for this presentation with the goal of preserving the essence of the expressions.

The interviews were conducted after the participatory action research (PAR) phase. This order was chosen so that the interviewees had a chance of getting the experience of working on the subject before structuring their thoughts on the matter. Because the author represents the employer and superior to the interviewees, special care was to be exercised on what and how the author can request of the employees in their role as informants (Grönfors & Vilkka 2011, 111, 115).

Unstructured and conversational interview is preferred in phenomenological methodology (Laine 2018). To lay out some common ground for all the four interviewees, a list of three supporting questions, or rather themes was devised. The questions included:

1. Can you please describe your relationships at work?
2. Please describe, how your relationships have developed during joint working years.

3. What effects has getting to know your co-workers had on your work experience?

These questions acted as the starters for different themes of the interviews. The author let the discussion flow by expressing interest and inviting the informant to continue the train of thought. The author asked follow-up questions when the informant stopped speaking. The interview recordings were transcribed by the author right after the interviews. That way the author was able to dive right into the more nuanced exploration of the expressions of the informants. Technically, the transcription was done by listening to the conversations recorded with headphones and typing out the interview on a text editor as it had been spoken. The author included speech breaks and fill-in expressions like hmm and uh in the spelling. By including these fill-in expressions to the transcription, the author felt that the inner landscape of the informants lived experience was easier to approach and analyse.

Three prominent themes rose from the interview material above others. Firstly, informal encounters and "just spending time together" creates a relaxed outlook to work and enables deepening of the relationships. Secondly, significance above and beyond the work creates strong ties between the co-workers based on the perceived worth the company can offer to the society. Lastly, getting to know each other acts as a lubricant and a glue as nuanced intuitive analysis of others becomes an integral part of everyone's modus operandi. These themes are presented with analysis in the following sub-chapters.

In each sub-chapter, quotes of the informants are provided along the analysis. The quotes have been selected and translated by the author to represent the experiences of the informants regarding the effects of getting to know each other. Colloquial expressions have been changed to general language and filler words have been carefully removed from the quotes to make them easier to read without losing the meaning of the expressions. The quotes are used to verify and justify the interpretation of the research material and to give the reader a change of testing the hypotheses against their own experience. Abbreviations P1, P2, P3, and P4 have been used to represent the employees interviewed in the study.

As each interview was done in one sitting during the workday and between other tasks, the generalisability of the expressions should not be taken as a rule, but rather as a guidance. Even with these limitations, the picture became rather nuanced and left a lot for the author to analyse.

6.3.1 Informality as a fuel

Informality of a small "atypical" workplace compared to the perceived formality of more traditional work environment was a theme that was raised by every informant during the interviews. Informality was experienced from multiple positions and its effects were thought to be both good and bad. Typical train of thought did not include any clearly good or bad depictions of the informality, but was quite ambivalent on whether it was a good thing to know others, like P2 states:

> *"When getting more familiar with the co-workers, I don't know, whether the being has ever been very rigid, but it is less so after getting to know others better."*

The lack of formality in the workplace has created what could be called self-governing environment. After the latest leadership transformation towards shared leadership and shared responsibility and power, the atmosphere has been evolving towards pride and ownership over the business. Trust between the employees' ability to perform is a prerequisite for the formal culture to transform into informal one like P1 states:

> *"…it helps responding to many things when you know how someone reacts to a particular type of communication. Trust was gained during an unknown period. You can count on what is agreed to be done."*

This evolution seems also to need a level of familiarity between the employees. Employee's attitude towards their own work seems to change when they can feel that support is easy to come by, when in need, like P3 here explains:

> *"…although the motivation may have been bad for some other reason, yes, it has been kind of that it has helped me in the work. It's easier for me to ask questions of my friend than of an unknown person, if I don't know something or if I messed up a job or something, it's a lot easier if you kind of know that person in advance and it's so much easier to approach."*

Relaxed atmosphere and informality seem to bring some unwanted consequences to the workplace. Pedantic watching of others' work efforts is something that was brought up by P4, even though the result of attentive watching of others well performed job creates familial relationships:

> *"And of this whole work community, I think that we have a petty work community. Probably everybody demands, or at least almost all that everyone brings their own contribution to work and to business. And then when it is felt that each does their part, there are very immediate relations in every direction."*

These expressions are in line with the findings of participatory action research and phenomenological reduction. In the workshops everyone identified the need for control mechanism to assure the right direction and level of effort towards common goals. In the phenomenological reduction the author recognised that the perception of the others mental landscape is only slightly altered when the other adds words to the actions she is taking. In this case, these informal control mechanisms seem to work as a substitute to formal power and control. By recognising and identifying these implicit control mechanisms, they can be implicitly managed by affecting the notions of the people controlling these mechanisms. If there would be a problem with the calibration of these control mechanisms from the business point of view, they could be made visible and talked through to calibrate the objectives with the employees.

Informality and communal work environment can lead to an effect, where collective moods can shape the whole work experience. The effect of other employees' mood, or even just the mood of one employee can suck up the whole workplace into a "mood spiral". The effects of the spiral can be good or bad, but to stop or even to change the direction of the spiral usually requires herculean efforts. The moods of the employees become more vulnerable to impact when persons are more familiar. Collective reasons for different attitudes and reactions

can be hard to itemise and can be significant threat to the motivation. Deep familiarity between the employees seems to protect from such effects on the motivation, as understanding of another's situation improves. Then again, collective reasons might come from outside, like P4 states when talking about motivational problems and work performance:

> *"…or if there is one, they are always seasonal and then there is some underlying collective reason that goes through the whole team, which is then reflected in that work, or motivation for doing the work."*

The most significant finding within this theme is the realisation, that explicit structures are easily replaced by implicit ones, and the effectiveness of those implicit structures is heightened when getting to know each other better. Effectiveness can of course work in an undesirable way. But as there is always the possibility to unearth the implicit and look at it explicitly and critically with the employees, this should not be a problem when the leadership is not only hierarchical, but moral as well.

The author recommends promoting implicit structures in companies, where de facto leadership coexists within the same leader as de jure leadership. The justify this statement, we must look at the resources needed to build, develop, and maintain rigid formal structures and controls throughout the company in every level. As most organisations struggle with limited resources, implicit structures help by easing the load from the formal requirements on leadership. This of course is very demanding on the socio-cognitive load of the leader, as the implicit needs to be understood and kept under check to avoid the pitfalls of divided workforce.

6.3.2 Significance above and beyond the work

The feeling of significance can rise from the immediate task of the person doing the work, or it can be the result of collective aspiration towards a common goal. In some, albeit rare, cases the implicit goals of the group can rise above the level set by the formal organisation. In these cases, the group can start to nurture a narrative of higher calling through emergence. Then the work is perceived as

achieving more than just salary and sociality. Brewer (2009) explains this as a gradually unveiling process of slowly grasping the meaning of the activity by dialectic engagement. In essence it means that by working together on a meaningful task the understanding of the subject gets clearer. Callard (2018, 226) proposes that the aspiration to significance comes from the feeling of inadequateness when facing the challenge. Sharing the burden with well-known co-workers gives strength to the individual. P4 engages with the idea of changing all the colleagues:

> *"I feel that the work would lose something and that the meaning of my own work would suffer. Such a large amount of expertise would disappear, and I feel that the more would be lost than just the persons, if it all happened in one go."*

The feeling of importance then comes from several sources. The task at hand, meaningful human connections, ability to partake in something significant, and the feeling of smallness all contribute to the perceived importance of the task at hand. Understanding the larger scope of the endeavour can be difficult for individuals. In general, it seems that everybody knows the answer to *how* you do your work. Almost everybody knows the answer to *what* you do for work. But when asking *why* you do your work; most answers are less sure. From the workshops and interviews it became clear that *why* can be best answered together. From the phenomenological reduction, the author recognised the inadequateness of one person, when trying to comprehend the universality of human emotions. On the other hand, the employees saw significance in matters completely unrelated to the work. These feeling of significance seemed to be amplified, when shared parallel life experiences brough employees closer together like in the case of P4:

> *"It is probably much about my own life situation, or your family situation that has changed a bit in recent years. It's true - it's also easier to identify with at least such challenges. I still do not accept it for myself, and I do not admit it to others as an explanation, but I understand it better. Like what having a child does and shows in the rest of life."*

P4 talked most about the feelings of significance. He seemed to have gone through the process of evaluating his own life critically and as a side benefit had analysed and structured his relationships and attitudes towards work in a way that provided a comprehensive, even holistic, view to the aspects of his life.

The feeling of connection and calling beyond work can also be challenged, as the situation can be something the employees are forced to. Even though the structure of the work might be highly informal, the probability of this set of people doing something meaningful together without the constraints the company sets, can be questioned, like P2 explains:

> *"My ability to understand what goes inside the head of co-workers has improved, or at least it feels, or I imagine like I know what's going on with others. However, it is such a long time that even if you don't want to, you still deal with others so much, that you understand something … I am not sure, if I would have met with any of the fellow students if there wasn't a common company."*

But even as we have the formal structure of the company in place, the atmosphere, and the ability to work well together is still not given. I came evident in all the interviews that personal chemistries between the employees determine a large portion of the outcomes, like P1 states:

> *"In this company it is much the same as with my previous employer. There was also a lot of stuff done together in spare time. This is a much smaller outfit than that, but here again it is the same as we are spending time together for leisure. It's by no means self-evident that this is the case when I think about the other jobs I've had. In some cases, I wouldn't be able to look at that co-worker for a minute if not forced. It brings a different nuance to that job. When you come here, to this company, from time to time, you don't look or sound like you're at work."*

When employees perceive their work to be in line with their aspirations and values, the work transforms from something they must do, to something they are entitled to do. This is affected also by the relative sameness of the individual employees' values and aspirations. From the research material, there rises a picture, that individuals' values and the resulting culture is more important than the alignment of individuals versus company values and culture. The power of

implicit agreements can lead to harmony when in pursuit of the larger goal. P4 explains this:

> *"We have talked about this internally recently. There is no need to have an outside client for those things at all to take the ownership. It is enough to have responsibility for some part of the work, then it becomes a sense of ownership for that part. It is even more true when it comes both as assigned and, more importantly, from within. In a way, "this is my thing". I will take care of this aspect of the operations like the effect of electric car charging points within our product, and it is an honour for me to take care of it, we have it at a good level in these documents. It really has an impact."*

It must be remembered that in the context of this research, the somewhat well aligned individuals were able to formulate their own iteration of the company values and strategy. In many cases this kind of design process is not possible, for example in the case of larger companies. Still the company might choose to foster different sub-cultures among different teams as had happened in the principal company before.

For smaller companies, the author recommends holistic and inclusive co-development of the company. This aligns the aspirations of the individuals in a way that enables deeper engagement in the workplace. In time, the participants can also be able to gradually unearth the significance above and beyond their immediate perception. This way, the company can harness the power of inspired action.

6.3.3 Getting to know each other as a lubricant and a glue

Maybe the most important theme risen from the research material is this: when people know each other well, they work better together (lubricant) and want to stay for those relationships (glue). This is rather significant as the cost of recruiting and training a new employee to replace a resigned employee is high (Carrion 2020). This is especially true, when talking about high-complexity jobs (Tracey & Hinkin 2008). High turnover rate can be detrimental to the performance of the company (Kacmar et al. 2006). It seems that when the employee has made the decision to leave, the subsequent enticement from the side of the employer

does not affect the decision. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to keep the employees satisfied in the long run, rather than try to bribe them to stay, when they have already decided on leaving. This study has so far shown that the employees' well-being and commitment has grown since engaging in the participatory action research. P3 describes the effect that he has felt when getting to know some of the family members of the colleagues:

> "But then, when the relationships have first started to deepen through staying some days at the office, then those relationships have developed so that I have come to know people. Now, five years on, those initially cold relationships are quite the opposite. Sometimes the banter is savage in the office, but in a good way. Then again, I have learned to know family members of the colleagues when seeing and hearing about them and thus the relationships have significantly deepened, when I have learned to know people better."

P1 talks about how the epistemic closeness enables relaxing the discipline while assigning tasks to the employees:

> "To me, it's a little different when being in a supervisory position. If I did not know the employees so well, then it would probably be pretty much more disciplined how to assign tasks."

When asked to describe the current state of relationships from P4, he answers:

> "I can, I can, and I feel that I have excellent relationships in my workplace and the work community right now. First, to give an example, we help each other out when in need of moving help, and then we continue as friends to spend the night. Yes, we have such very, remarkably close relationships, although they are generally limited to the workplace and work."

As the employee turnover is extremely low, with the latest resignation happening in 2014, we might be able to give some weight to the good relationship's ability to retain professional workforce in this case. This should be considered doubly remarkable, as most of the employees work remotely and at the customer sites for the most part. The author has promoted the idea, that departure from the company is acceptable and even desirable if the employee does not feel at home and sees a better opportunity elsewhere.

The author recommends that the business owners strive for an environment and a mode of operations that fosters the deepening of the relationships between the employees. This does not only enhance the immediate performance of the company but creates also beneficial secondary effects. One of these effects is the psychological commitment to the workplace via friendships, so the cost of employee resignation is not only monetary, but mental as well. Other significant effect is the ensuing efficiency with which the tasks are divided inside the company to the most able employees without any formal structure.

7   PLAN OF ACTION

From the ethereal outset of this research, we can lean on the words of Deming (2000, 35), who wrote: "It is wrong to suppose that if you can't measure it, you can't manage it – a costly myth." Even though there is only limited result to show in terms of transferrable benefits, the change that has happened in the work-life of the commissioner can be measured in monetary results as well as overall well-being of the employees. A lot of work still needs to be done, as the progress has not shown any signs of slowing down when continuing the familiarisation of the employees to each other.

The company has committed to regular bi-weekly development days, which are the primetime of getting to know each other. In these events, the time will be split between talking about business, operations, and future of the company, and free form mingling and talk. As the personalities of the participants vary, these all-hands meetings will be accompanied by one-on-one meetings between the author and the employees. This in turn helps the author, as the facilitator of most all-hands meetings, take into consideration all the different approaches and reactions the employees manifest during these events.

Discretion is also advised for all sensitive subjects between the employees as the influence of wrongly placed words can be detrimental to the co-worker relationships and to the operations of the firm. We do not want our people to just do their work, but to like it and thrive in it. Best result would be, that the company

strategy would address the emotions of the employees so, that they could see their aspirations fulfilled in the company service. To reach this goal, the company leadership needs to be aware of the different aspirations and thoughts of the employees. Therefore, for the needed actions, the CEO is the responsible initiator and patron of the activities. The agreement between the employees for the program fulfilling the needs of familiarisation can be seen in Table 4

Table 4: Plan of action as agreed with the employees.

Action	Initiator	Frequency
All-hands development days	CEO	bi-weekly
Development discussions	CEO	yearly
One-on-one talks	CEO	weekly
Strategy review and update	CEO	Yearly

8 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the effects of the research project on the company and to the author personally. In addition, it gives some details on the operating environment of the company during and after the research project. In addition, sub-chapter 8.1 goes through the major findings of the research, in sub-chapter 8.2 the author describes and evaluates the thesis process, sub-chapter 8.3 gives an overview on the evaluation to the quality of this study and sub-chapter 8.4 talks about further research.

Throughout this research process, I noticed the position of this thesis struggling to find its place in between several genres. With a genre I refer to the way of presenting the writings as formed in the practice and history of that discipline (Russell 1997, 224). If I define genre as a social action as Charles Bazerman (2012) suggests, this thesis could fit a loose definition of sociology. I am more of a professional than academician, and this thesis has put me in between the activity systems of working professionals and academics (Russell 1997, 231). It has led me to study and develop the working life from the perspective of my interests in academics, which are wide and sometimes deep.

Internalisation of such an immense body of work has led me to externalise a lot of it to my colleagues by the means of informal discussions. These interdependent discussions in conjunction with the discussions with my thesis supervisor, and other people, have led me to a set of new situations where I have created mental artefacts that have directed my subsequent streams of activity (Prior 1997, 278; Russell 1997, 230).

This dynamic and coexistent process of ever deepening level of understanding and simultaneous apprehension about the eventual scale of exploration to come up with a coherent representation and effective end result of the subject I have embarked upon did eventually lead me to embrace a new way of thinking about research and working life. This messy and intense disciplinary enculturation landed me in a new territory of understanding (Russell 1997, 229). The new personal and communal information that I and my co-workers have reached can, hopefully, be easily managed to help stretch the knowledge even further (Hakkarainen 2014, 3).

We sold our company promptly after the empirical data collection phase of this research project. The process of acquisition was tedious-and time consuming. It started before the research project and as such affected the whole company as well as me, as the researcher, personally. Uncertainty, in which the employees lived in during the research project, can be seen in the results of this thesis. This uncertainty was partly my own doing, as I communicated the whole process for the employees as it unfolded. This honesty resulted in open and sincere discussions between the employees and me. My intent during these discussions was to bring the employees together as an emergent unity. For the most part, the acquisition process brought our employees closer together and closer to the company. The emphasis on teamwork and the explicitly stated aspiring goal of getting to know each other better were influential promoters of workplace wellbeing during the negotiation phase of the acquisition.

My personal motivation for this thesis was to learn, understand and implement a new research methodology by expanding the boundaries of my comfort zone.

The concepts of lifeworlds and essences beyond the naturalistic world helped me to choose phenomenology as the methodology. An idea that what can be measured can be only really understood when subjected to the raw experience of the experiencer resonated with my own experiences as a leader. I had witnessed numbers, strategies, incentives and perks to fail as a guiding principle of an organisation and motivational factor of employees so many times, I felt an innate need to structure my intuitions of proper development, satisfaction and results into a coherent whole. This thesis represented a part of that journey during a time, when our company was going through multiple challenges set from outside. In my explorations and free flowing conversations with all the employees, I gained new and deeper respect for the heterogeneity and extraordinary capacity for human compassion and understanding from the part of my employees.

This thesis would have been a lot different had I done it one year previous or would I start now. For me, that is the most rewarding aspect of being researcher and developer of organisations: forever unreachable, ambivalent, and liminal stage where even the smallest of details can either mean the end of an epoch or nothing at all – all depending on the complex systems that we and our organisations are. This thesis will keep on giving to me as I can confidently say: I have successfully internalised the hardest paradigm shift ever come across my path by implementing phenomenological method to my everyday reflection. It took over two years and countless books and articles from Edmund Husserl and others.

Self-reflection is integral part of human experience. The process of self-reflection is intuitively known to all of us. At its simplest, it happens when a person focuses her thoughts on her own experience and lets her thoughts guide her actions now or in the future. After internalising more robust methods of self-reflection a person can reflect on the meanings behind her experiences, past and present, and alter her course of action and her thoughts in the future. This is the stage I was in a priori. A posteriori, I have implemented a new possibilities of self-reflection through phenomenological (intrapersonal) and eidetic (interpersonal) reduction. To me it means the ability to perform immediate, intuitive internal reflections like

in the phenomenological reduction (Chapter 6.1) and to glimpse beyond the immediate experience horizons of my fellow human beings as in chapter 6.3.

If I were to start this thesis project again, I would involve and engage the employees as co-researchers even before framing the research project. During the workshops, interviews, and open discussions at the office, I received invaluable input on the formulation and the direction of this thesis. Us employees are, after all, the ones affected by the change.

8.1 Findings

This chapter summarises the findings of the study. These findings and their applications have been discussed throughout the thesis where and when they have risen during the process of exploration. Here the findings are presented as answers to the research questions. To recap, the research problem was:

What is the worth of learning to know one's group members?

The author perceived the research problem as a challenge for the further development of the company. The research problem was divided to three focused research questions. The questions were formulated based on the initial observations on the bottlenecks hindering the clarification of the chosen research problem.

The first research question was: *what are the effective methods of getting to know each other?* Phenomenological reduction was directed to find prerequisites for this question. Insights to answer the question were gathered during the workshops. There were no direct questions in the research interviews aimed at elucidating this question.

In the phenomenological reduction, the first finding was that there are prerequisites before actual acquaintance can begin. These fundamentals include the bilateral willingness for acquaintance with the other, possibility to connect in several levels of human experience and honesty towards the other. Without the

willingness even the keenest observer will not be able to peel the layers of the human experience of the other. The levels of connection are connected to the layers of human experience and in standard case they are encountered based on the depth of the layer from the outermost inwards. But as Small (2017) corroborates, the order is not set in stone. Honesty is the third prerequisite for effective method of getting to know each other, as false impressions tend to weather the ability to build a constant model of the other's mind.

During the workshops, two main methods rose above the rest in their ability to acquaint co-workers to each other. Relaxed and welcoming atmosphere with the feeling of communion got participants to share a view to their soul in a way that enabled participants to get a feeling of understanding the other better. The other effective method could be called a lighthouse. When one individual (the lighthouse) starts to share their own personal stories, most of the other participants were willing to reciprocally share their stories as well. The lighthouse can be the leader of the group, but the method was most effective, when one of the regular participants acted as the lighthouse.

These findings hold true in a small group setting. In a large group, or one-on-one setting the dynamics might change.

The second question was: *How does the feeling of knowing each other affect individuals?* The workshops and the feedback gathered from them helped in formulating the interview questions to answer this research question. The interviews were aimed at finding answers to this question. The cohesion of the interviewed group might have influenced the interview answers so that all interviewees gave quite similar answers to the questions regarding this research question. All interviewees pointed out that time, intensity, and the quality all need to be considered before the effects of these relationship can be elaborated on.

Two findings rose above others in the analysis. Knowing each other better leads to higher certainty about the capabilities and limitations of the co-workers thus affecting the individuals' actions and communication towards co-workers. In this

research all the interviewed employees felt that the ability to work effectively with others was enhanced when getting to know each other. Most prevalent finding was that the mood of a well-known co-worker can be sensed just by observing the "shoulder position" of the said individual. The resulting knowledge led people to be sensitive towards co-worker's situation and mood and thus getting better team output overall by modulating their own approach to every meeting.

Other major finding to the second question is the effect of the bond co-workers have been able to build during the study. Three out of four interviewed employees thought that even though the collegial relationships were not at the level of close friendships, the individuals felt that they knew more about their co-workers than many of their friends. This study thus challenges the idea of friendships to be closer than collegial connections. Of course, the individual situations vary a lot and further study is needed to come to any definitive conclusions.

The third research question was: *How does the feeling of knowing each other affect the performance of the company?* This question was left mainly unanswered due to the setup of the study. To answer any question about the performance of the company, there would have to be a longitudinal study setup. As this research did not have any recurring questionnaires for the employees or any financial metrics to be followed during the length of the study, any verifiable improvement on the performance of the company was not identified.

8.2   Description and evaluation of the thesis process

In this subchapter I describe the creation process of this work and critically evaluate my own actions during this journey. This thesis process spanned over two years of research and development in a constantly changing environment, during which I kept a research diary. During the process I had to constantly re-evaluate my assumptions as they got challenged by co-workers, my own phenomenological reduction, literature, and analysis of the research material. I describe and evaluate the process chronologically from September 2018 to November 2020. The timeline is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Thesis process timeline.

Time period	Process phase
Sep. 18 – Nov 18.	Deciding on research subject and coming up with a research problem, literature review
Jan. 19 – Feb. 19	Phenomenological reduction, initial discussion with co-workers and thesis supervisor, literature review continued
Feb. 19 – Mar. 19	Participatory action research workshops, formulating the research questions, initial analysis, documentation, literature review continued
Mar. 19 – July 19	Research interviews, transcriptions, analysis continued, literature review continued
Aug. 19 – May 20	Writing of first draft of the report, analysis continued, literature review continued, initial feedback from the supervisor
June 20 – Oct. 20	Expanding the manuscript, rewriting, analysis continued
Oct. 20 – Nov. 20	Finalizing the thesis
Dec. 20	Evaluation and graduation

My original research subject from year 2014, when I started to study for my master's degree was development discussions of which I had an extensive experience from both roles as the interviewee and interviewer. I had, for a long time, thought that the development discussions could be developed further by changing the structure of the discussions. My initial excitement was tailed off as I had the change to develop and evaluate development discussions multiple times a year between 2014 and 2018.

After focusing on other aspects of my life from 2015 to 2018, I decided to choose a research subject that would really challenge my abilities and expand my sphere of knowledge. After many discussions with my co-workers, many read books and articles and extensive self-reflection I came up with the research problem presented in this thesis. The process was an ad-hoc exploration to the psyche of our work community without clear goal in sight. From the research ethical perspective, I fear that I subjected my co-workers to much strain during the exploration phase as I was constantly reflecting my own thoughts in discussion with them. During this period, I steered my research problem from the idea of exploring judgement aggregation in a small group setting to the final form presented in this thesis.

After choosing a research problem in the start of 2019, I still did not have any idea on methodology or research questions. After attending a few methodology and academic writing courses during the winter 2019 I decided to challenge myself with previously unknown methodological choices. The initial idea was to do a purely phenomenological study by interviewing my co-workers. Nevertheless, our strategic co-development initiative in the spring of 2019 gave me a good platform to include a second research methodology by predisposing my research problem to be studied during the planned workshops. The process with which I came up with the participatory action research as the methodology for this part is obscure even to myself. Here my thesis supervisor had a major influence by urging me to structure the research around developing a plan of action to improve our work-life. I would not have included a second research methodology without her guidance. Now, after going through the process, the interplay between the two research methodologies turned out to be one of the strengths of my research.

Before starting with the workshops in February 2019, I did a phenomenological reduction found in the chapter 6.1. on the research problem. This was by far the most challenging part of the thesis process. I had to learn the whole process of phenomenological reduction by reading methodology literature and examples of noteworthy phenomenological studies. During the whole time, I felt inadequateness towards the demands of reduction and epoché of phenomenological method. Even, as I fancied finding some small sliver of the methodological ground laid by Husserl, I am still uncertain whether I never found myself in the plain purified of natural attitude, which is the prerequisite for phenomenological research. In this I would most certainly have benefitted from guided methodological studies.

I involved my co-workers to the process from the start, but the actual co-development started after the phenomenological reduction in the workshops, where we co-created the structure mostly inside the guidelines set by me. The process of co-creating the structure and the content of our workshops gave me invaluable insights to the collective mind of our workforce. This exploration also

enabled me to formulate the final version of the three research questions. In hindsight, it would have been wise to analyze the material a bit further before settling on the research questions as the third question about effects on performance was left mostly unanswered in the workshops and interviews. This would have probably needed a long-term research, of which I did not have the means to execute.

The workshops demanded a lot of perseverance and guidance from me as the change entailed by these workshops did put many of our employees to their discomfort zone. This was evident in some of the communication between the co-workers including me, as different people travelled this journey from their separate situations and viewpoints. I did not do my utmost to ease these tensions, but rather observed how the situations played out. I have been titled as being intimidating in some work-related situations and I wanted to keep out of that mode of working in this case.

I conducted the research interviews after the workshops with the questions derived from the initial findings of the workshops and literature review. The answers to the questions gave good qualitative content for the two first research questions on the methods and effects of getting to know each other, but the third question about the effects on performance was not answered. I transcribed the interviews right after and made the first remarks to my research diary. I did make a mistake of letting the interviews sit before starting to analyze them as the hermeneutic circle of the research would have benefitted from the early involvement of the transcriptions. Later during the winter and spring of 2019 - 2020, when I started analyzing the interviews, I had put a lot of work in analyzing the workshops, and literature, and writing the draft of the thesis report. The merging of the interview material to the draft proved to be formidable task, which would have been a lot easier during the initial drafting of the manuscript.

During the summer and autumn of 2020, I rewrote and expanded the manuscript and presented it to my co-workers for feedback. The feedback I got was positive as the co-workers felt their thought were presented as they intended. I attribute

this success to the long-term relationships I have with my co-workers. I returned the finished version of this thesis to the supervisor in the end of October 2020 and got good actionable feedback. The problem with the third research question proved to be persistent. I should have understood that the research setup was wrong for me to have any substantial results regarding the performance of the company.

All in all, the process could have been a lot more straightforward. I could have chosen an easier subject. I could have chosen an easier research methodology. I could have narrowed my research subject further. I could have written this thesis in my native language. I could have turned my thesis for evaluation almost a year before I did. But I would not been able to push my knowledge and capabilities as far as I did during this process. The same goes for our work community. We implemented a lot of new ways of working, new methods of co-creation and expanded the ideals of work together during this process. I did learn a completely new way of regarding the world with phenomenology, which I have used ever since for critical self-reflection. Per aspera ad astra.

8.3   Evaluating the quality of the study

Tools for assessing quality of the qualitative research are scattered and there is little consensus on how to evaluate the quality of qualitative research (Cho 2017). Seale (2002) proposes methodological awareness and craftmanship as a solution to the scattered nature of the quality tools; by relying on these the researcher becomes somewhat autonomous in assessing the quality of the research. The criteria for assessing the quality of the accounts from the informants is not fixed, but the shift has been towards understanding the context of the informant (Clifford 1986, 9-10). As this thesis employs action research methodology and phenomenological methodology, the evaluation of the quality requires us to first look each separately and then incorporate them in a way that enables the assessment of the entirety of the work.

The *reliability* and *validity* of an action research is difficult to assess based on its transformative nature. As the action research seeks to change status of the

researched subject, the only reliable indicator on the reliability and validity is the *comparison to the objectives set in the study design*. These can be estimated by reflecting whether the problems faced in the beginning of the study were removed or their influence diminished. Even though this viewpoint is compelling, reliability and validity can be estimated from other perspectives and dimensions as well. (Kananen 2014, 126, 137.)

Reliability can be divided to *stability* and *consistency*. Stability is the reliability of the measurement tool across time; consistency estimates the changes of the phenomenon over time without affecting the stability of the measurement tool. Other perspective for reliability is the similarity of the results between multiple researchers. This perspective considers internal consistency of the data. As the last perspective, the criteria for qualitative research can be divided into the sufficiency of the data, the coverage of the analysis, and the evaluability and the reproducibility of the analysis. Reliability is a prerequisite for validity, but it cannot be used as a measure for validity of the research without problems. (Kananen 2014; Koskinen et al. 2005.)

Validity can be used to assess if the research measures what it is supposed to measure. From one perspective it can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity is used to estimate the correctness of the cause-and-effect relationships in the study. External validity evaluates the generalizability of the results. Validity as a measure for qualitative research has been opposed and challenged, as the individuality of each research project can create unique results that are tied to time, place, and events around the research. Validity can be gained by credibility, which considers whether the results are reliable and credible from the informant's point of view. One method of enhancing the credibility is to use multiple methods on the same data. This is called triangulation. In addition, triangulation can be used to produce more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and to compare multiple observations on the same subject. (Kananen 2014; Nightingale 2020.)

The comprehensiveness of the *documentation* considering the outset, the design, and the description affects the quality of the research. When done properly this would include notions on the circumstances, time used, reflections made, etc. The appropriate classification of the research material contributes also to the comprehensiveness of the documentation. The only way an outside evaluator can consider the quality of the research is by assessing the documentation produced before and during the research project. This does not mean that the documentation would enable valid *transferability* of the study design to a new subject as the results are interlinked to the context. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2012 & Kananen 2014)

The assessment of the quality of the phenomenological research seems to be grounded in evaluating the internal coherence of the arguments reached through the investigation. As phenomenology is interested in intuitive analysis of *essential structures*, and not in induction or deduction, the evaluation of the quality cannot lean on the same principles as in other forms of qualitative research. Ethical issues rise when assessing the quality of the phenomenological research. These essential structures can be evaluated, but as with the analysis, the evaluation procedure leans on the quality and training of the evaluator. These points lead to a situation, where the informants experience is transformed to something unrecognizable compared to the original intent, if the researcher is not skilled enough. (Levy-Malmberg & Eriksson 2010; Porter & Cohen 2013; Cho 2017.)

Porter & Cohen (2013) proposed touchstones instead of criteria for the evaluation of the phenomenological research. They identified eight of these touchstones which offer points of contact for the reviewer to contrast the research to her own experience and expertise. Here are presented adapted abridgements of those "touchstones" and the authors responses to the challenges they present:

1. *The philosophical tradition (descriptive phenomenology, interpretive phenomenology, or hermeneutic phenomenology) underlying the chosen method is explained and if sources from other traditions are used, they are contrasted to the chosen method.*
   - Husserl's descriptive phenomenology was explicitly chosen as the tradition, and the methods were chosen from that tradition. Tradition

of the sources cannot be discerned on all occasions, and thus views from different traditions might have been mixed.

2. *The rationale for the use of phenomenological method is explained, and relevant literature is reviewed; research is examined for relevant constructs and they are explained with enough basic knowledge of the field for the arguments to be valid.*

- The use of the chosen method is explained and defended. Relevant literature is reviewed in the scope possible for this thesis; related ideas are brought together in metacontextual framework. The author's basic knowledge of the field and methods has grown exponentially during the project but is still far from expertise.

3. *The research problem is based on an interest in understanding the experience and its context.*

- For such an intimate subject as the research problem of this thesis is, understanding of the individual and collective experience in the context set by the commissioner, chosen methods were evaluated to be best suited to answer the challenge.

4. *The approach is referenced with methodological works grounded in descriptive methodology, rather than generic qualitative methods. Omissions are stated and the approach is exemplified by specific activities, related in sufficient detail and with data examples to illustrate the rationale for ongoing methodological decisions.*

- Methodology was heavily based on the decidedly impalpable presentations of Husselr, rather than more operational methodologies built on his ideas. With this the author wanted to develop his own capability as the interpreter and performer of phenomenological acts. Data examples are used, and their interpretation is based on the chosen methods.

5. *In-depth interview with individuals and observations are the primary sources of data; the researcher's experience can be integrated as data in certain situations. Data are presented in enough detail to support the findings.*

- In-depth interviews were conducted with most of the participants. The authors own experiences are separated or pointed out in the findings for the most part. The other methodology used; the Participatory Action Research might have made some of the descriptions opaque by design. The research problem, on the other hand, leans on the transformative nature of this research and as such the experiences of the participants have intermingled in the process.

6. *Findings are presented in a narrative manner reflecting an underlying structure drawn from the experience, rather than adhering to a theoretical framework.*

- Both phenomenological parts are run through the constructs inner structure. The described structures could be more comprehensive and consider the effects this study had on those structures more lengthily.

7. *The style of the presentation should support the reader to draw into the experiences of the participants. Pithy remarks from the participants should be used to evoke a sense of understanding from the reader.*
   - Engaging descriptive language was used and the presentation was structured in a narrative manner. The readability could have been improved as lengthy and difficult sentences were used.
8. *The discussion should interface with any bracketed literature to illuminate the experience taking more completely into consideration the relationship of any prior work to the present work.*
   - As the author had limited time and experience on the tradition of descriptive phenomenology, there must be abundance of structurally close research available, which are not referenced here.

This thesis is subjective in its theme and methods. Triangulation with multiple methods and data sets were used to gain comprehensive look on the subject. Methods included the Participatory Action Research (PAR), an inclusive and a transformative method for empowering participants to create change in the research subject; the phenomenological investigation, of which phenomenological and eidetic reductions were used. The phenomenological reduction, performed on the author's own experience, consists of two staggered moments called epoché or bracketing and the reduction (proper). Epoché seeks to purify the experience from biases and assumptions to identify the underlying structure of the said experience for it to be accepted as is. The reduction, where that purified, accepted experience is seen as accepted. Further analysis is not done during the phenomenological reduction. The eidetic reduction expands this analysis to cover multiple informants' narratives to find structurally identifiable constructs, called eidos, that transcend the experience of one informant to reveal common underlying truths. From these premises four key points were considered to reach acceptable quality of this research:

1. Study design employs two different methodologies (PAR and phenomenology) and multiple methods from these methodologies thus enabling a triangulation to validate the quality of the findings. The phasing of the study was also designed to enable impartial spectatorship from the author, where that was needed. This can be seen in the workshops, where the author was not present and from the epoché that the author performed before starting further investigations.
2. The status of the author as the employer of the researched group was considered when designing the study and in the analysis of the material. In addition, the expertise of the author regarding the research problem and

setup was considered when the informants were included in the creation of new structure and content during this research.

3. Constant and considerate reflection of the author's actions and conceptions was performed for the whole duration of the research project. Research ethical questions were considered and protection of the rights of the informants were taken into consideration throughout the research. By these actions biases from the part of informants and the author, and the ignorance of the author were considered adequately thought through.

4. Participants were intermittently informed on the status and phase of the study. They also had the right and ability to acquaint themselves with the material, analyses and conclusions considering their own contributions. All the material related to the process were catalogued and saved for them to be assessed.

As ever in a study like this, the final say on the quality comes from reflecting on the transformation achieved and from the participants' experiences on the transformation. From that viewpoint, I would argue that the required quality was attained.

8.4   Further research

The research problem this thesis aimed to solve can be approached by varying the scale and depth. The understanding of the effects of getting to know each other in a larger scale would benefit from quantitative or mixed-methods research. On the other hand, this research only got so far on the study of individual's experience on the matter. Both would bring new and exciting information on the nature of the phenomenon of getting to know each other.

The study of the individual or small group experience over longer length of time would also give valuable insights on the process as the effects of knowing each other seem to be an entanglement of multiple parallel and opposing forces. Further research could operationalize the dimensions as measurable units and thus discover underlying generalizability if such can be found.

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