



# **Towards Soft Social Sustainability in a Hybrid Organisational Culture**

**Case: Aava & Bang**

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### **Abstract**

White collar work environments have seen a major transformation in recent years, accelerated in no small part by the COVID-19 pandemic. The need to work remotely as a result of social distancing re-strictions has led organisations to consider how to optimise the resulting combination of office and remote work environments. The result has been the emergence of hybrid work models as part of an organisation's normal functioning. For hybrid work to produce the best possible results for an organi-sation, changes to its organisational culture are required to at least maintain, if not increase, employ-ees' wellbeing.

The objective in this thesis was to identify tools which would support development of a hybrid organi-sational culture from the perspective of soft social sustainability. The case selected for detailed study was Aava & Bang, a Jyväskylä-based advertising agency. The principal focus in the thesis was social sus-tainability as it is the least studied area of sustainability but has a major impact on the wellbeing of a company's employees and on productivity and competitiveness. The study mapped Aava & Bang's cur-rent situation regarding hybrid work, the culture of hybrid organisation from the perspective of social sustainability and searched for new ways to maintain and develop a socially sustainable hybrid organi-sational culture.

A mixed-method research study was carried out, in which data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Given the limited amount of prior research on the topic, a recognised hy-brid work expert was first interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of pertinent issues. Next, a member of Aava & Bang's management team was interviewed to chart the company's current situation in more depth. Finally, Aava & Bang's staff responded to a survey informed by both the interviews and the theoretical background developed by the author that mapped employees' opinions, experiences, and feelings about hybrid work.

The results of the study, analysed within a physical, digital, social, and mental workplace framework, revealed a host of viewpoints, knowledge, experiences, and suggestions regarding hybrid work. Key issues included task-work location optimisation, improved ergonomics, the need for high-quality tech-nological solutions, cyber security, a desire for transparent and understandable agreements & rules, a sense of community, and development of physical and mental wellbeing. Overall, results showed that soft social sustainability is an important issue to consider when optimising organisational culture for the "new normal".

### **Keywords/tags (subjects)**

Hybrid Work, Organisational Culture, Hybrid Organisational Culture, Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Social Sustainability, Soft Social Sustainability

### **Miscellaneous (Confidential information)**

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## **Tiivistelmä**

Asiantuntijatyö on suuressa murroksessa ja COVID-19-pandemia on vauhdittanut muutosta valtavasti. Pandemian aiheuttama etätyöpakko sai organisaatiot pohtimaan toimisto- ja etätyön yhdistelmän entistä suurempaa hyödyntämistä, eli hybridityömallien rakentamista osaksi toimivaa työn tekemisen mallia. Jotta hybridityö tuottaisi yritykselle parhaan mahdollisen lopputuloksen, tarvitaan muutosta myös organisaatiokulttuuriin, jotta työntekijöiden hyvinvointi säilyy ja ideaalitalanteessa myös kasvaa.

Opinnäytetyön avulla pyrittiin löytämään toimeksiantajana toimineelle mainostoimisto Aava & Bangille työkaluja, jotka tukisivat hybridioorganisaatiokulttuurin kehittämistä pehmeän sosiaalisen kestävyden näkökulmasta. Opinnäytetyössä keskityttiin sosiaaliseen kestävyteen, sillä se on vähiten tutkittu vastuullisuuden osa-alue, mutta sillä on mittavia vaikutuksia yrityksen henkilöstön hyvinvointiin ja sitä kautta yrityksen tuottavuuteen. Tutkimuksessa kartoitettiin yrityksen tämänhetkinen tilanne liittyen hybridityöhön, hybridioorganisaatiokulttuuriin sosiaalisen kestävyden näkökulmasta, sekä etsittiin uusia tapoja ylläpitää ja kehittää sosiaalisesti kestävää hybridioorganisaatiokulttuuria.

Opinnäytetyö toteutettiin monimetodisena tutkimuksena, jossa aineistoa kerättiin sekä kvalitatiivisin, että kvantitatiivisin metodein. Koska aiheesta on vielä vähän tutkimustietoa, haastateltiin aiheeseen perehtynyttä asiantuntijaa syvemmän ymmärryksen saamiseksi. Tutkimukseen haastateltiin myös Aava & Bangin johtoryhmän jäsentä, jotta yrityksen sen hetkinen tilanne saatiin kartoitettua syvemmin. Tämän lisäksi toimeksiantajan henkilöstö osallistui pääosin kvantitatiiviseen kyselyyn, muutamalla kvalitatiivisella kysymyksellä, jossa kartoitettiin heidän mielipiteitä, kokemuksia ja tunteita hybridityöstä.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella hybridityö jaettiin neljään osa-alueeseen; fyysiseen, digitaaliseen, sosiaaliseen, sekä henkiseen työympäristöön. Keskeisiä asioita olivat työtehtävien sijainnin optimointi, ergonomian parantaminen, laadukkaiden teknologisten ratkaisujen tarve, kyberturvallisuus, halu läpinäkyviin ja ymmärrettäviin sopimuksiin ja sääntöihin, yhteisöllisyys sekä fyysisen ja henkisen hyvinvoinnin kehittäminen. Kaiken kaikkiaan tulokset osoittivat, että pehmeä sosiaalinen kestävyys on tärkeä asia, joka on otettava huomioon optimoitaessa organisaatiokulttuuria "uuteen normaaliin".

## **Avainsanat (asiasanat)**

Hybridityö, organisaatiokulttuuri, hybridioorganisaatiokulttuuri, kestävyys, kestävä kehitys, sosiaalinen kestävyys, pehmeä sosiaalinen kestävyys

## **Muut tiedot (salassa pidettävät liitteet)**

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## Key Concepts

<b>Hybrid Work</b>	Work where office and remote work are combined, and work can be done basically anywhere anytime.
<b>Organisational Culture</b>	Organisation, employer, and employee values, needs, norms and assumptions about the organisation.
<b>Hybrid Organisational Culture</b>	The same ideology as organisational culture but created to promote a hybrid working environment.
<b>Sustainability</b>	A concept where people live their life in a way that does not harm or interfere with the lives of future generations. It has three different dimensions: environmental-, economic-, and social sustainability.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	A global goal that supports sustainability and finds resources to support environmental-, economic- and social sustainability.
<b>Social Sustainability</b>	Everything connected with human needs and thoughts. It is the least researched and hardest aspect of sustainability to understand since it is very personal and individual for each person.
<b>Soft Social Sustainability</b>	Also known as emerging social sustainability as defined by Colantonio (2011). It represents a softer side of social sustainability, which supports, for example people's wellbeing and quality of life.

# 1 Introduction and Research Objectives

*“Success in a hybrid work environment requires employers to move beyond viewing remote or hybrid environments as a temporary or short-term strategy and to treat it as an opportunity”*  
(Penn 2021).

During 2020, most employees in white-collar workplaces had to start working remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It happened quickly, and businesses did not have time to prepare a strong remote work strategy. Prior to the pandemic, remote work was not highly promoted, and it was assumed that working from home was less productive than working in an office. However, when remote work was forced upon them, companies soon discovered that once their employees settled into remote work, the requirements were fulfilled, and the results were the same or even better than previously. Since then, organisations have been rethinking their working environments to be more flexible. (Tippmann, Sharkey Scott & Gantly 2021.) The ‘new normal’ or hybrid working environment combines office and remote work together, meaning that employees can mostly choose where they work best, resulting in better results for the organisation (Ro 2020). As hybrid working models are becoming more common in white-collar organisations, it's critical to reassess their organisational culture. Traditional organisational culture is oriented toward office work and excludes remote working environment. (Pantzar 2020.) Employee wellbeing and work motivation are influenced by organisational culture, which supports employees' needs and values. Hybrid organisational culture requires some changes, as it has the potential to affect employee productivity if things go wrong. (Niemi 2018, 378.)

Because of climate change, human rights issues, and economic considerations, sustainability has risen to become a significant global concern (Thiele 2016, 16). Sustainability can be divided into three dimensions: Environmental, economic, and social sustainability (Cavagnero & Curiel 2012, 2). Of these, social sustainability has received the least attention, and is the most difficult to comprehend (Kosanović, Glažar, Stamenković, Ljubiša Folić & Fikfak 2018). For this reason, Colantonio (2011.) further divides social sustainability into hard and soft social sustainability. While hard social sustainability deals with ending poverty, hunger, and education, soft social sustainability is more concerned with people's happiness, wellbeing, and safety. Soft social sustainability can also be described also as the emerging social sustainability (Colantonio 2011, 43).

These two principal topics are combined in this thesis in an investigation of how soft social sustainability can be developed alongside hybrid organisational cultures. These two topics, and the research problem they stimulate, were selected for study because they are absolutely central to the current and future work life of millions of people around the world, and in a more general sense critical to the health and wellbeing of the planet and society as a whole. In particular, the focus on “soft” sustainability reflects current trends and will help develop the knowledge base of this emerging discipline.

The theoretical background begins with a general description of hybrid working environments and social sustainability. First, the meaning of sustainability and sustainable development are explained, including their primary dimensions (environmental, economic and social). After that, social sustainability is described in more depth, and it is explained how the practices are important in an organisation. Next, hybrid work is described, including office work, remote work, and hybrid work. When describing hybrid work, organisational culture and hybrid organisational culture are described, as is the role social sustainability plays in them. Hybrid organisational culture is an important factor of this thesis, since it makes employees’ values and needs heard, both of which are central themes in social sustainability. After covering hybrid organisational culture, the issue of building tools for the new normal is considered, and tools and practices needed in the hybrid organisational culture, especially while maintaining and developing soft social sustainability, are discussed.

To investigate these issues in more depth, an interview was conducted with an independent hybrid work expert, as well as a member of senior management at the case investigated in this thesis, Aava & Bang. The idea was to understand the current state of, and needs related to, hybrid work in general, and at Aava & Bang in particular. Based on the interviews and the theoretical background, a survey was developed to investigate the same issues within Aava & Bang’s employees. The research methods and analysis are described in chapter 3, Method.

Aava & Bang is a marketing agency with approximately 50 white-collar employees. The company was established in 2005, and they have offices in Jyväskylä, Helsinki and Tampere, as well as customers all over Finland. Annually, they have over 150 customers and 600 projects.

(Rakkaudesta kasvuun ja markkinointiin [Love for Growth and Marketing n.d.]) In 2020 they came



first in the Great Place to Work- awards which gave them the Great place to Work-certificate. The award and certificate are internationally recognised and shows that the employees of the company think the organisation is a great place to work, and their employee satisfaction is high. (Okkonen 2020.) In 2021 Aava & Bang was fourth in the same awards (Moilanen 2021).

Since Aava & Bang has been awarded the Great Place to Work-certificate, it was considered interesting to see how social sustainability factors might be reflected in hybrid work, and whether there might be some factors of social sustainability issues that the organisation should be aware of. The reason for choosing Aava & Bang as the case to be studied was that it is a local, small to medium sized company that has experience of working in a hybrid working model, and in which sustainability is known to play a central role. Collecting data from employees who have previous knowledge about the subject ensured that the research content would be understood and enhanced the validity of the data collected. (Kananen 2019, 31.)

The research problem investigated in this thesis was how to optimise practices and tools required to build hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability.

Two research questions were formulated when investigating the research problem in relation to Aava & Bang.

1. What specific tools could and do Aava & Bang use to develop their hybrid organisational culture?
2. How might these tools be driven by Aava & Bang's desire to maintain and develop issues central to soft social sustainability within their organisation?

These questions were investigated with reference to the four types of workplaces described below in chapter 2.4. *Building Tools for the New Normal*, namely Physical, Digital, Social, and Mental workplaces, each of which covered a series of sub-themes. The use of this framework meant that the data collected would be easier to reflect on in relation to the research problem and theoretical background.

The overarching goal of this research was to investigate how an organisation can build a hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing soft social sustainability. To achieve this, three principal objectives were defined:

1. Develop a solid theoretical framework on which to base data collection and analysis. The theoretical framework is the foundation on which the thesis is built, so this is a critical first step.
2. Collect high-quality data using a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods approach was chosen to increase reliability of the case study data.
3. Identify specific tools from the results that an organisation can use to facilitate development of a hybrid-ready organisational culture. By highlighting key issues raised by the expert, employer, and employees, concrete tools and solutions can be proposed.

## 2 Theoretical Background

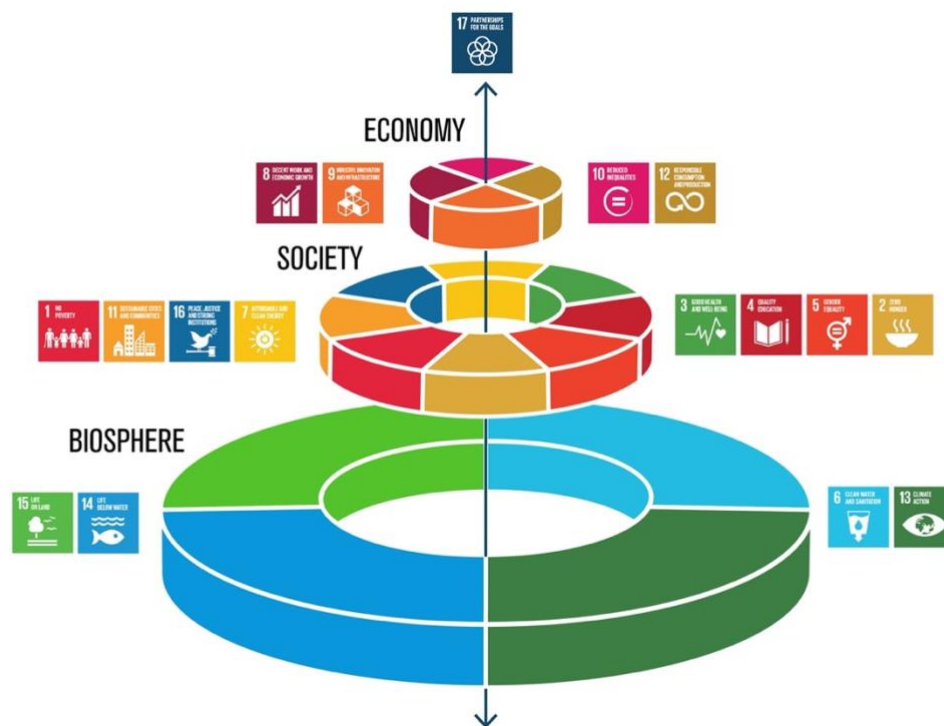
The theoretical background has been structured from various refereed journals, books, and other articles. The two interviews provided some additional themes. It begins with a definition of social sustainability, followed by a definition of hybrid work and organisational culture. The last part describes the tools used in hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability. It has been used in structuring the research and building understanding of the subject.

### 2.1 From Sustainability Towards Social Sustainability

Concerns about sustainability can be traced back to the year 1700, when fears of deforestation first arose (Thiele 2016, 16). However, it was not until the 1980s that the term sustainability began to be more commonly used and specifically defined, and when it became a more meaningful term to the general public (Portney 2015, 1). In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published the Bruntland Report about sustainability and sustainable development. It defined sustainability and the kind of actions that should be taken to deal with sustainability-related issues around the world. It addressed issues concerning the environment, the economy, and society. (Bruntland 1987, 5, 7-8.)

The same report stated that sustainable development is a global goal, but it is important to understand that the goal is reached differently in different countries. The reason for that is that sustainability needs vary according to the nation, meaning that every country should have their own actions towards sustainable development. (Bruntland 1987, 39.) Even now, the same idea applies when sustainability issues are on the table, even if they have evolved and developed (Morelli 2011, 5). In 2015, the United Nations launched a blueprint called the “2030 Agenda” for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that should be achieved by the year 2030. There are 17 goals that are considered the most important targets to achieve, and the goals tackle issues related to human rights, economic growth, and climate. (The 17 Goals n.d.) The biggest goal of sustainable development is to make life better for the people who are living in this planet right now, as well as for future generations. This goal requires a lot of work from governments, businesses, and individuals. (Cavagnero & Curiel 2012, 1.)

According to Rockström and Sukhev (2016) Sustainable Development Goals can be arranged according to the “wedding cake” model (See Figure 1.). It shows how all the goals are separate, but the idea is to represent the goals in a way that the environment supports society, and society supports the economy. The “wedding cake” model shows that sustainable development consists of all the three dimensions combined, and it is important to understand that the goals cannot be fully reached if any of the other parts are not complete. (Rockström & Sukhdev 2016.)



Graphics by Janine Lohmann

Figure 1. Wedding Cake Model for SDGs, which also pictures the three dimensions of sustainability. (Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, 2016, <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-14-how-food-connects-all-the-sdgs.html>.)

Sustainability can be approached according to different models. The first way is to divide them into three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social sustainability. These can also be described with three P's: Planet, Profit and People. (Cavagnero & Curiel 2012, 2)

### **2.1.1 Environmental sustainability**

Environmental sustainability is about protecting global ecosystems and preserving natural resources. It is based on preventing climate change, which has been accelerated by human actions. It is required that people acknowledge the damage they have made to the earth and start to take responsibility for it. (Cavagnero & Curiel 2012, 30.) Portney (2015, 27-28) states that the biggest environmental worries are high carbon emission, the rise of the sea levels, and high temperatures.

Also, environmental sustainability can be seen as protecting our ecosystem, which can be divided into untouched, and human altered & handled ecosystems. An example of an untouched ecosystem is forests that have not been used by people. An example of a human-altered and handled ecosystem is agriculture. (Morelli 2011, 4.)

To have a responsible socioeconomic system requires clean air, water, and land, without which sustainability cannot be achieved. The environment can survive without social and economic sustainability, but these are dependent upon having a sustainable environment. (Morelli 2011, 4.) Rockström and Sukhdev (2016) agree that while the environment is at the base of sustainability, the three parts of it should not be seen as three separate, unrelated concepts. Environmental sustainability supports social sustainability, and social sustainability supports economic sustainability. The planet is not negotiable, but it should not set limitations on prosperity, transformation, and success. (Rockström & Sukhdev 2016.)

### **2.1.2 Economic sustainability**

Economic sustainability is defined as practices that promote good economic growth for the future without causing any harm to the environment and society (Portney 2015, 25). It is developed from environmental and social sustainability needs, and for this reason is an important part of sustainability that shows that to have a sustainable economy the environment and society must be sustainable, too. (Ikerd 2012, 11). The reason why economic sustainable development is important is the fact that it shows growth in living conditions which then makes the conditions and wellbeing and social interactions better to humans. (Portney 2015, 20-21). As Morelli (2011) states when talking about economic sustainability, economic sustainability refers to the activity that has been

made economically which does not affect negatively to the future generations. It should respect the environment and keep it safe. Economic sustainability does not define the standards of environmental sustainability, but it ensures that social costs of the standards are minimised. (Morelli 2011, 2.)

Economic decisions are always based on present values not future values, which highlights the fact that economic sustainability requires a lot of work. It is also clear that economic growth and profit clash with economic sustainability (Ikerd 2012, 10). It has been argued that to be more economically sustainable, consumption should be minimised. However, to get to the point of economic growth, some consumption is inevitable (Portney 2015, 57). One answer to this could be a circular economy, which would protect the environment and social success, which also would provide economic growth while being within the boundaries of sustainable development. A circular economy means that materials are made to last forever, and they can be used in a “closed-loop system”. (Sverko Grdic, Niciz & Rudan 2020.)

### **2.1.3 Social Sustainability**

Social sustainability is the least researched and for this reason the least understood dimension of sustainability. Sustainability and sustainable development have been a concern for decades, but social sustainability started to receive more recognition in research and practices only in 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Kosanović et al. 2018.) Social sustainability does not have a standardised definition, and multiple different sources describe social sustainability slightly differently (Colantonio 2011, 37). For example, Mensah and Casadevall (2019) explains social sustainability as equity, empowerment, convenience, cultural identity, and institutional stability; but Kosanović and others (2018) argue that social sustainability also includes different cultures, ethnicities, and religions. On the other hand, Amrutha and Geetha (2020) state that health, safety, and wellbeing are the most important factors in social dimensions of sustainability. This shows that there is no single correct definition of it, and that more research is needed to make it more clearly defined (Vafadarnikjoo, Ahmadi, Hazen & Liou 2020).

Since social sustainability is hard to define, Colantonio (2011) has divided it into “hard” social sustainability and “soft” social sustainability. “Hard” social sustainability is more about the traditional way of considering social dimensions in sustainability such as poverty, human rights,

and equity. On the contrary “soft” social sustainability is more concerned with modern and newer ways of framing social sustainability, such as improving happiness, identity, and wellbeing. (Colantonio 2011, 40.) Soft social sustainability can reveal different features of the community, and it can highlight issues that might not previously have been seen, bringing actual change, for example, to particular communities (Petrova & Marinova 2015). Table 1 shows key aspects of hard and soft social sustainability. While the focus of this thesis is soft social sustainability, it should be recognised that both aspects of social sustainability are equally valuable.

Table 1. Traditional and Emerging Social Sustainability Key Themes (Adapted from Colantonio, 2011, 40).

<b>Traditional (hard social sustainability)</b>	<b>Emerging (soft social sustainability)</b>
Basic needs, including housing and environmental health	Demographic change (aging, migration, and mobility)
Education and skills	Social mixing and cohesion
Employment	Identity, sense of place and culture
Equity	Empowerment, participation, and access
Human rights and gender	Health and safety
Poverty	Social capital
Social justice	Wellbeing, happiness, and quality of life

Sustainable development with all three dimensions (environmental, economic, social) is important to everyone living on the planet. Each dimension should play a role in every organisation, and a balance should be found between the dimensions that promotes a better workplace. It should be important to identify which aspects are needed to create a sustainable workplace. (Jilcha 2020.) In this thesis, workplace sustainability is focused on from the point of view of social sustainability when building a hybrid organisational culture. Petrova and Marinova (2015) state that social sustainability has many dimensions and definitions, which means that in sustainable development they range widely because they determine the need for long-term development. Social dimensions can also highlight a well-operating society’s challenges. (Petrova & Marinova 2015.)

Social sustainability has now become a more focused factor in organisations. Before the importance of social sustainability, organisations tended to focus more on the economic and

environmental dimensions of sustainability. Now, social sustainability should be more in management's focus. (Vafadarnikjoo et al. 2020.) It has been said that sustainability is one of the factors affecting how organisations will function, how they should focus their strategies, and how they should improve the social aspects of the workplaces and their community, all of which are essential parts of social sustainability. (Chouinard, Ellison & Ridgeway 2011; Colantonio 2011, 41). Even though it is becoming increasingly clear that social aspects are very important to most organisations, and they are now starting to separate social sustainability values away from the economic values, their actions typically still focus on revenues (Boyer, Peterson, Arora & Caldwell 2016).

Social sustainability is being increasingly taken into account in fields such as management and business. This reveals an increased understanding of its importance, but still more work is needed. (Wolff & Ehrström 2020.) Social sustainability from an organisation's point of view can be described, for example, in terms of integrating the community and being socially inclusive, as well as focusing on general employee wellbeing, health and services, and facilities (Colantonio 2011, 48). A healthy work-life balance and work wellbeing requires a safe, healthy, and productive working environment. From an organisation's point of view, it should be seen as an investment, since employees will be more motivated and happier at work. It can also bring competitive advantage and economic profit. (Työhyvinvointi [Work wellbeing] n.d.)

## **2.2 From Office Work Towards Hybrid Work**

Having established a sustainability-related focus on (soft) social sustainability, different modes of work are now compared and contrasted, with the aim of establishing a secondary focus on hybrid-related issues. After all, to create hybrid organisational culture, it is important to understand what hybrid work is and what it includes.

### **2.2.1 Office work**

What we now term office work originated in 17<sup>th</sup> Century. This form of work has thus been with us a long time even though many people consider it a fairly new concept. (Chevez & Huppatz 2017.) In 19<sup>th</sup> Century, working models required employees to go to certain location, at certain times, to work. The thinking behind this was to find the best place to work that would increase



productivity levels and the efficiency of the work tasks and bring more economic profit to the organisation. (Ayoko & Ashkanasy 2020).

Office work refers to work that is carried out in the physical work environment, e.g., office premises, that the organisation provides for their employees. In the office, employees do their work during set times that have been agreed beforehand. A typical work schedule requires employees to work from 9 am to 5 pm, five days per week. This schedule is generally not very flexible from an employee's perspective, and its structure means there is more authority and work is more consistent. (Richmond 2017.)

Working in an office is beneficial for social relationships since one is in close proximity to, and interacting with, people for many hours on a daily basis. A fixed work schedule is also beneficial in that it creates more structure to an employee's life (Rosebaum 2021.) On the other hand, office work is not as flexible as remote work, and employees are required to stay in the same city for a long period of time, since they must go to the office every day (Otte 2021).

### **2.2.2 Remote work**

At the other end of the workplace spectrum is remote work, which is work carried out away from the office. Remote work is a possibility mostly for white-collar workers, such as professionals and managers who can do work tasks basically wherever, whenever. (Felstead & Henseke 2017). When completing their work remotely, employees can change their working location anytime they wish, which helps make working more flexible. Digital tools are at the heart of remote work and are what allow one to work – at least in theory – anytime, anywhere. (Cook 2019, 12.) Technology is a megatrend according to SITRA (the Finnish Innovation Fund), and as new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), are developed, and digitalisation becomes the norm, they will have an increasing affect on workplaces and social interactions between employees. Digitalisation – and the anytime, anywhere ethos it evokes – is driving organisations to embed everything within virtual environments, which will make future workplaces more flexible. (Dufva 2020.)

During medieval times, working from home was very common. So, just like office work, remote work is also not a new concept. However, it is a concept that until recently had faded into obscurity for most people. Essentially, as office work became more common, offices came to

represent working life, while home came to represent convenience and privacy (Chevez & Huppertz 2017). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working was not common in most businesses. In some quarters, it was almost despised. For example, in 2013 Yahoo! did not allow its employees to work remotely due to a perceived lack of speed and quality. Yahoo! believed that having every employee working physically together was better for business. It is now recognised, however, that working from home can increase employee's productivity since one's work schedule can be more flexible and adjusted to the needs of day-to-day life. (Felstead, Henseke 2017.) Of course, not all companies are able to give flexible working hours to their employees, so the transformation towards remote work is still in its early stages. Nonetheless, COVID-19 has forced businesses to re-evaluate the importance of remote working and the role that remote work will play in their organisation. (Bonacini, Gallo & Scicchitano, 2021.)

Remote working has received largely positive feedbacks from employees, with reports of increased productivity and good or better results common (Robinson 2020). Employees also report increased positive feelings towards their job as a result of an increased sense of autonomy. Since the work schedule is not forced upon an individual, they can choose the best time to work themselves (Wang, Liu, Qian & Parker 2020). Flexibility at work can also bring more motivation towards the job and it can be more satisfying, too (Felstead & Henseke 2017).

### **2.2.3 Hybrid work**

It is believed that only a small percentage of companies will implement a remote-only working model after COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted. Instead, many organisations consider the "new normal" to be hybrid work. (The Rise of Working from Home 2021.) Hybrid work is a combination of office work and remote work. It can be described as either office-centric, in which there is more office work than remote work, or virtual-centric, in which more remote dominates (Ro 2020; Tippmann et al. 2021). Gratton (2021) believes that when talking about hybrid work the common points of reference are where and when employees work. This illustrated in Figure 2.

People have now realised that they want to fit their work to the other parts of their lives not to implement work to their life. Even though working is important for people, if they have a choice to work wherever they want they will choose flexible working environments more likely. The hope is that hybrid work would combine the structure and social life of the office with the flexibility and

freedom of working from home. (Ro 2020.) In hybrid working model organisations can decide with the employees which work tasks are best done in the office and which are best done remotely. For example, work tasks that require creativity to thrive within the team and from other people office working might be the most beneficial. The tasks that are requiring a lot of concentration and thought processes are best done in the remote office where employee can choose to work in a place without interruptions. (Tippmann et al. 2021.)

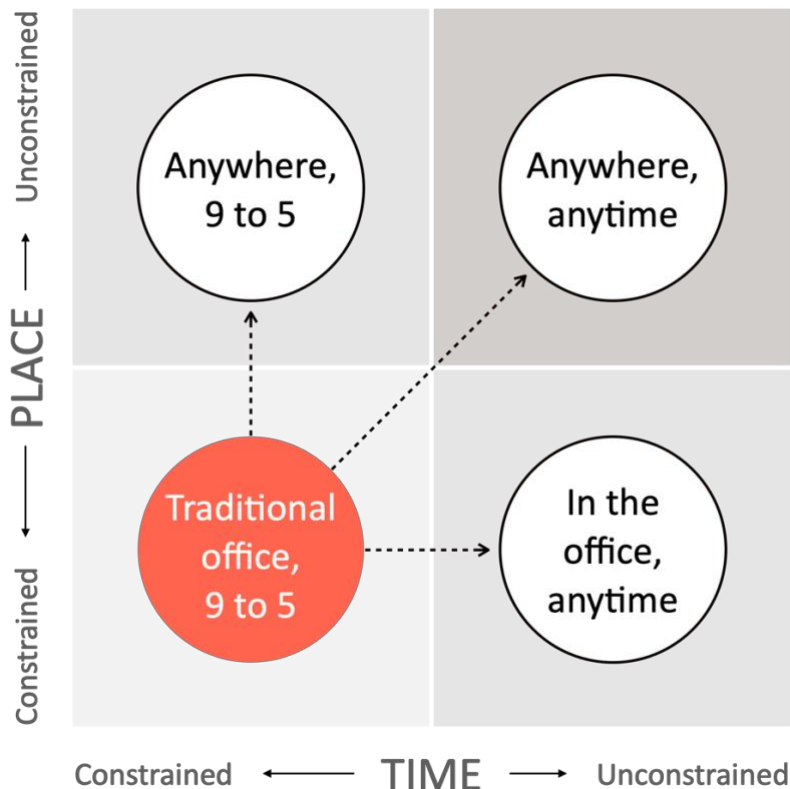


Figure 2. A depiction of key considerations and their relationship to one another in a hybrid work scenario. Adapted from Gratton (2021).

It's easy to see how the hybrid working model could be beneficial to both employers and their employees. It gives flexibility to employees to choose *where* they work, allowing those who want to work from home to do so, and those who prefer to work in the office also to do so. When implemented well it can bring employees' capabilities and innovative thinking into the organisation (Helberath, Kilmann, Lovich, Tzanetti, Bayley, Beck, Kaufman, Khandelwal, Schuler & Woolsey 2020.) Also, it can afford the organisation a competitive advantage since it brings more

flexibility to the employees, which in turn is linked to good employee experience (Tippmann et al. 2021).

It's also important to consider, however, that some employees might find hybrid work harder than office work. It can bring difficulties in balancing between office work and remote work since it can be hard to build offices again and again in different places, and some important equipment might be at another location. (Lufkin 2021b.) Also, even though many employees find hybrid working to be beneficial to their productivity levels and work motivation, because remote work allows people to have more freedom at work, employers can find it more difficult. Changing the company's working models is hard work, and to have successful results that benefit the organisation and employees it is essential to make changes in the ways of working. (The Rise of Working from Home 2021.)

Richmond (2017) suggests that remote working as part of a hybrid work model could be easier for younger generations who are more familiar with newer technologies and might feel more productive when working remotely. Older generations may prefer to work from the office because it can help with their routines and make their work easier to accomplish. (Richmond 2017.) On the other hand, younger employees might need the office to have more support in the work tasks which then would lead to better results in their working effort (Lufkin 2021b). Because different people want and need different things, working remotely should be a possibility, not mandatory (Siltamäki 2021). Therefore, hybrid work could be beneficial to the organisations since it gives the employees the freedom to choose where to work.

## **2.3 From Organisational Culture Towards Hybrid Organisational Culture**

Hybrid work, then, appears to be the "new normal", at least for (predominantly white collar) organisations that are able to implement it effectively. However, as hybrid work becomes increasingly common, it's critical that organisational culture is updated accordingly (Jilcha 2020).

### **2.3.1 What is Traditional Organisational Culture**

To understand organisational culture, it is important to understand what culture as a concept means (Schein & Schein 2017, 6). Cultural identity is one part of social sustainability, and culture itself represents the way people live and what kind of beliefs and values they have. (Mensah &

Casadevall 2019; Culture n.d). Culture can be seen in individual and community behaviour in times of crisis, and in their decision-making (Niemi 2018, 378).

Organisational culture is a social phenomenon that comes from the concept of culture (Pinheiro, Mesquita & Matos 2017). It is like a glue that connects people to the organisation and creates a common value-base, upon which daily work schedule and structure is built (Hietala, Kaivanto, Pystynen 2021). It is based on the values, assumptions, norms, and beliefs that employees and managers have about the organisation. Organisational culture has a great influence in practices such as problem-solving and decision-making, but it also forms the basis of the social relationships between every member of the organisation. (Fietz & Günther 2021.) Khan, Ismail, Hussain & Alghazali (2020) describe organisational culture as a culture that has been built to understand the attitudes, characteristics, and manners inside the organisation. It shows the employees how to behave and act in the company. (Khan, Ismail, Hussain & Alghazali 2020.)

According to Rantanen, Leppänen and Kankaanpää (2020) the best-known model for organisational culture has been created by Edgar Schein (1987). The model has been divided to three different levels. The first level is the structures and procedures, such as offices, dress code, work humour, and everything that is seen on the outside. The second level is values and norms, which indicate the organisation's identity, vision, and mission. It also shows how the organisation wants others to see them. The third level is the basic assumptions, which are mostly the subconscious beliefs that can be hard to change and make visible. (Rantanen, Leppänen & Kankaanpää 2020, 54).

According to Heikinheimo (2021, 188) the most important factor of organisational culture is letting employees participate in the shared work to create success for the organisation. This then leads to another important factor of the culture in the organisations which is risk management and how employees deal with and control risks that arise while working (Niemi 2018, 377). Every organisation has their own organisational culture, but the basics of each are the same (Fietz & Günther 2021). When building organisational culture, it should be built on the facts that makes the work communities' actions better and on finding tools to replacing the negative signals with more positive ones (Heikinheimo 2021, 183). The culture that the organisation builds based on their values, attitudes and beliefs is often seen as a source of their success (Schein & Schein 2017, 207).

Organisational culture helps employees have a sense of identity which brings commitment to the organisation. Because of this, employees most likely want to do what is best for the organisation. Organisational culture also makes people have a bigger sense of belonging because it gives an illusion that the organisation they believe in is different from other organisations. (Pinheiro et al. 2017.) As Heikinheimo (2021) states, without a sense of belonging there cannot be a shared culture. To have a sense of belonging there should be a good team spirit, caring and respecting managers, and trustworthy and fair actions. These three factors reflect people's need for safety and approval. (Heikinheimo 2021, 189.)

Organisational culture raises the question of whether the values, beliefs, and attitudes of an employee about the organisation is in conflict with their personal values. Another question is whether or not it's even possible to build organisational culture, since every individual has their own values and needs. (Asatiani, Hämäläinen, Penttinen & Rossi 2020.) Pinheiro and others (2017) state that when building organisational culture from scratch, the early stages are structured mostly from the organisation's founders or employers' values and assumptions of the employees, and that after that it is built from the behaviours and attitudes that the employees share. To have a good organisational culture it is important to have a clear structure of what is expected from the employees. The expectations are based on the organisation's strategy and goals. (Heikinheimo 2021, 192.)

### **2.3.2 Creating Hybrid Organisational Culture**

Since organisational culture has a lot to do with work society and social issues, it needs to be re-evaluated frequently. New social changes and issues mean that organisational culture should be seen as an adjustable concept. (Pinheiro et al. 2017.) In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant effects on how society functions, and traditional organisational culture is not built to perform well in the hybrid workplace (Pantzar 2020; A Bright Future for the World of Work 2021). Thus, because hybrid work is likely to become the new norm, to have a productive and beneficial hybrid working environment organisations will need to make some changes to their culture.

It is important to understand that building a new organisational culture takes time; it is not possible to change everything overnight (Rantanen et al. 2020, 54). The reason for the slow

process of changing organisational culture is that people, manners, processes and built structures are maintaining it, and all the old habits are strongly aligned with the old organisational culture (Niemi 2018, 378). Järvinen (2020) argues that making new procedures for organisational culture, in this case for hybrid organisational culture, requires a lot of time and strong willpower of management. It means that managers need to have a lot of conversations with their employees, enact resilient and constant actions to repeat same things repeatedly and the old unwanted habits are cut out very strongly from the new organisational culture. Over time, the new culture will become the common practice. (Järvinen 2020, 194.) Jilcha (2020) mentioned that when an organisation is in the middle of change – in this case changing their organisational culture – having employees be part of it will strengthen the changes, promote the quality of working life, and create better results in the work tasks. (Jilcha 2020).

As mentioned above, traditional organisational culture is not created for hybrid work. However, traditional and hybrid organisational cultures still share many similarities. For example, both are based on people's different values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms. (Knight 2020b.) Also, both emphasise the importance of communication, even though in the hybrid organisational culture communication has become ever more important since not all employees are in the office (A Bright Future for the World of Work 2021). Moreover, increased digital communication required in a hybrid working model will change the dynamics of the traditional organisational culture. When people see each other, it is easy to see and sense the emotion compared to virtual environments. (Schein & Schein 2017, 9.) Serpa and Ferreira (2019) agree and argue that technologies make human relationships different in organisations, so it is important to understand when people need physical interactions and when they will manage with digital communication.

Since hybrid work means that employees are not all working in the same workplace at the same time, there is a risk of having two separate organisational cultures; one for office workplace and another for remote workplace. This can cause inequalities between the workplaces. (Lufkin 2021a.) Although changing organisational culture often takes a lot of time, some things can be accomplished more quickly. To prevent two different organisational cultures emerging in hybrid work, employers could start leading the environment of emotions that can change a lot faster than a new organisational culture. Environment of emotions refers to employees' senses, expressions and actions to the emotions that occur while working. Taking care of employees' emotions will

bring more understanding and support from the employees while the company is in a big change of an organisational culture. (Rantanen et al. 2020, 56, 59.)

Changing organisational culture to the hybrid working model will bring an increased sense of autonomy. When employees are given autonomy over their work tasks and how to accomplish them, their motivation is increased, which in turn feeds the whole work community. That can also have a negative side to it since for some people full autonomy brings more stress and the feeling of the unknown. That can be a challenge, as it can be hard for that employee to know what is expected of them, which can then lead to overachieving, which in turn can lead to burn out. (Heikinheimo 2021, 190, 192.) Clearly, it's important to balance autonomy with employees' functioning and capabilities.

Chassaing (2021) argues that hybrid organisational culture can also be developed while keeping up with social sustainability, since organisational culture has a lot to do with employee's values, assumptions, and norms. It will bring more devotion to the company from the employees, which will also bring economic growth to the organisation. To get to this point, it is important to build organisational culture that is sustainable. To achieve greater economic growth, organisations need social sustainability actions in their organisational culture. Subjects such as cyber security, balancing the use of new technologies, focusing on humans values in their culture, increasing the sense of diversity, promoting creativity, and developing networking make hybrid organisational culture more socially sustainable (Chassaing 2021, 40, 44.)

## **2.4 Building Tools for the New Normal**

Hybrid organisational culture can be hard to build, but when done correctly the possibilities for reducing the price for office spaces, bringing more productivity and motivation towards the company, and creating new kinds of relationships with customers will make it worth it when employees work in co-working offices. (Helberath et al. 2020.) According to Knight (2020b) hybrid work has brought positive experiences to the organisation, and it has been showing that there is a need to build new creations towards the "new normal". Also, remote working has been showing more innovative practices and it can promote more results to the company (Gladwell n.d).



Since the hybrid working model is here to stay, it is important to build hybrid organisational culture to support the change (Helberath, et al. 2020). Innovating new methods, processes and products for different workplaces can increase employees' quality of working life, make organisational culture better and bring more profit to the organisation. (Jilcha 2020). So, what are some of the issues an organisations should consider, and what are some of the tools they might use to create an effective hybrid organisational culture?

Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) created tools to build a hybrid culture and maintain social sustainability. Tools could be categorised into two different factors: physical and non-physical. Physical factors supporting social sustainability can be, for example, good housing, transportations, or good neighbourhoods and they can be easier to plan and measure. The hope is that with time physical tools would support social sustainability, but it needs more than the physical factors to achieve social sustainability. Social issues should be seen as non-physical factors, which are, for example, education, health, and social interactions. (Eizenberg & Jabareen 2017.)

It has been said that hybrid work can be divided to four different workplaces, namely physical-, digital-, social- and mental workplaces (see Table 2). Supporting every workplace is hard, and there is no right or wrong answer as to how to do it. Every organisation has their own process that should be taken into account. (Attaran, Attaran & Kirkland 2019.)

In this thesis, tools for hybrid organisational culture that support social sustainability have been divided into the four workplaces mentioned above. The physical workplace represents the locations, office space, and ergonomics while working. The digital workplace represents the virtual working environment, and consists of the technological tools used, as well as issues such as cyber safety. The social workplace represents agreements and rules, leadership, equality, and sense of community. The mental workplace even though it cannot be seen or touched, is essential for having socially sustainable hybrid organisational culture, and relates to wellbeing. See table 2. In what follows, each workplace is described in more detail.

Table 2. Workplace framework showing how hybrid work can be divided into four different workplaces — Physical, Digital, Social, and Mental — each with specific concerns (structured by the author based on the theoretical background).

Physical	Digital	Social	Mental
Location	Technological Tools	Agreements & Rules	Wellbeing
Office Space	Cyber Safety	Leadership	
Ergonomics		Equality	
		Sense of Community	

### 2.4.1 Physical Workplace

The physical workplace represents the environment where work is carried out, such as the office provided by the company, or one's home (office) (Attaran et al 2019). It is also continuous, and everyone experiences it, although the experiences are not similar (McCoy & Evans 2005). In this thesis the focus is on location, office space, and ergonomics.

#### Location

Many employees all around the world have said that remote working has affected their productivity and happiness positively. They feel more motivated to work, and many have said that they would like to work remotely for almost half of their working hours. (The Rise of Working from Home 2021.) The working environment should serve the goals of the work itself.

#### Office space

Office spaces are one of the biggest purchases organisations make (McCoy & Evans 2005). Organisations build their offices differently. For example, one office might have individual rooms to work and the other might have open offices where many employees work in the same room, but in their own booths. (Ayoko & Ashkanasy 2020.) Now that working is digitalising quicker than ever before, the question is whether or not traditional office spaces are even needed anymore.

The traditional office space might not play a big role in the future, when more and more people want to work at home or at their customers' location. (Rantanen 2018, 58.) On the other hand, organisations are still using office spaces, but they are building them to promote different work tasks since they enforce social interactions and give employees a concrete place to go and work (which in turn promotes a sense of identity). (Korkiakoski 2019, 126; Knight & Haslam 2010). For example, office spaces are now being planned that will increase employees' productivity and wellbeing but in different ways, such as having places for quiet work, small meeting rooms, places where people can "bump into" each other, and creative areas (Eskola 2021). Knight and Haslam (2010) believe office spaces can also bring more access to social relationships, which offer empowerment, participation in a work community and is also an important part of soft social sustainability.

### **Ergonomics**

Ergonomics is a major concern in hybrid work, both in the office and remote working environments. One of the most important considerations is to support employees' backs while sitting down and bring some movement to the body once in a while. (Kuinka huomioida ergonomia etätyössä? Työfysioterapeutin neuvot kotitoimistolle. [How to Take Care of Ergonomics while Remote Working? The Advice for Home Office from Work Physiotherapist] 2020.) If people don't move their bodies they may develop some serious health issues, such as diabetes 2 and cardiovascular disease, which can cause sick leaves and bring extra cost to the organisation. (Koohsari, Nakaya, Shibata, Ishii & Oka 2021.) Ergonomic considerations are also linked to sustainability since health and wellbeing belongs to the social dimensions of sustainability. Junkin (2020) states that bad working ergonomics can also cause injuries and long-term disabilities that again can lead to sick leaves, which can affect to the productivity levels and the quality of work. Hence, it is important to find ways to encourage employees to move more, such as offering the possibility of an adjustable standing desk, which would increase their mobility and help prevent those illnesses (Koohsari et al. 2021).

## **2.4.2 Digital Workplace**

New technologies have enabled projects, data, and other work-related components to be transformed into virtual environments in which work can be carried out in non-physical workplaces. This is known as the digital workplace, and it can be described as the environment where work is carried out online. (Attaran et al. 2019.) Covid-19 has forced organisations to use more technology to ensure that employees' productivity levels, engagement and relationship with the customers work better (Gladwell n.d). According to Jilcha (2020) technology is an important part of sustainability, since it allows the workplaces to have new innovations and helps transferring knowledge between employees. In this thesis the focus is on technological tools and cyber safety.

### **Technological Tools**

To be able to work in the digital workplace it is essential that every employee has a good internet connection (Attaran et al. 2019). Technology makes the use, saving, arranging, and searching of information easier (Hämäläinen, Maula & Suominen 2016). Adding new technologies for employees to use can help with productivity and the flexibility in different workplaces and they can promote a better relationship between the employees and the organisation, as well as promote employees' motivation to do their work better (Gladwell n.d). Working in a digital workplace means that information moves quicker inside the organisation, but it can affect negatively to the human experiences, ideas and inspiration that comes from being with other people (Rantanen 2018, 58). To add to that, Asatiani and others (2020) think it can bring challenges to sharing information and communication with work colleagues. There are some tools that can promote positive digital workplaces, such as business applications (online applications such as Google meets), messaging (e-mail) communication (software, storage), productivity (time reduction and efficiency), collaboration (online meetings, sharing files) and workplace mobility (computer, home office). (Attaran et al 2019.)

### **Cyber Safety**

A cyber-secure virtual working environment is an important factor in hybrid work since it brings more safety to working online. Cyber safety is perhaps a bigger concern for remote as opposed to office workers, at least in as much as it's more in the employee's responsibility when they're

working from home (Robinson 2020). Having sustainably cyber-secure virtual working environment requires the simulation of the problem, which then helps with the analysis process these steps helps to recognise the threat. After this it is easier to plan how to develop the protection online. When these steps are done building and operating cyber security is easier. (Sadik, Ahmed, Sikos & Najmul Islam 2020.) Safety overall increases satisfaction levels in the organisation and can promote wellbeing and the motivation to work (Jilcha 2020). For this reason, it is important to take care of cyber safety.

### **2.4.3 Social Workplace**

The social workplace represents the non-tangible parts of hybrid work which have also been structured to promote social sustainability. In this thesis the focus is on agreements and rules, leadership, equality, and sense of community.

#### **Agreements and Rules**

Knight (2020b) argues that the hybrid working model requires new agreements and rules to make employees' working efficient. For example, when an organisation is transitioning to the hybrid working model, it is important to change the contract of employment to a hybrid contract of employment. It means that one part of the contract will be included to the working time law and one part will be part of the work-time autonomy. Work-time autonomy means that the employer cannot supervise employees' use of work time. (Hietala, Hurmalainen & Kaivanto 2020, 209.) Lufkin (2021b) thinks that some organisations have a very free policy with hybrid work, with employees able to decide freely when to work in the office and when remotely. Some organisations have more strict rules, and they define when employees should be in the office and when they can work remotely if they wish to. (Lufkin 2021a.)

Since hybrid work can affect the sense of community strongly, some rules or agreements can motivate and bring more productivity to the working environment. (Williams & Multhaup 2020). They could bring efficient results in the organisation, but it is important to have the employees involved in the process when building them. For example, each team could decide on their own scheduled meeting, where everyone is asked to be. (Knight 2020b.) Sometimes these meetings can be the only social interaction employees who do mostly remote work have with each other. In this

way they can build a better sense of community. Also, to add more structure between the meetings employers could have a rule at what time employees need to be able to be contacted. (Williams & Multhaup 2020.) To get better results in a hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability, agreements and rules play a major role, but because we are talking about the social issues, they are not so straightforward. Some factors, in this case wellbeing, equality, and sense of community in the organisation, are more difficult to understand since they are more dynamic, harder to recognise, and they cannot be automatically expected. It requires a lot of planning and developing new policies to be able to implement those into an organisation's practices. (Eizenberg & Jabareen 2017.)

### **Leadership**

The role of an employer and the basis of their professionalism is based on the law. An employer must follow the contract of employment law, which means that they are working as a representative of the organisation. That means that employers must put the organisation first when making decisions with employees. (Järvinen 2018, 76.) As times change, and management skills are expected to change from the old habits' employers have had, it is important to have more sustainability driven management in the organisation (Rantanen 2018, 63; Bärlund & Perko 2013, 103). For example, future employers are seen as a natural part of their own team and employees need energy and enthusiasm from the manager, so their work motivation and happiness are higher (Rantanen 2018, 64; Korhonen 2019, 153).

Employers need to adapt to ensuring business by focusing employee experience, since happy employees lead to happy customers (Llabres, Schawbel & Guthkelch 2021). Sustainable leadership is qualitatively good leadership, which supports and strengthens the aim of the organisation's strategy. This means that the organisation is succeeding in the tasks it has been built for. It also means that the employer can lead people, so that the tasks are made to promote human wellbeing. Simply put, it means that employers are coherent, transparent, and responsible when they take care of their employees' wellbeing, while at the same time ensuring that they are committed to the organisation and deliver good work performance. These factors will promote a healthy and supportive workplace. (Bärlund & Perko 2013, 103.) For employers' social sustainability can be one of the hardest aspect to follow and manage, because it cannot be

measured or identified. It requires ongoing feedback from the employees, good strategies, and tools to be able to fulfil the goal of full employee satisfaction. (Eizenberg & Jabareen 2017.)

## **Equality**

Companies are frequently very diverse and socially mixed because people are not usually allowed to choose who they work with. This means that organisations can have an impact on making more integration into society. Social mixing is an important part of equality in the workplace, and it can affect the overall sense of community if everyone is treated as an equal, since it brings more positive attitudes and diminishes stereotypes. (Lillis 2019.) Equality is a wide subject, and it consists of, for example, demographic issues such as gender, race, and age (Samuel & Robertson 2021). This study focuses on the overall feelings of equality in the work community and the equality between office and remote work.

The hybrid working model can bring some inequalities between workplaces. Office workers might get more attention compared to remote workers, which can make them feel unequal in the organisation. (Lulla 2021.) Those who work in the office might get other advantages, such as promotions, since their work effort is more clearly observable. In addition, salaries tend to increase quicker at the office rather than in remote work. (Samuel & Robertson 2021.) Everyone must be equal, and everyone should have a voice in the organisation, and the solutions to any kind of problem should be solved together as a community, regardless of whether one works physically or remotely. (Llabres et al. 2021.) One important factor in hybrid teams is communication where everyone is equally involved in the conversation and meetings. One option for this is to have online meetings where everyone is at their own computers, even if some employees are in the same physical workplace. (Knight 2020b.)

## **Sense of Community**

Psychologically, a sense of community means the sense of belonging and the feeling of being valued by other members of the community. A sense of community can be found in neighbourhoods, universities, and in workplaces. A sense of community can be characterised, for example, by the shared vision and values between employees. (Arnold, Arnold, Neher & Miles 2020.) Humans have a natural need to belong somewhere, and when employees are treated well

they get the feeling of belonging to the organisation and they get more work done. They're more productive and more innovative, which brings better results to the organisation's economy (Twaronite 2019.) A sense of community at work promotes social cohesion which allows employees to feel part of something and feel valued. This further supports the concept of social capital, the networks that employees build within the organisation (Eizenberg & Jabareen 2017).

To build a better sense of community in the organisation, employers and employees should communicate well with each other, and value both their feelings and thoughts about the things that are done well and those that might need some development. After this, it is important to make changes if needed and have a common agreement on how to proceed. This promotes employees' commitment to the work community since it has been built together. (Henley 2020.). Also, regular meetings where everyone can talk about their day and non-work-related conversations should be incorporated into the weekly or monthly work schedule, since remote workers aren't able to have coffee breaks with work colleagues. This supports the sense of community between employees, and it creates a good culture in the workplace. (Knight 2020b.) Furthermore, when managers support their employees individually, and make them feel safe, happy, and comfortable at work, it further promotes the sense of community in the organisational culture (Twaronite 2019).

#### **2.4.4 Mental Workplace**

The mental workplace concerns the feelings and values employees have, and especially their wellbeing (Attaran et al. 2019). It is the most personal of all four workplaces, but it is essential for social sustainability.

As previously mentioned, health and quality of life are important factors in employees' wellbeing. They are also important aspects of social sustainability (Amrutha & Geetha 2020). Being healthy and having the feeling that employees' wellbeing is taken care of in the organisation creates a better employee experience. Having a good employee experience makes employers as well as employees think about people, which then leads to being more acceptable to other people and helps promote a better sense of community and employee experience. (Llabres et al. 2021)



While remote working is now becoming more popular in the white-collar working environment, it also makes some people feel anxious at the thought of working from home all the time. Some people don't want to mix home with work, at least not the whole time. Reasons for that can be, for example, poor living conditions or a small apartment. For some people it is hard to switch off from work after a workday if they remain in the same environment. (Siltamäki, 2021.) Also, remote work can affect more to employee's mental health since everything is done virtually, it can be very tiring, and it is hard to see the difference between free time and worktime. (Robinson 2020). A hybrid organisational culture is built strongly on trust and on individual support. To get more stress-free working experience in the hybrid work, employees should be able to adapt more to the new situation and have mental support from their manager. That can help to prevent crises in the working culture (Knight 2020a.) An individual employee's wellbeing is one of the principles of sustainable leadership. At the organisation level, it is mostly seen as promoting a good work-health balance and leadership that supports it, but at the community level it includes equality between cultural, gender, and generational relationships. (Bärlund & Perko 2013, 115.) When workplaces are designed to be more sustainable, it will increase employee's happiness levels, health, and wellbeing (Jilcha 2020).

## **2.5 Summary**

The change of working environments has had a major impact on social issues. COVID-19 and the need to work remotely has, for example, highlighted the need for employee wellbeing and sense of community. After the COVID-19 pandemic many organisations have decided not to remain in the traditional office work but instead change their working environments towards hybrid work.

However, hybrid work changes the dynamics in the organisations culture, and that culture needs to be updated. As the organisational culture changes, it is important to focus on social sustainability issues that arise when working in a hybrid environment. In particular, issues of soft social sustainability – such as social cohesion, identity, happiness, and wellbeing – should receive significant attention. Having a socially sustainable hybrid working environment can promote a good employee experience, which then promotes good customer experience, which in turn brings economic growth for the organisation.

To develop a socially sustainable hybrid organisational culture, organisations can employ particular tools. The tools are individual for every organisation, since social sustainability factors differ between organisations, and it can be a hard concept to measure. Having all the workplaces in hybrid work functioning well supports each other which then supports social sustainability.

### 3 Method

The novel research reported in this thesis concerns a case study of a single organisation. The overarching objective of this research was to investigate how an organisation can build a hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability. As part of this work, I explored the kind of tools a company could use to get the best results when implementing a hybrid working model. In terms of the specific company studied (Aava & Bang), this involved identifying what they have done well already in terms of hybrid organisational culture and soft social sustainability, and aspects and practices they might need to develop.

A case study tries to get as comprehensive a picture of the subject as possible, and it is beneficial to use multiple different data collection methods (Vuori n.d). For this reason, a mixed methods approach was adopted. Mixed method research means that there are quantitative and qualitative research methods used. (Creswell & Plano Clark 2018, 5.). Accordingly, in the present study, comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data were collected via a series of interviews and surveys. Having qualitative and quantitative research methods in this study gives more detailed results on the subject as they can provide more specific answers to the research problem and question (see chapter 1.1 overview of the present study). Qualitative methods give more understanding of the subject since it is more unknown. To better comprehend issues surrounding hybrid work and the social needs for hybrid organisational culture, the researcher decided to hold two interviews that would shed light on the subject in general and Aava & Bang's point of view in particular from before conducting the survey of the employees. (Kananen 2019, 25.)

Since the purpose of the research was also to learn more about what kind of tools for hybrid organisational culture that maintains and promotes social sustainability it was important to get as many answers from the employees as possible. For this reason, the survey was mostly quantitative. The researcher already knew that the employees understood the concept of hybrid work, and the questions were structured on their feeling and thoughts about hybrid organisational culture. (Ibid. 25.) The data collection method in this study is called "mixed methods case study design" and it means that the data is collected about specific criteria. It is used to find out the answers to the research problem and the question. The chosen analysis method was data comparison, in which the researcher compares the interviews with each other and then compares them to the survey results. (Creswell & Plano Clark 2018, 186, 219.)

## **3.1 Respondents**

Because data was collected from multiple categories of respondents – expert, employer, and employees – the demographics, procedure, and materials are explained separately for each respondent category.

### **3.1.1 Interviews**

Two interviews were conducted, one with a recognised expert in the field of hybrid work, and one with a member of Aava & Bang's senior management. The idea was that the expert would offer a general, outsider's perspective, while the member of senior management would offer a perspective from the organisation/employer's point of view.

#### **Expert**

To obtain a general idea of the subject of the study and to have a person not included in the organisation give their thoughts on hybrid organisational culture, it was beneficial to find a hybrid work expert, who has general high-level knowledge on hybrid work. The expert identified, contacted, and interviewed is an expert of digital leadership and is known for being an advocate for digital transformation and hybrid work. He is a book author and keynote speaker about leading digital transformation and has 15 years of experience of digital business development.

The author of this study contacted the interviewee via LinkedIn. The interview was carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> June, and it lasted approximately 35 minutes. It was held in Zoom. The conversation leading up to the interview was held in LinkedIn private messages and the Zoom link was sent there too. The interview was recorded and permission of the recording and the explanation where it is used were explained before the interview started. The interview was transcribed based on the recording.

This interview will illustrate an expert's opinion about the situation in general. Since the objective of the interview was only focused on the subject itself, any pauses or facial expressions were not relevant for the study. Therefore, the transcription was written only to see the thoughts and information the interviewee told. (Kallio n.d.)

Interviewee A's interview structure had 11 questions (see Appendix 1), but if needed the interviewer could ask more questions if they occurred at that moment. The interview focused on the hybrid organisational culture and how to make it better. It was structured from the theoretical background and more specifically on section 2.4 Building Tools for New Normal, and had questions concerning the subjects of hybrid work, hybrid organisational culture (which included parts of social sustainability).

### **Organisation**

Interviewee B was one of the members of the management team at Aava & Bang. This interviewee was chosen to give the organisation's points of view on the subject. These answers also helped to form the theoretical background and the survey since it showed what are the needs that Aava & Bang are hoping to get answers to.

This interview was made on 14<sup>th</sup> May. It lasted approximately 40 minutes and it was held in Google Meets. The interview time was agreed via email and the interviewee sent the link to the interviewer, since it was easier for her. This interview was also recorded and permission of the recording and the explanation where it is used were explained before the interview started. The interview was transcribed by using the recording. This interview gives the organisation's perspective on the subject. This data will illustrate the current situation in the company from employer's point of view. Since the objective of the interview was the same in both interviews, the transcription was also written only to see the thoughts and information the interviewee told. (Kallio n.d.)

Interviewee B's interview also had 11 questions (see Appendix 2), and if some subjects occurred that would be beneficial for the study the interviewer could ask more questions. The themes where the focus on this interview was on the organisation and their hybrid working culture. Again, this interview was structured from the theory background 2.4 Building Tools for New Normal.

### **3.1.2 Survey**

The survey was made to Aava & Bang's employees. The objective was to get as many employees as possible to answer the survey, since the researcher wanted to get as complete an idea of the

employee's feelings and thoughts on the subject as possible. As a company of 50 people, the hope was to get at least 30 answers, to increase reliability of the data. The survey was structured in Webropol and was distributed to the employees from one of the employers of the company. It was not shared anywhere else, since the target group was only Aava & Bang's employees. The schedule for the survey was set for approximately one week but if needed it could be made longer. It was opened on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and after one week the survey collected 32 answers. After this it was discussed if it should be a bit longer open and it was decided to keep open for a bit longer. The survey closed 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 and the number of respondents remained at 32.

The survey had 42 questions and began with basic questions concerning demographic variables (age, gender, etc.) and experience with hybrid work. Following this, questions were structured according to the Physical, Digital, Social, and Mental workplace framework described in section 2.4. Building tools for the new normal. Questions were developed with reference to the theoretical background described in chapter 2, and results from both the expert and organisation interview described above. Of the 42 questions, eight were open answer (qualitative) and the remainder were quantitative. (See Appendix 3)

Data were analysed within the physical, digital, social, and mental workplace framework described in section 2.4 Building tools for the new normal. In addition, to deepen understanding in key areas, responses to selected questions were cross-tabulated by age and gender. (Ristiintaulukointi [Cross-Tabulation] n.d.) The cross-tabulation was made in excel and the answers presented show the biggest differences between age or gender when they were compared. Where responses did not differ by age or gender, they are presented across all respondents.

From the total of 32 respondents to the survey, 22 were female, 9 were male, and 1 was other gender. Twelve were aged 18-28, nine were aged 29-38, and eleven were aged 39-48. Twenty-seven participants lived in the Central Finland region, and 5 lived in the Uusimaa region. Nine of the respondents had worked less than a year at Aava & Bang, nineteen had worked 1-5 years, one had worked there for 6-10 years, and three had worked there for 11-16 years. All 32 respondents were familiar with the term hybrid work, and 24 had worked in a hybrid environment prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. All 32 respondents wanted to continue working in a hybrid working model after COVID-19.

All 32 responses to the survey were valid, and no answers needed to be discarded from the analysis. To preserve anonymity of one respondent who identified as other gender, this person's answers were excluded from all gender-related analyses. This person's data was, however, included when only age difference were taken under consideration or when the data were collapsed across all factors, since in such cases their anonymity could be preserved. The survey data will be used to illustrate the employees' perspective of the research and both qualitative and quantitative results are included.

### **3.2 Reliability**

When the process of this study began there was very little research published on the principal subjects of this thesis. For this reason, the author chose relevant refereed journals, and books that would give answers to the research problem. The themes researched in these were sustainability, social sustainability, organisational culture, and work in general. The references for this research were found from the school library and the databases found there, for example ProQuest, Alma Talent, and from google search. To add to that the author used news articles from reliable websites, such as BBC, YLE, and Harvard Business Review, which fulfilled the missing pieces of the theoretical background. From the news articles the author discovered more about hybrid work, hybrid organisational culture and the connection between hybrid work and social sustainability. Since there were very few studies about the core subject of this study, many references were used to get the answers needed to it. The theoretical background was structured from the references, but also from the needs of the organisation (Aava & Bang), so that they would get the biggest benefit of the subject. The needs were discovered from the interview B. (Vilkka 2015.)

Based on the interviews and the theoretical background, the survey was structured with a view to eliciting similar answers from Aava & Bang's employees. Therefore, if the expert and the member of management know what they are talking about the survey will have higher reliability. When doing the survey the researcher asked about different aspects of certain topics, which increased the reliability of the data that was collected about each of them. In addition, for several questions respondents were further prompted to give more detailed responses, for example questions 19 and 21 (see Appendix 3) The researcher reported results that best illustrated similarities and differences most relevant to the framework established in the theoretical background and by interviews A and B.

### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

This project followed the ethical principles of JAMK, as well as good scientific practice and valid legislation. Ethical principles of research in the human, social, and behavioural sciences were adhered to. This project involved human participants, and informed consents were obtained from all respondents. It was ensured that participants had fully understood the information and did not feel pressured or coerced into giving consent. Participants were able to deny their participation or cancel their participation at any time without consequence. The informed consent contained a general description of the data to be collected and its purposes, as well as a thorough description of the procedures, measurements, and surveys to be collected. It included detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as specified the length of involvement. Before participation began, participants had an opportunity to discuss the content of the informed consent with the researcher. (Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2018, 3-4)

No individual who took part this project was discriminated against or harassed based on age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. Every respondent in the research answered to the research voluntarily and the survey was completely anonymous. Since this study was conducted only to one organisation the researcher made sure that the answers cannot be identified to a certain individual, for example in the gender part there was only one other gender and as a company of 50 people they can be identified more easier and for this reason their answers were taken out when analysing the gender part of this study. In the interviews both of the interviewees knew where this study is going, and they were asked permission to record their interview. (Ethical Principles for JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2018, 4)



## 4 Results

Results are presented within the Physical-Digital-Social workplace framework described in *chapter 2.4 Building tools for the new normal (see page 24.)* For each workplace, relevant data from interviewee A is first summarised to provide general insights from an expert. Following this, relevant data from interviewee B is summarised to highlight the organisation's perspective. Finally, pertinent survey data is summarised to illustrate the employees' perspective. Where appropriate, survey data is presented also by age and gender to reveal deeper patterns of results that emerged from the data, and which might be of particular interest to Aava & Bang.

The researcher acknowledges that sub-groups represented in the figures contain different numbers of respondents (for example, when dividing by gender). However, to make comparisons clearer, each group is treated as if it contains the same number of respondents by using 100% stacked column charts. Figures relevant to all respondents are included in Appendix 4.

Before going to the main results of the research, the main positives, and negatives about hybrid work, as described by respondents, are presented (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Positive and negative aspects of Hybrid Work from employees' point of view, Q 11 &amp; 12.

Positive	Negative
Can utilise use different workspaces and not be depended in one place (N=15)	Less face-to-face human contacts (N=25)
It gives flexibility with timing and gives more capabilities to match own free time with (N=14)	Communication takes more effort (N=8)
It gives flexibility with timing and gives more capabilities to match own free time with (N=14)	Engagement with the the work communi-ty can weaken (N=8)
Freedom and flexibility (N=11)	the feeling of being an outsider or lonely (N=7)
Work is more efficient (not so many dis-tractions) (N=11)	Harder to remember to take care of own wellbeing, such as ergonomics and work-ing when ill (N=7)
Saves time (when work commutes does not take so much time) (N=13)	Free time and work can get mixed up to-gether (N=6)

## 4.1 Physical Workplace

### Location

**Expert.** When talking about *remote* work with Interviewee A, the discussion focused mostly on “where” employees work. When talking about *hybrid* work, on the other hand, the discussion centred around how it allows work tasks to be done better and more productively while working in different locations. The conclusion was that it might be beneficial to consider which work tasks are better in remote work and which are better for office work.

**Organisation.** It emerged from Interview A that, at present, Aava & Bang does not have any rules as to whether employees should work at the office or from somewhere else. Employees tend to reflect on remote working with their superior and see how their wellbeing and working is going, but maybe in the future that will change, and they will have common agreements concerning hybrid workplaces. It was also discussed how Aava & Bang might find it useful to have some sort of rules about related issues, such as the employees' living situations.

**Employee.** Survey data revealed that every respondent wanted to do hybrid work on some level. From all 32 respondents, three wanted to do 1-30% hybrid work, twelve wanted to do 31-20%,

eleven would like to do hybrid work 51-80%, and six wanted to do 81-100% of hybrid work. It was also interesting that the remote aspect of hybrid work didn't necessarily mean working from home. For example, 27 respondents would like to work in the same city they currently live in, 3 would like to work in a different city than they are living now, 1 would like to work in the countryside, and 1 abroad.

## **Office Space**

**Expert.** Interviewee A suggested that one option for office/meeting space for hybrid work could be a room where there are upright screens in a round table across from the regular seats. In other words, each employee would be represented as a separate entity. It should not be so that there is one camera to show everyone in the office and then having one big screen where all the remote employees are. This would bring a feeling to everyone that the meeting is equal, everyone is on the same level even though some people might be working remotely.

**Organisation.** Interviewee B revealed that, from the organisation's point of view, hybrid working allows Aava & Bang to have better office space management and utilise a smaller office space, bringing some savings to the company. A challenge of hybrid work is the office spaces and how to build them as effectively as possible. The office should not be too small that people don't fit there, but on the other hand it should not be too big either since much of the time it would be half empty. That, of course, is not economically viable. It is still, however, necessary to have some sort of office space for learning, as a meeting point, and for overall hustle. Quiet work could perhaps be best carried out at home. How to build that kind of space for employees to see each other and have gatherings is clearly a big challenge.

**Employee.** The general themes that emerged across all age groups for the office spaces were (question 41):

1. More places for quiet work (N=22)
2. Visually pleasant rooms to promote creativity (N=18)
3. Rooms for spontaneous meetings (N=18)

One of the “other, what?” answers had this to say, *“an office that would have a lot of rooms, which would allow to have meetings with remote workers and customers without disturbing others”*. For the last question (nro 42), which had an opportunity to answer something about hybrid work if they want to and the respondent 11 said *“that quiet space in the office is very important to me and it is emphasized when there is a lot of people in the office. Also, I would like to have some extra screens to the office, now there is too little. (Others have possibly taken them home)”*. Also, two respondents would like to get more natural lighting in the office, which would make the offices cosier, and one hoped to get straight connection to the Helsinki and Tampere offices, so that they would be always open and simulates mutual office.

### **Ergonomics**

**Expert.** The hybrid expert felt that ergonomics was very important in every workplace and should be considered when moving towards hybrid working environment.

**Organisation.** According to Interviewee B, ergonomics is a big challenge that Aava & Bang face because people are working in many different working environments. How can they take care of work ergonomics? The ideal situation would be that the company would provide the equipment for every employee, but it is not possible.

**Employees.** When comparing how employees take care of their ergonomics, it was evident that the ergonomic issues are taken care of more in the office than in remote work (see Figure 3).

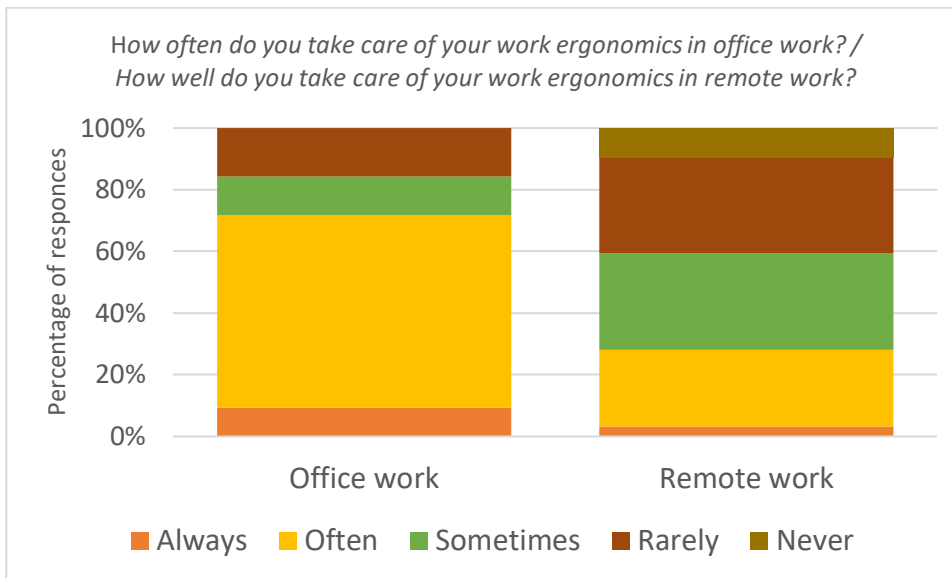


Figure 3. The comparison of ergonomics between office work and remote work

Respondent 6 pointed out that: *“Employers could think more employee’s ergonomics, is it actualised at home and then give the needed tools for making it better.”* Also, respondent 3 said: *“Concrete work benefits would be beneficial for work wellbeing in hybrid work when common meetings are decreased. For example, Smartum, employment bicycle, clear training money or time, exercise class, etc.”*

## 4.2 Digital Workplace

### Technological tools

**Expert.** According to Interviewee A, for the digital workplace it is important that the Internet is working flawlessly. Also, different technological tools are very important, and these will make hybrid organisational culture more easily accessible. In addition, finding new and different tools to make working easier can promote good hybrid working environment (for example, not just using Zoom and Teams).

**Organisation.** Interviewee B agreed that to get the best working experience it is important to have a good Internet connection. So, with a good internet connection, employees could even work from their summer cottages. Good quality microphones and cameras also have a big influence on the working experience. Good quality equipment makes the meetings more enjoyable and effective, since the visibility and sound are functioning well. Also, Google’s services and programs are

essential for hybrid work at Aava & Bang in particular. Since everything is on the internet it is one of the most important factors of hybrid working culture. Google hangouts, calendar and storage makes the working easier when team members are in different locations.

**Employee.** In general, all the employees feel like they have enough technological tools for hybrid work. Out of 32 respondents, only one wanted more. Employees also felt that good technological tools often (N=18) or always (N=14) made working more productive.

To make the sense of community and belonging better in hybrid work, a few respondents wished for a “virtual room” where the whole team would “be” while doing their individual work on their own, but if ever needed they could have help or small breaks with each other.

Also, the younger the employee the less they felt they needed help with technological tools (see Figure 4). On the other hand, the older the employee the more likely they are willing to think that they would get help if needed.

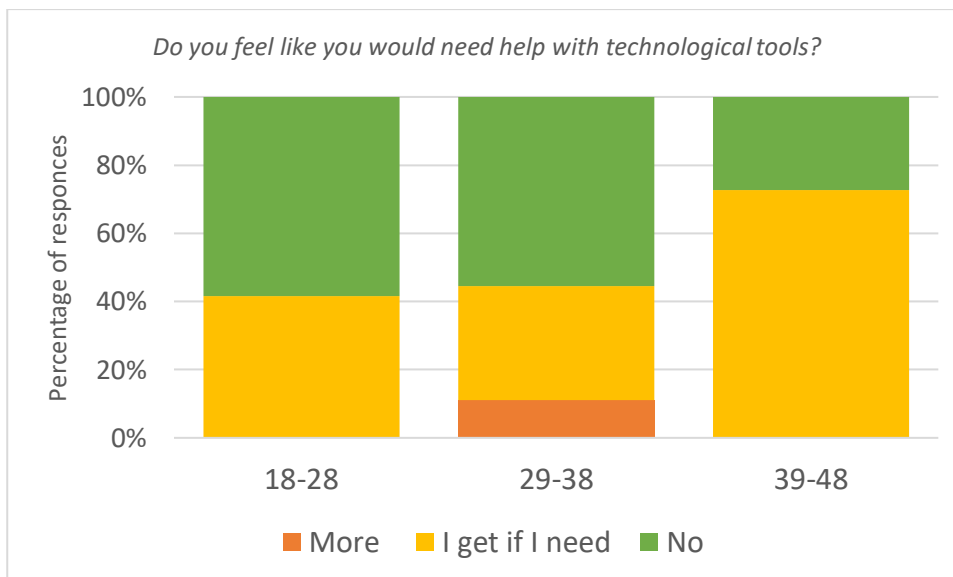


Figure 4. Does the employee need help with technological tools divided by age.

### Cyber Safety

**Expert.** Interviewee A stated that cyber security is something that should be taken care of well. It is important that employees feel safe when working online. When working with digital tools online

it is important to know that humans are the weakest link in that relation, therefore cyber security is important.

**Organisation.** According to Interviewee B, every employee has information security on their phones and computers, which makes online working safe in any location.

**Employees.** When comparing responses by age, the younger the respondent the more they felt safe working online (see Figure 5). Older respondents still responded positively, but a little less so.

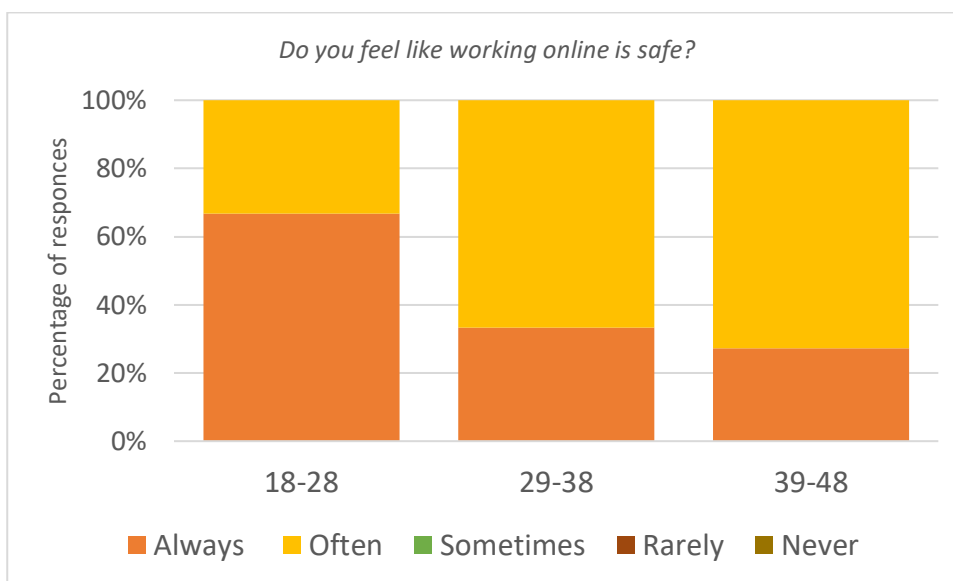


Figure 5. Does the employee feel safe working online, divided by age.

### 4.3 Social Workplace

#### Agreements and Rules

**Expert.** It was important to Interviewee A that rules and agreements should be transparent and easily understandable, and individual to every organisation. It is important to have agreements and rules, and these will bring more stability to the organisation. In a white-collar office most employees can do work in an office or remotely, so it would be beneficial to analyse all the time what are the best agreements and rules that would support hybrid organisational culture. To help with that, an organisation could build a “rulebook” for hybrid working which describes how to work best in the model. Also, being open and taking everyone involved in the organisation to have their own opinions about the subject. Every organisational culture has their own ways to do work,

and they must be followed by everyone, but the working models should always be tested to see if it is working well for the organisation.

**Organisation.** According to Interviewee B, Aava & Bang has agreements that support working in general. They have a certain time of the week when everyone gathers. Each team has their own individual agreements that they follow, specific to them. They also have individual agreements between the employer and the employee. That makes working more efficient and it is easier to follow the process of the work.

**Employee.** Employees' feelings about agreements and rules were summarised extensively by respondent 14, who stated that *"In hybrid work would be good to "map" a suitable model to everyone taking account everyone's work tasks. It would be beneficial to make a hybrid work review with everyone when thinking about the future. What kind of workspaces there are at home, does the work need good internet connections and big extra screens? What is the relationship between office and remote work (are there children at home or not?) For me long lasting remote work developed symptoms of depression, so it would be important that everyone finds the right rhythm for hybrid work. When thinking of office spaces, it would be beneficial to see the real need for that for example specific questions about it and a personal hybrid work plan. Then it would be easier to focus better on the remote work ergonomics and the need of office spaces."*

It was also noted that the younger the employee the more they thought that common routines and rules would promote their working productivity compared to older employees who more likely could not really see the difference (see Figure 6). Furthermore, the younger employees felt that common rules and routines in the organisation would promote good sense of community while older employees mostly did not see the difference or did not think so at all (see Figure 7). From this, one could assume that older employees are not as interested in common rules and routines about hybrid work as younger employees are.



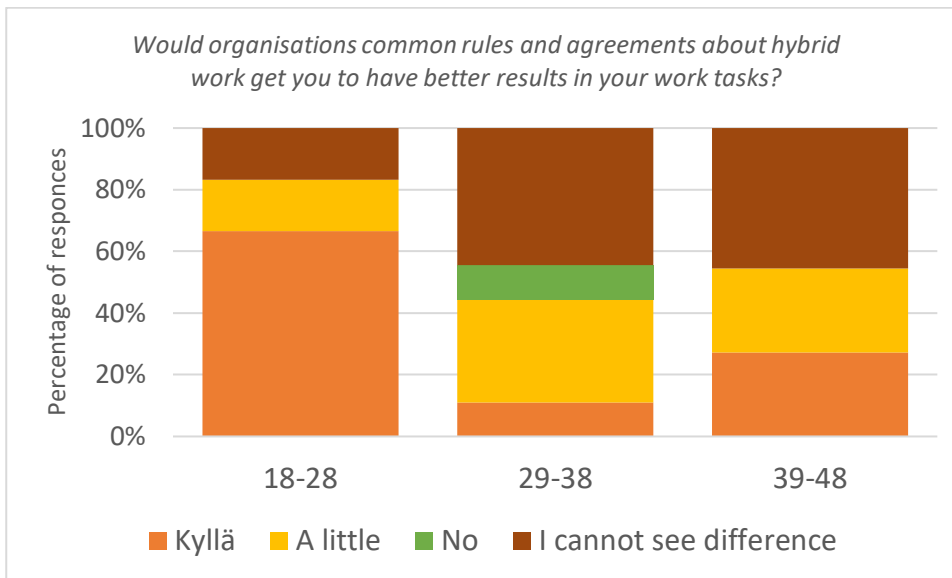


Figure 6. Can rules and routines about hybrid work enhance the work productivity

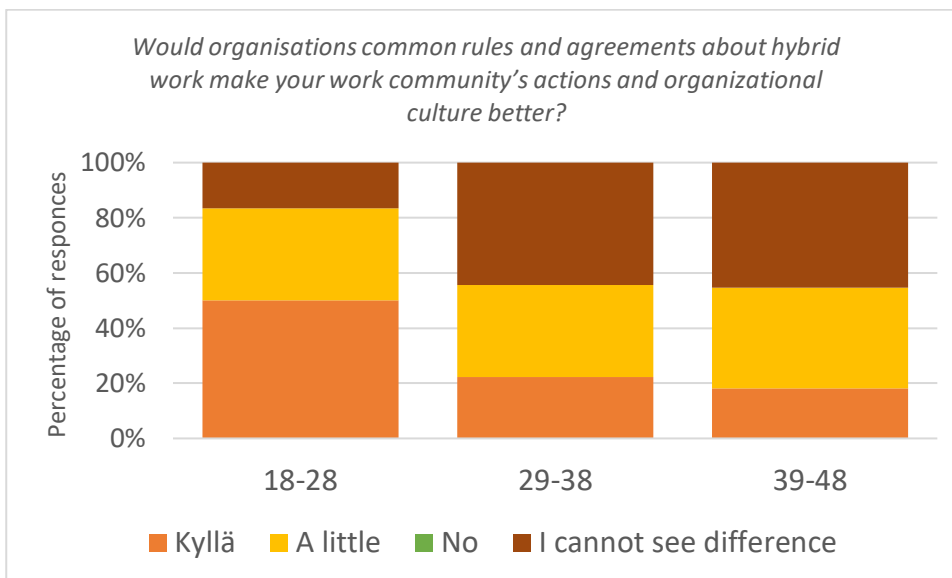


Figure 7. Can routines and rules about hybrid work enhance the work community

### **Leadership**

**Expert.** As Interviewee A noted, hybrid work requires more effort from management, and the effort can be made on different levels. The first level is the individuals, the second level is the team, and the third level is the organisation. Each level has different needs. In hybrid work, the individual needs are clearer since every employee works in their own desired place and are not with the team all the time. It is important for the manager to fulfil individual employees hopes and dreams, but at the same time take care that the teams' values and organisations requirements are fulfilled.

**Organisation.** According to Interviewee B, before COVID-19, leadership in the organisation had focused mostly on the team as a whole and it had been easier to see how employees were doing, because everyone was in the office and easily reachable. Now after COVID-19 organisations are going towards hybrid working culture and managers should have more individual approach to their management decisions. One aspect of leadership on hybrid working environment is that management keeps the agreed routines and practices running. Usually, different teams make up their own routines and practices and the leader ensures they are followed.

**Employees.** Most of the employees felt that they got enough support from their employer (9 always, 14 often, 8 sometimes, 1 rarely). They also felt that their employer took care of agreed routines and rules that would make working easier (10 always, 14 often, 7 sometimes, 1 rarely).

Employees' open answers revealed positive feeling about their employer, although there were a few things they would hope from them more.

- When working in different places employee hopes that they would get contacted more frequently and in a lower threshold, which could include having social breaks and individual feedback. (N=7)
- More support, such as help, understanding and examples on how to have better work ergonomics at home. (N=10)
- The last theme that came across from the hopes for employer was regular meetings with their teams and thinking/developing different practices especially about remote work. (N=11)

The younger the employee, the more likely they were to feel that their work experience would be enhanced if their employer led by example (see Figure 8).

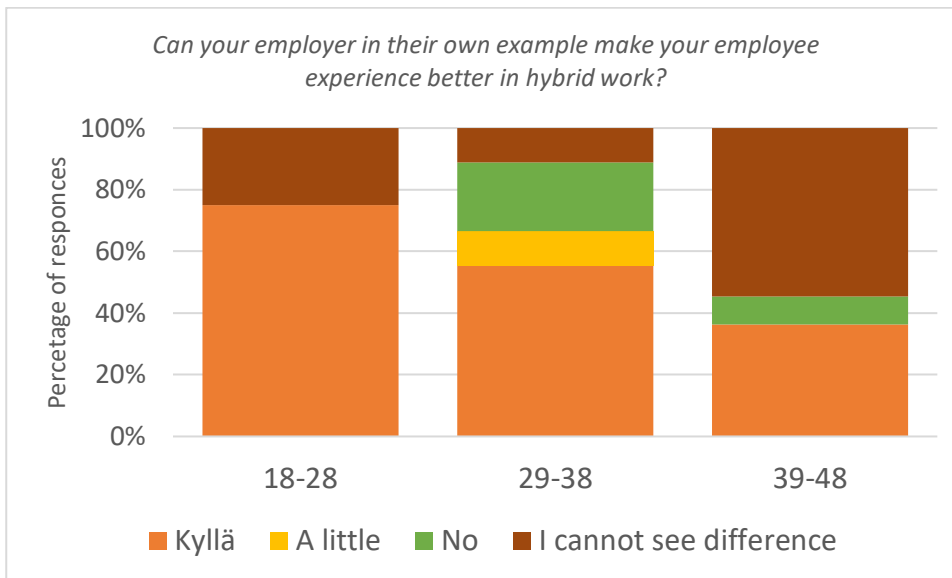


Figure 8. Can manager lead by example answers divided by age

It was also seen that women hoped to have more individual support from their leaders compared to men (See Figure 9).

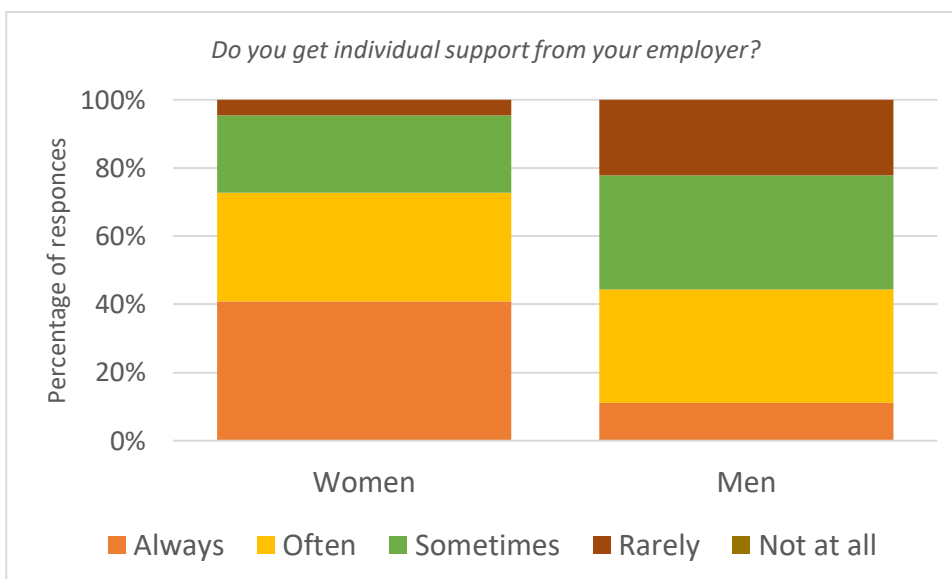


Figure 9. The need for individual support from the employer divided by the gender.

## Equality

**Expert.** It emerged from the expert interview that hybrid work can bring workplaces more flexibility, and lets employees choose where to work, which can make organisations more equal from the employees' point of view. In hybrid work the idea is to see what the end results are

rather than how much time it takes to do the tasks, it helps employers see what the employees have done, and it makes it easier to recognise the work effort, which equalises the office and remote workplaces. Also, allowing every employee to have same technological tools for working promotes equality, since everyone has, for example, the same quality cameras and mics.

**Organisation.** Interviewee B felt that COVID-19 has brought more equality between offices. It has also brought the knowledge of the feeling of being remotely in the meetings and how does it feel like to be behind the screen. That brings more equal actions within the communication between employees since they have the experience of being in a remote meeting and those people are easier to involve to the conversation. Aava & Bang has employed a system in which every employee has the meeting open on a video, even though some people are in the same room. Also, they have offices in three different cities which allows employees to feel like they belong to the organisation and has a concrete place to go.

**Employee.** Overall, the employees of Aava & Bang have a positive feeling about their work community, with only one respondent felt that they rarely belong to the work community. As regards a sense of equality, 23 respondents felt that they are equal in their work community, 8 felt like they are often equal, and 1 rarely felt equal in the work community.

Out of all the respondents, 14 felt like equality between workplaces (office and remote) has changed, and 18 felt it did not change. Respondent 29 stated in that *“When I was already working remotely, (since I work in a different city than in the main office in Jyväskylä), the feeling of equality has increased during COVID-19. Why? Because we all are same way remotely in the lines, which makes it easier to give attention towards each other. Before COVID-19 I usually was the only one in the meetings remotely and taking part in the conversation was harder since I didn’t even see everyone. I hope that in the future remote connections would remain the same, for example in the meetings, even if most of the work would go back to office working model.”* Most of the open answer questions were about the organisation being a low hierarchy work community which makes it feel more equal in the work community. As a respondent 14 said, *“We have a low hierarchy, everyone is equal.”*

There was disagreement about sense of equality among interns or temporary staff. For example, respondent 6 felt that the organisation has an unequal position when being an intern or a temporary employee. Those who have been in the organisation longer keeps in touch more, which makes it harder to be part of the group. On the other hand, respondent 11 said that all the interns are knowingly taken into the group immediately, and their capabilities are valued a lot and wanted to be utilised.

With regards to age, younger employees are more positive about equality between office and remote workplaces, while older employees' answers vary more and are a little more negative (see Figure 10).

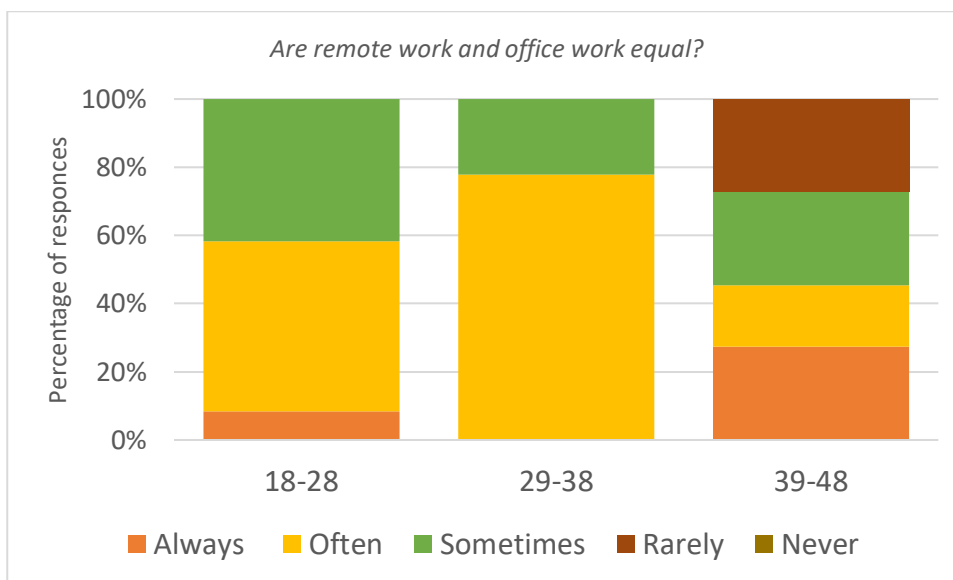


Figure 10. How different ages see equality between office and remote work

### Sense of Community

**Expert.** Interviewee A believed that organisational culture will change when hybrid work becomes more dominant to the organisation, and that will naturally affect the sense of community. It is important to talk with the employees to see what kind of hybrid organisational culture they want and how that promotes a sense of community. Having transparent communication and open files for work tasks brings more sense of community and belonging. Also, information should flow effortlessly even though employees are not in the same place. For example, tacit knowledge should be told to the remote workers and vice versa.

**Organisation.** Interviewee B described how Aava & Bang started to build their working culture by asking the question: what their idea of human is. They believe that people are individuals, and they want to trust their employees immediately. They think that is the way of keeping the employees more attached to the company. It brings a sense of belonging to the employee and raises the thought of community. Aava & Bang's practices are strongly linked to trust. They trust their employees and believe that their employees know themselves that what kind of environment is the best place for them to work. Since employees have the ability to choose where to work, it gives the employees more flexibility and individuality and it shows to the employer that they are trustworthy, and they can show that they can use multiple different work environments. One aspect of the hybrid working model is linked very much with the work tasks and what can be made remotely and what should be in the office. To make the sense of community better, Aava & Bang focuses on inner communication and having time to just be together and talk. Every Monday they start the week together in a meeting and every Friday they vote who succeeded the most during that week.

**Employees.** Employees survey responses suggest that Aava & Bang's practices are working. The majority of respondents (N=21) felt like they have a very strong sense of community in the organisation; many others said it was quite strong (N=10), and only one felt it is somewhat strong. When it came to a sense of community, most of the employees had very positive feelings about their sense of community.

When asked what would make the sense of community better in the organisation the employees answered this:

- When working in different places many respondents hoped more "free talk" also online, not having all the meetings just about the work, but that there would be time to talk to each other not just about work. (N=22) One example for this was "speed dating"
- Having a good team work all together, for example regular meetings, all the work tasks would be able to be seen by everyone. Few suggested that teams could have virtual rooms where everyone would be and work and if help is needed, it would be easier to ask something. (N=17)

- Live meetings seemed to be very important, and the hope was that everyone in the organisation would meet from time to time to make the sense of community better. (N=8)

Respondent 28 said: *“Our work community and communication culture are so strong, and we have been able to keep the sense of community in this unusual remote working time (COVID-19). So even if most of the employees return to the physical workplaces, I believe that the ones who want to work more remotely will not feel like outsiders.”*

When looking at the age factor, older employees were less likely to need more social contact from colleagues while working remotely, but younger employees were more likely to need it more (see Figure 11).

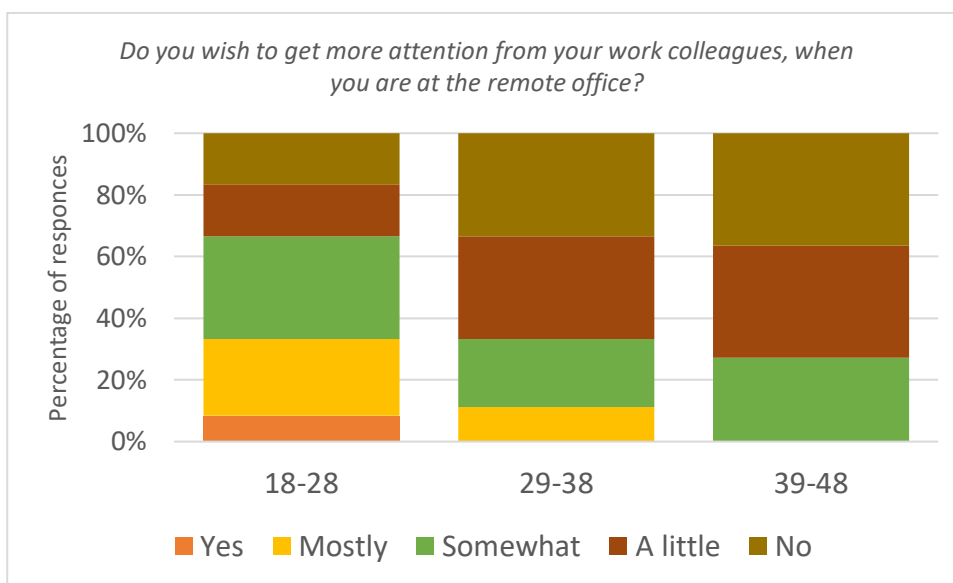


Figure 11. More contact from their work colleagues divided by age

Women were more positive about the sense of community in hybrid work (see Figure 12). Men were happy, but more negative about it. Both genders were positive about effects of remote work on community/belonging, but women were particularly positive. The sense of community occurred more positively in remote work not in hybrid work.

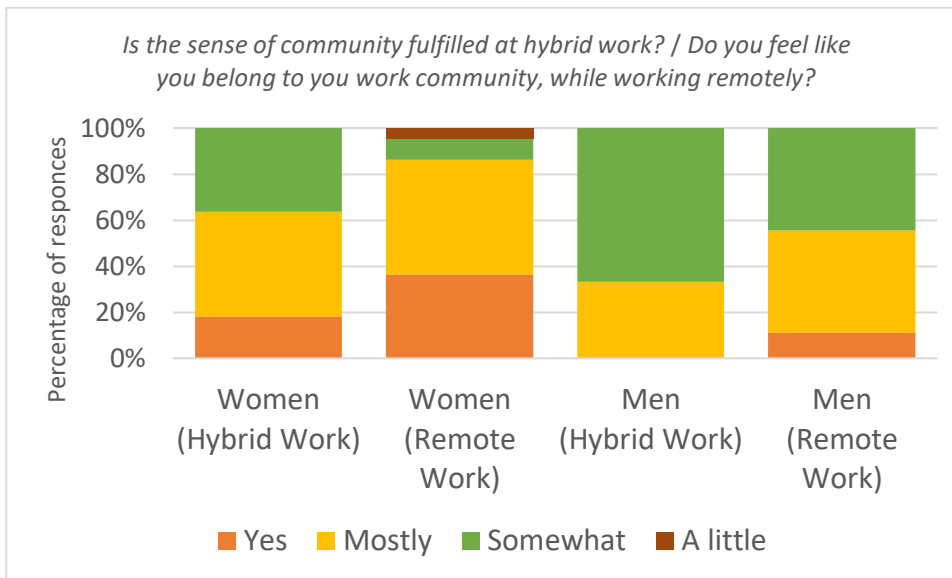


Figure 12. The comparison of sense of community in hybrid work and remote work from the women's and men's points of view.

#### 4.4 Mental Workplace

**Expert.** From the wellness point of view, Interviewee A suggested that when employees can save time with work commutes, leaving more time to do other things at home and free time, wellbeing will be enhanced. Also, the freedom of choice when choosing where to work will deepen one's knowledge of oneself, which will help with motivation which then promotes wellbeing.

Interviewee A also pointed out that one negative aspect that will affect the wellbeing of employees in a hybrid working environment is stress and the longing for live meetings with work colleagues. It is individual for every person, but it can be a negative aspect of hybrid work.

**Organisation.** According to Interviewee B, Aava & Bang believes that their employees' lives have a big impact on success at work. How it is going at home, how well they take care of their physical health, and how the employee recovers from a workday, all play a role in the quality of work. This is the reason why Aava & Bang want to take care of their employees' overall wellbeing.

**Employee.** Survey responses revealed that the majority of employees (N=31) felt that hybrid work gave them more free time (see Table 4). Two respondents said that they got less free time, which means that one of the respondents chose both options. Mostly, the answers are positive, but employees seem to focus more on the physical aspects of wellbeing rather than mental. On the



other hand, respondent 6 said that *“Monitoring and focusing on the employee’s mental health or mental capabilities is important when working remotely it is easy to feel lonely”*.

Table 4. Detailed responses to question 35 “Because of Hybrid work...”

<b>Hybrid work allows:</b>	
I have more freetime (N=31)	I have less free time (N=2)
I feel better (N=11)	I feel worse (N=1)
My stress levels are lower (N=14)	My stress are levels higher (N=6)
My physical wellbeing gets better (N=8)	My physical wellbeing gets worse (N=14)
I find finishing work easy (N=10)	I find finishing work hard (N=15)
My mental health gets better (N=4)	My mental health gets worse (N=4)
Other, what?	
<p>I can have my own daily routines which are not designed around work</p> <p>I get more work done per day</p> <p>My work is more flexible.</p> <p>The balance between work and free time is better</p> <p>I can do work more efficiently and with greater motivation</p> <p>My work focus is better</p>	

Women are more positive about their workplace supporting their wellbeing and their mental health than men (see Figure 13).

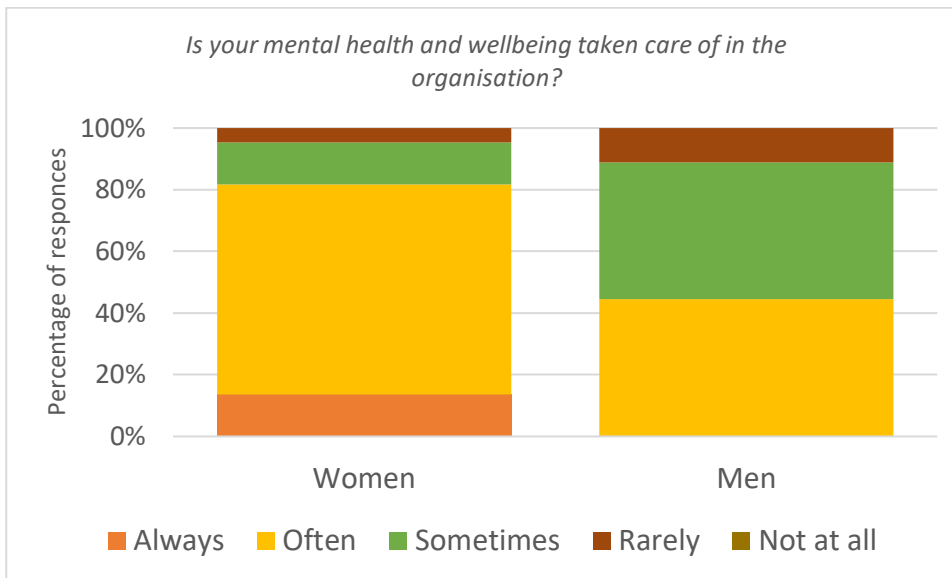


Figure 13. The division of the employees' feelings about the workplace supporting their wellbeing and mental health.

Respondent 13 said: *"I think it is important to recognise voluntary hybrid work and the remote work which has been forced to everyone because of COVID-19. Even though we have not had just certain rules when being in the office, is safety and others safety often forced to stay in a remote work. In an ideal situation hybrid work, both are easily achieved.*

*Work fringe benefit could be re considered to the "new" ordinary days in life benefits cannot link to doing everything together, but they should be able to utilise in an individual's ordinary days of life. It could be culture, exercise, food, training, or better workspaces for home.*

*If there is less encounters with each other, it would be good to invest in them and what would be small and continuous benefits which would bring wellbeing and happiness into employee's lives.*

*These gives a big competitive advantage when trying to find new employees and in our field the competition of specialists is getting harder, and I think these have a lot to do with the employee engagement and individual experience point of view.*

## 5 Discussion and Limitations

The results of this study, summarised in Table 5, shed light on two principal concerns of the modern age, namely how best to implement a hybrid organisational culture, and how to do so while maintainig and developing soft social sustainability. Data from two interviews and a survey were triangulated to provide practical knowledge concerning all four workplaces – Physical, Digital, social, and mental – that Aava & Bang, or indeed any organisation, could utilise as they move ever closer to the "new normal".

Table 5. Summary of the Results.

Workplace	Summary of Results
Physical	It is beneficial to structure work tasks according to their suitability to office or remote work. When working remotely, most employees would like to work in the same city in which they live, but there was also a desire to work elsewhere, including abroad. Office spaces should be tested to discover how they work best for both the employees and the organisation. Offices might be oriented toward social (inter)actions, but quiet office areas and spaces would also be beneficial. Ergonomics is one of key the challenges in hybrid work, and an aspect employees need significant help with it. This is especially true when working remotely. Employer-supplied equipment that takes ergonomics under consideration would help.
Digital	High-quality technological tools are essential for working in a hybrid environment. Making these tools accessible to all would allow employees to work anywhere, boosting productivity. Cyber security is critical since humans are the weakest link in the technology chain. Such issues are well taken care of at Aava & Bang.
Social	Transparent and understandable agreements & rules should be a key consideration of the employer since they enhance employee productivity and promote a sense of community. Individual-focused management is also desirable. A hybrid work environment brings a sense of equality to office-based and remote work. Social contact is, however, very important, and it is beneficial to bring people together on occasion. In general, the sense of Community is high at Aava & Bang, although there is a desire to have more unstructured "free talk".
Mental	Data concerning wellbeing was more focused on physical as opposed to mental aspects, despite the fact that some employees felt remote working affected their mental health more. Aava & Bang takes good care of their employees, and views them as an important asset. Hybrid work permits more free time and feelings of autonomy, but it can also lead to higher levels of stress when rules about a subject or work project are less clear.

Hybrid working environments are here to stay and will change the dynamics of the organisational culture. Right now, hybrid working models are being developed, and they will need a lot of planning. Moreover, sustainability is becoming an ever more important factor in organisational

strategies. Organisations need to take practical steps towards creating more sustainable work environments. In so doing, it is important that they consider social aspects of sustainability, and soft social sustainability in particular since this aspect of sustainability is particularly important to an organisations' economic growth. In what follows, the research results are discussed in relation to the theoretical background.

First, what kind of tools are needed in the physical workplace to be more socially sustainable? The results show that all the employees want to do hybrid work after COVID-19, so it is important to have a plan that states which work tasks are beneficial to do in the office and which are more beneficially completed remotely. The results reveal that the thought of employees doing quiet work remotely at the home office and the office spaces could be built to provide more social areas for meetings. While the social area was important to the employees, it was clear that rooms for quiet work were the most desired. This emphasises the importance on the testing and finding the new office space that would promote hybrid working. It also points to the fact that every organisation has different needs for offices, and it would be beneficial to include people who actually work there in the planning process. Having office spaces that promote a good work experience and allow employees to meet from time to time is essential for hybrid working environment. It offers employees a "base" where they can go if desired. Also, as mentioned previously by Rantanen, Leppänen and Kankaanpää (2020), offices are one example of the first level of organisational culture.

Second, when it comes to ergonomics in the physical workplace, it's clear that employees take more care of their ergonomics in the office than in remote work. This, Interview B revealed, was already known in the organisation. The results show that it is not possible for the organisation to provide every employee with everything they need, such as good tables and chairs, to help with the issue of ergonomics. Perhaps the solution is for the organisation to spend more time and effort on this matter. It was found that providing exercise classes or training about ergonomics for the remote office could be beneficial for the physical health of the employees. Having common breaks where everybody gets some movement to the body can help a lot. This supports also what Koohsari and others (2021) have said in that this can prevent more serious illnesses, and reduces the likelihood of employees having to take costly sick leaves. It also promotes employee's wellbeing and quality of life, both of which are essential aspects of soft social sustainability.

A good digital workplace promotes the virtual working environment as a space where the actual work can be accomplished effectively. It is important to have good quality tools, such as computers, microphones, and speakers. All of these make working in the hybrid model easier. They allow employees to be in contact with each other and with customers anywhere. When these are provided the next step is to have good connections wherever employee's work. The better the internet connection, the higher quality meetings and other interactions will be, and the more satisfied both employees and customers will be. Aava & Bang already have a lot of different digital applications, such as Google services, that they use in the virtual working environment and the results reveal that employees believe there are enough such tools being used. As Gladwell (n.d) said, these tools can help with the relationship towards the organisation, and that can promote better organisational culture.

One interesting event that occurred while writing this discussion was that Meta (Facebook) had just launched a beta version of a virtual workplace called Horizon Workrooms. In this workplace, employees can make a character of themselves and they will be moved to their desired workplace. After that the workplace works in a program and it is manoeuvred around using VR-classes. (Virranniemi 2021.) This could be beneficial for hybrid organisational culture, since it creates a feeling of being in the office. As such, in addition to potential virtual social interactions that could be implemented in the future, it could prevent the mixing of free time and worktime, since it creates an "office space" in which to work, which one can "leave" at the end of the workday. A desire for this kind of "virtual room" was also found in the results of this study.

Also, when working in a digital workplace, cyber security is important and Sadik and others (2020) suggest organisations should have certain process to recognise and prevent threats when working online. The results show that Aava & Bang's employees generally feel safe working online, and this might be partly explained by the fact that, as stated by Interviewee B, Aava & Bang have protective cyber security measures in place to keep their employees safe whenever they're using equipment provided by the organisation.

It was clear that agreements and rules should be changed and developed to match hybrid work. The results revealed that agreements and rules promote a sense of community and productivity, especially for younger employees. This could indicate that younger employees need more support

when working in general, since they have less experience in any workplace. As Lufkin (2020b) says, the younger generation might need more support while working remotely, and for this reason agreements and rules are beneficial. As Hietala and others (2020, 209) stated, agreements and rules can also promote work autonomy and make working easier, since employees know more clearly how things are supposed to be done.

Having a common hybrid working environment rulebook for the entire organisation could provide a better employee experience, which in turn would promote soft social sustainability in terms of employee health and wellbeing. Furthermore, it may be beneficial for each team to have their own agreements and rules that the team follows, helping each team work even better. Knight (2021b) agrees, and believes it promotes more efficient working. The most important agreements or rules concerning how people do hybrid work should be made between the employee and the employer individually, since the hopes and desires to work in a physical or remote office differs for everyone.

Physical and digital workplaces are an essential part of social sustainability in the organisation. However, having a good hybrid organisational culture that supports social sustainability at work requires considerable effort from the employer. As Rantanen (2018, 63) and Bärlund and Perko (2013, 103) state, when times change an employer's actions should change too. It is employers who should be the ones who take care of their employees, making sure agreements and rules are adhered to. From the employees' point of view, individual support becomes more important and valued in hybrid organisational culture, since employees are not all in the same place. In the present study this was especially so for women, who reported wanting to have more individual support than men from their employer. In addition, it is clear from the results that employees expect the employer to lead by example. This expectation was especially clear for the younger employees. When working in a hybrid environment, the threshold for being able to contact one's employer should be set very low. Moreover, employees would be happy if their employer contacted them more. It was stated that in so doing their employer would make them feel more included in the organisation.

Equality between office work and remote work is an important part of social sustainability. As Samuel and Robertson (2021) said, employees who work in the office might get more attention

and benefits compared to remote workers. While this is clearly an important concern in general, most of the respondents in this study felt that they were working in a low-hierarchy organisation, and that they were in fact equal within the organisation. While both women and men reported being happy about equality in the workplace, women were particular so.

As regards equality between office and remote work, there was a tendency for older employees to view this more negatively than the younger ones. This could be a generational thing connected with the fact that younger employees are more used to and better able to adapt to new technologies and, by extension, ways of working. It was clear that, at least at Aava & Bang, COVID-19 brought office work and remote work together and made them more equal. It was also apparent that, by giving every employee the same opportunities to work in a hybrid working model, such as giving everyone the same technological tools, a sense of equality is increased. This was also emphasised by Knight (2020b). An organisation with a greater sense of equality among its employees not only helps with social networks but also promotes a sense of community.

As regards this sense of community, the results showed that Aava & Bang has a very good sense of community. Interestingly, however, the sense of community was higher for remote work than for hybrid work. The reason for this could be the fact that, when all employees were working remotely, everyone was in the same position. After all, nothing brings people together better than a common enemy (in this case COVID-19-related social distancing). As Twaronite (2019) puts it, a sense of community promotes good hybrid organisational culture and allows employees to have the sense of belonging they hope for.

One negative aspect of working in a hybrid model is that it is harder to know where everyone is, when they are working, and what they are working on. To help with this, good communication and transparent actions are a key benefit to an organisation. Since humans do have a natural need for contact with other humans, to promote a better sense of community the results show that people would hope to have more social interactions. One example of this proposed by Aava & Bang employees was “speed dating” sessions in which employees could get to know each other better. Results also supported the notion of a virtual room, similar to that proposed by Interviewee A, that could promote a better sense of community when some people are working remotely. This virtual room could be used for work interactions, social interactions, or both.

As discussed in the theoretical background, wellbeing is a significant aspect of soft social sustainability, and is closely related to employees' quality of life and overall happiness. Wellbeing is another factor that might need more attention when working remotely, especially since this mode of working is not as common as office work. People are not used to it or how to deal with the stresses and strains this mode of work creates. It was notable from the results of this study that employees mostly focused on the physical aspects of wellbeing. In contrast, mental health was mentioned more rarely. Rather than being a negative aspect, this might in fact amplify the fact that Aava & Bang takes care of their employees' mental health. As such, it is not as big of a deal in this particular organisation as it might be in others. Indeed, results show that employees mostly feel that the organisation takes care of their mental health. As Robinson (2020) notes, this is an important factor when working in a hybrid model. The results show that most responses from employees about hybrid work and wellbeing were positive. Moreover, wellbeing was seen as a positive factor in their quality of life and happiness, which, as previously noted, is very important when talking about soft social sustainability (see Jilcha 2020)

To sum up the discussion, there exist tools that support soft social sustainability, but some are not as visible as others. These tools can relate to technology or equipment for the physical workplace, but they can also be new models, practices, knowledge, better leadership, and skills. The tools identified in this study were in particular related to physical, digital, social, and mental workplaces. They all support each other as well as soft social sustainability. What's more, not all tools are physical – they can be rules, ways to work, mindsets, or thoughts. Tools that support social sustainability are rated very highly by employees, and this is important, since social sustainability has everything to do with our life on Earth.

It is therefore important to have a good physical workplace, where employees feel safe and happy to work. In addition the digital workplace plays as big of a role if not bigger in the organisation as the physical workplace, since it was until recently the place where everyone works, putting them all "in the same boat". Using new technologies and innovations that consider this helps when building hybrid organisational culture to support social sustainability.

Of the four workplaces described in this thesis, physical and digital workplaces are the most visible. The social and mental workplaces, meanwhile, represent more "invisible" aspects of hybrid



work that might easily be overlooked when developing a hybrid organisational culture that also promotes social sustainability. Social- and mental workplaces include the actions, feelings and values of the work environments as well as the workplace itself. These workplaces require effort from employers but also from employees. Rules and agreements should support these more invisible aspects, and give structure to employees' place of work, whether it be office-based, remote, or hybrid. By developing a hybrid organisational culture that emphasises high levels of employee wellbeing, equality, and sense of community, an organisation will be best positioned to maintain and develop a similarly high level of social sustainability.

### **Limitations**

When the thesis writing process started there was very little other research made about this subject and for this reason, I used multiple different references and viewpoints were used. Since this subject is new it was harder to find data that would be straightforwardly on the topic. However, relevant theories and data were found in the different subjects and references, which were combined to create a solid theoretical background for the thesis.

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, Aava & Bang's employees might have very strong feeling about remote working. This might have affected some answers in the survey. In the future, similar studies could be conducted when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have passed, and hybrid work has been in use for a longer period of time. Since organisational culture changes relatively slowly this might even be beneficial for the organisation. The results would show what needs to be done more and what aspects are already good.

One more limitation of this study is that it has been made to only one organisation. For this reason, interview B and the survey results cannot be compared to other organisations. On the other hand, the themes and factors arising in this thesis, as well as the advice and themes emerging from the expert interview A, could be utilised by any organisation. They could even be modified to match their own practices. Still, it is important to note that the Aava & Bang-related results might not be relevant to other companies, despite the relatively large sample size (over 60% of employees completed the survey). Perhaps an optimal solution would be to repeat the steps taking in this thesis – an interview with management that helps inform a survey for

employees – with other companies, especially since social sustainability is very personal and a challenge to measure. This affects the reliability of the research, and it cannot of course be predicted to have the same answers if another organisation makes the same research.

## 6 Conclusion and Future Suggestions

The workplace is changing rapidly as a result of COVID-19. Because remote working has shown good results in employees, work tasks and the development about hybrid work has begun. The hybrid working model is becoming increasingly popular as it brings more opportunities for companies. As a result, organisational culture needs to be updated so as to be suitable for the “new normal”. This requires more work and time from organisations. Furthermore, as sustainable development has become more and more prominent, this too should be taken into consideration as part of this development process.

The motivation for this study arose from the author’s interest in the subject matter. She had seen hybrid work in action, and began to question how socially sustainable this mode of working could be, as well as how it might be conceived in different organisations. As the thesis process unfolded, the author herself started working in a hybrid workplace, which gave an additional perspective on the subject. These experiences have prompted the author to consider becoming more deeply involved in developing hybrid organisational cultures that would promote social sustainability.

As a starting point, the author could suggest that, in order to derive maximum benefit from this study, she could start building a code of ethics for Aava & Bang based upon the theoretical background and data collected. Other suggestions for future work on or related to this topic include more basic research on the two aspects central to this thesis, namely hybrid organisational culture and soft social sustainability. At the time of writing, there remains very little research dealing specifically with these topics. Given the importance of these topics in contemporary society, there would seem to be a desperate need for such research to be carried out.

Future studies might also delve more deeply into different aspects of social sustainability. This thesis focused mainly on so-called soft social sustainability since it is the least researched dimension of sustainability, but has undeniable effects on people’s wellbeing and organisations’ economic growth. However, to get a complete picture of sustainability in an organisation, it is important to consider environmental and economic sustainability, too, and the theoretical background developed in this thesis might be utilised to give structure to such research.

In conclusion, this study has provided tools for building hybrid organisational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability, all underpinned by a solid theoretical background and mixed-method data provided by a hybrid expert, an organisation with experience of hybrid work, and its employees. The tools were developed within four different workplaces (physical, digital, social, and mental) all of which play a significant role in supporting social sustainability. Having a socially sustainable hybrid organisational culture brings more competitive advantages to an organisation, and creates a better employee experience. It is inevitable that organisations need more work to make it happen, but the tools described in this thesis provide a solid foundation upon which this work can be built.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The Structure of the Interview done to Hybrid Work Specialist

1. Millaiseksi kuvailisit hyvää hybridi organisaatiokulttuuria?  
*How would you describe a good hybrid organisational culture?*
2. Minkälainen on huono hybridi organisaatiokulttuuri?  
*What is a bad hybrid organisational culture?*
3. Millä tavoin yhteisöllisyyttä pystytään rakentamaan hybridi organisaatiokulttuurissa?  
*How can sense of community be built in a hybrid organisational culture?*
4. Mitkä asiat ovat tärkeitä johtajan tietää hybridi organisaatiokulttuurin johtamisesta?  
*What factors are important for employer to know about leading hybrid organisational culture?*
5. Minkälaisia sopimuksia/sääntöjä olisi hyvä olla hybridi organisaatiokulttuurissa?  
*What kind of agreements/rules would be good to have in a hybrid organisational culture?*
6. Kuinka iso rooli eri teknologisilla laitteilla on hybridityössä?  
*How big of a role different technological tools have in hybrid work?*
7. Minkälainen toimistotila olisi parhain hybridityötä tekeväälle yritykselle?  
*What kind of office space would be best for organisation that does hybrid working model?*
8. Koetko, että hybridityö on tuonut tasavertaisuutta työelämään?  
*Do you feel like hybrid work has brought equality into working life?*
9. Miten hybridityö parantaa hyvinvointia?  
*How does hybrid work promote wellbeing?*
10. Millä tavoin jatkuvaa oppimista voitaisiin tuoda paremmin esille hybridityössä?  
*In what ways lifelong learning could be highlighted better in hybrid work?*
11. Onko hybridityöstä tulossa "uusi normaali"?  
*Is hybrid work going to be the "new normal"?*

## Appendix 2. The Structure of the Interview for Aava & Bang's Member of Management

1. Kuinka paljon teidän yrityksessänne tehdään hybridityötä?  
*How much hybrid work is done in your organisation?*
2. Mitä hybridityö yrityksellenne tarkoittaa?  
*What hybrid work means to your organisation?*
3. Mitä hyötyjä näet hybridityöstä teidän yrityksellenne?  
*What benefits you see about hybrid work in your organisation?*
4. Minkälaisia työkaluja teillä on hybridityössä?  
*What kind of tools you have in hybrid work?*
5. Millä tavoin yrityksen kulttuuri tukee hybridityöskentelyä?  
*In what ways the organisations culture supports hybrid working?*
6. Onko teillä jotain sääntöjä hybridityöhön?  
*Do you have any rules for hybrid work?*
7. Millaista johtamista tarvitaan hybridityöskentelyyn?  
*What kind of leadership is needed for hybrid working?*
8. Minkälaisia haasteita hybridityöskentelyssä on yritykselle?  
*What kind of challenges hybrid work has for the organisation?*
9. Miten te haluaisitte kehittää hybridityöskentelyä, jotta se olisi tehokkaampaa?  
*How would you develop hybrid work to make it more productive?*
10. Millä tavoin COVID-19 on vaikuttanut työntekoon ja mitkä asiat ovat muuttuneet?  
*How has COVID-19 affected working and what things have changed?*
11. Minkälaiset tulevaisuuden suunnitelmat yrityksellenne on hybridityön suhteen?  
*What are your organisations future plans for hybrid work?*

### Appendix 3. The Structure of the Survey

\*Required

Olen Sara Ronkainen, 4. vuoden restonomiopiskelija Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulusta, teen opinnäytetyötäni, jonka toimeksiantajana on Aava & Bang. Tutkimukseni aihe on hybridityökulttuurin työkalujen rakentaminen ylläpitäen ja kehittäen sosiaalista kestävyyttä. Sen tavoitteena on selvittää miten Te Aava & Bangin työntekijöinä koette hybridityön ja siihen liittyvät sosiaalisen kestävyiden eri asteet.

Hybridityöllä tarkoitetaan työtä, jota tehdään niin läsnä toimistolla kuin etänä, sekä sosiaalisella kestävyydellä yrityksessä tarkoitetaan henkilöstön hyvinvointia ja terveyttä edistäviä tekoja. Kyselyn tarkoituksena on parantaa Aava & Bangin hybridityökulttuuria ja saada uusia työkaluja sen parantamiseen pitäen samalla kiinni sosiaalisen kestävyiden periaatteista.

Jokainen vastaus on tärkeä. Vastaamalla kyselyyn pystyt työntekijänä vaikuttamaan Aava & Bangin hybridityökulttuuriin ja sen kehittämiseen, jotta voitte luoda entistä parempia käytänteitä työntekemiseen hybridityössä. Kyselyn vastaamiseen menee noin 10-15 minuuttia.

Vastauksenne käsitellään täysin anonyymisti ja luottamuksellisesti ja tämän vuoksi Teitä ei voi tunnistaa antamienne vastauksien perusteella. Kyselyn kysymykset ovat pääosin monivalintakysymyksiä muutaman avoimen kysymyksen kera. Tutkimuksen on määrä valmistua syksyllä 2021. Kyselyn vastauksia saatetaan hyödyntää myöhemmin artikkelissa tai jatkotutkimuksessa.

Kaikki kysymykset tutkimukseen liittyen suoraan minulle sähköpostitse (m2465@student.jamk.fi).  
Kiitos vastauksistanne.

Ystävällisin terveisin, Sara Ronkainen



*My name is Sara Ronkainen, fourth year tourism and hospitality management student from Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. I am doing my thesis for an assigned organisation Aava & Bang. The subject of my research is building tools for hybrid organizational culture while maintaining and developing social sustainability. Its aim is to find out how you as employees of Aava & Bang experience the different steps on hybrid work and social sustainability.*

*Hybrid work refers to work done in the office and remotely and social sustainability in an organisation means actions that promote the wellbeing and health of employees. The purpose of this survey is to improve Aava & Bang's hybrid organisational culture and find new tools to achieve that while maintaining and keeping up with the principles of social sustainability.*

*Every answer is important. By answering the survey, as an employee, you will be able to influence Aava & Bang's hybrid organisational culture and its development, which allows you to create even better practices for working in a hybrid work. It takes about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.*

*Your answers will be analysed completely anonymously and confidentially and for therefore you cannot be identified based on the answers you provide. The survey questions are mainly multiple-choice question with few open-ended questions. The research will be finished during autumn 2021. The responses from this survey might be utilised later in an article or further study.*

*All the questions concerning the survey can be addressed to me via email ([M2465@student.jamk.fi](mailto:M2465@student.jamk.fi)). Thank you for your answers.*

*Kind regards, Sara Ronkainen*

Tässä osiossa kysytään peruskysymyksiä sinuun ja työhösi liittyen. / *This section asks basic questions about you and your work.*

1. Sukupuolesi on: \* / *Your gender is \**

- Nainen / *Female*
- Mies / *Male*
- Muu / *Other*
- En halua vastata / *I don't want to answer*

2. Ikäsi on: \* / *Your age is \**

- Alle 18v / *Under 18*
- 18-28v / *18-28*
- 29-38v / *29-38*
- 39-48v / *39-48*
- 49-58v / *49-58*
- 59-65v / *59-65*
- Yli 65v / *Over 65*

4. Missä maakunnassa asut? \* / *What region do you live? \**

- Ahvenanmaa / *Åland*
- Etelä-Karjala / *South Karelia*

- Etelä-Pohjanmaa / *South Ostrobothnia*
- Etelä-Savo / *South Savo*
- Kainuu / *Kainuu*
- Kanta-Häme / *Kanta-häme*
- Keski-Pohjanmaa / *Central Ostrobothnia*
- Keski-Suomi / *Central Finland*
- Kymenlaakso / *Kymenlaakso*
- Lappi / *Lapland*
- Pirkanmaa / *Pirkanmaa*
- Pohjanmaa / *Ostrobothnia*
- Pohjois-Karjala / *North Karelia*
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa / *North Ostrobothnia*
- Pohjois-Savo / *North Savo*
- Päijät-Häme / *Päijät-Häme*
- Satakunta / *Satakunta*
- Uusimaa / *Uusimaa*
- Varsinais-Suomi / *Southwest Finland*

4. Jos saisit päättää, tekisitkö töitä \* / *If you could choose, would you work \**

- Samassa kaupungissa kuin nyt / *Same city as now*
- Eri kaupungissa kuin nyt / *Different city as now*
- Maaseudulla / *Countryside*
- Ulkomailla / *Abroad*

5. Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt Aava & Bangilla? \* / *How long have you worked at Aava & Bang? \**

- Alle vuoden / *Less than a year*
- 1-5- vuotta / *1-5- years*
- 6-10- vuotta / *6-10- years*
- 11-16- vuotta / *11-16 years*

Tässä osiossa kysytään peruskysymyksiä hybridityöstä. Hybridityöllä tarkoitetaan monipaikkatyötä, eli töitä tehdään niin etänä, esimerkiksi kotona, mökillä tai ulkomailla kuin toimistolla. / *This section asks basic questions about hybrid work. Hybrid work refers to multi-site work, which means work can be done remotely, such as at home, summer cottage or abroad and in the office.*

6. Onko hybridityön käsite sinulle tuttu? (katso selite ylhäältä) \* / *Do you know the concept of hybrid work? (See definition above) \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Ei / *No*

7. Oletko tehnyt hybridityötä ennen COVID-19 pandemiaa? \* / *Have you done hybrid work before COVID-19 pandemic? \**

- Kyllä (Jos vastasi tämä kysymys 8. ilmenee) / *Yes (If answered this question 8. appears)*
- En / *No*

8. Kuinka monta prosenttia kokonaisajasta teit etänä hybridityössä ennen COVID-19 pandemiaa? / *How many percent did you do remote work when working in a hybrid working model before COVID-19 pandemic? \**

- 1-30%
- 31-50%
- 51-80%
- 81-100%

9. Kuinka paljon haluaisit tehdä hybridityötä COVID-19 pandemian jälkeen? \* / *How much would you like to do hybrid work after COVID-19 pandemic? \**

- 1-30%
- 31-50%
- 51-80%
- 81-100%
- En halua tehdä hybridityötä ollenkaan (Jos vastasi tämä kysymys 10. ilmenee) / *I do not want to do hybrid work at all (If this was answered question 10. Appears)*

10. Miksi, et halua tehdä hybridityötä? / *Why you do not want to do hybrid work? (Open-ended question)*

11. Hybridityössä positiivista on: \* / *Positive about hybrid work: \* (Open-ended question)*

12. Hybridityössä negatiivista on: \* / *Negative about hybrid work: \* (Open-ended question)*

Tässä osiossa kysytään kysymyksiä yhteisöllisyydestä, niin työyhteisössä kuin hybridityössä. / *This section asks questions about sense of community in the work community and in hybrid work.*

13. Onko työyhteisössäsi vahva yhteisöllisyyden tunne? \* / *Do you have a strong sense of community in you work community? \**

- Hyvin vahva / *Very strong*
- Melko vahva / *Quite strong*
- Jollain tasolla / *Somewhat*
- Hieman vahva / *Little strong*
- Ei yhtään / *Not at all*

14. Toteutuuko yhteisöllisyyden tunne hybridityössä? \* / *Is the sense of community fulfilled at hybrid work? \**

- Kyllä todellakin / *Yes absolutely*
- Suureksi osaksi / *Mostly*
- Jollain tasolla / *Somewhat*
- Hieman / *A little*
- Ei ollenkaan / *Not at all*

15. Koetko kuuluvasi työyhteisösi, kun teet etätyötä? \* / *Do you feel like you belong to your work community, while working remotely? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Suureksi osaksi / *Mostly*
- Jollain tasolla / *Somewhat*
- Hieman / *A little*
- En ollenkaan / *Not at all*

16. Toivoisitko, että saisit enemmän huomiota työkavereiltasi, kun olet etätoimistolla? \* / *Do you hope to get more attention from your work colleagues, when you are at the remote office? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Suureksi osaksi / *Mostly*
- Jonkin verran / *Somewhat*
- Hieman / *A little*
- En yhtään / *Not at all*

17. Miten yhteisöllisyyttä voitaisiin parantaa hybridityössä? \* / *How the sense of community could be better in hybrid work? \* (Open-ended question)*

Tässä osiossa kysytään kysymyksiä tasavertaisuudesta työyhteisössäsi. / *This section asks questions about equality in your work community.*

18. Koetko olevasi tasavertainen työyhteisössäsi? \* / *Do you feel equal in you work community? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- En koskaan / *Never*

19. Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat kohdan 18. vastaukseesi? \* / *What aspects are affecting on the question 18. answer? \* (Open-ended question)*

20. Onko etätö ja toimistotyö mielestäsi tasavertaisia? \* / *Are remote work and office work equal? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

21. Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat kohdan 20. vastaukseesi? \* / *What aspects are affecting on the question 20. answer? \* (Open-ended question)*



22. Saako toimistossa työskentelevät parempaa kohtelua etätyöntekijöihin verrattuna? \* / *Does the ones working in the office get better treatment compared to remote workers? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

23. Saatko kuulla sovituista asioista, vaikka olisit etätöissä? (Esimerkiksi niin sanottua hiljaista tietoa?) \* / *Do you hear about agreed things, even if you are working remotely? (For example, tacit knowledge?) \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- En koskaan / *Never*

24. Muuttuiko tasavertaisuus hybridityössä COVID-19 pandemian aikana? \* / *Did the equality in hybrid work change during COVID-19 pandemic? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Ei / *No*

Tässä osiossa kysytään kysymyksiä esihenkilösi toiminnasta, sekä säännöistä ja sopimuksista hybridityöhön ja työyhteisösi liittyen. / *This section asks questions about the actions of your employer, and agreements and rules concerning hybrid work and your work community.*

25. Koetko, että saat tarpeeksi tukea esihenkilöltäsi hybridityössä? \* / *Do you feel that you get enough support from your employer in hybrid work? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- En koskaan / *Never*

26. Pitääkö esihenkilösi huolta rutiineista ja sovitusta säännöistä, jotta työntekeminen olisi helpompaa? \* / *Does your employer take care of agreed routines and rules, that would make working easier? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

27. Saatko yksilöllistä tukea esihenkilöltäsi? \* / *Do you get individual support from your employer?*

\*

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

28. Voiko esihenkilö omalla esimerkillään parantaa työkokemustasi hybridityössä? \* / *Can your employer in their own example make your employee experience better in hybrid work? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Ei / *No*
- Hieman / *A little*
- En näe muutosta / *I Cannot see a difference*

29. Mitä toivoisit esihenkilöltäsi hybridityötä ajatellen? \* / *What do you hope from your employer when thinking of hybrid work? \* (Open-ended question)*

30. Oppimisen kannalta on tärkeää, että: (valitse kolme (3) sinulle parhaiten sopivaa) \* / *Education point of view it is important that: (choose three (3) best suited for you) \**

- Tiimi kommunikoi hyvin / *Team communicates well*
- Esihenkilö antaa tarpeeksi palautetta työstäni / *Employer gives enough feedback of my work*
- Töitä tehdään tiiviissä yhteistyössä / *Work is done in a tight collaboration*
- Saisin enemmän koulutusta / *I would get more education*
- Näkisin, miten työkaverini työskentelevät / *I would see how my work colleagues work*
- Muu, mikä? / *Other, what?*

31. Auttaisivatko yrityksen yhteiset säännöt hybridityöstä saamaan aikaisiksi parempia tuloksia työssäsi? \* / *Would organisations common rules and agreements about hybrid work get you to have better results in your work tasks? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Ei / *No*
- Hieman / *A little*
- En näe muutosta / *I Cannot see a difference*

32. Auttaisivatko yrityksen yhteiset säännöt hybridityöstä parantamaan työyhteisön toimintaa ja työkuilttuuria? \* *Would organisations common rules and agreements about hybrid work make your work community's actions and organizational culture better? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- Ei / *No*
- Hieman / *A little*
- En näe muutosta / *Cannot see a difference*

Tässä osiossa kysytään kysymyksiä työhyvinvoinnistasii hybridityössä. / *This section asks questions about your work wellbeing*

33. Kuinka usein pidät huolta työergonomiastasi toimistotyössä? \* / *How often do you take care of your work ergonomics in office work? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

34. Kuinka hyvin pidät huolta työergonomiastasi etätöissä? \* / *How well do you take care of your work ergonomics in remote work? \**

- *Aina / Always*
- *Usein / Often*
- *Joskus / Sometimes*
- *Harvoin / Rarely*
- *Ei koskaan / Never*

35. Hybridityön ansiosta: (valitse viisi (5) parhaiten sopivaa vaihtoehtoa) \* / *Because of hybrid work: (choose five (5) best suited examples) \**

- *Saan enemmän vapaa-aikaa / I get more free time*
- *Saan vähemmän vapaa-aikaa / I get less free time*
- *Voin paremmin / I feel better*
- *Voin huonommin / I feel worse*
- *Stressitasoni laskevat / My stress levels gets lower*
- *Stressitasoni nousevat / My stress levels gets higher*
- *Fyysinen kuntoni paranee / My physical health gets better*
- *Fyysinen kuntoni heikkenee / My physical health weaken*
- *Työnlopettaminen on helppoa / Finishing work is easy*
- *Työnlopettaminen on vaikeaa / Finishing work is hard*

- Mielenterveyteni parantuu / *My mental health gets better*
- Mielenterveyteni heikkenee / *My mental health weaken*
- Muu, mikä? / *Other, what?*

36. Pidetäänkö mielenterveydestäsi ja hyvinvoinnistasasi huolta työpaikalla? \* / *Is your mental health and wellbeing taken care of in the organisation? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*

Viimeisessä osiossa kysytään kysymyksiä teknologisista työkaluista, sekä toimistotiloista. / *Last section asks questions about technological tools and office spaces.*

37. Koetko, että teillä Aava & Bangilla on riittävä määrä teknologisia työkaluja (kuten Googlen palvelut, Zoom, tms.) hybridityöntekemiseen? \* / *Do you feel like you at Aava & Bang have enough technological tools (such as Google services, Zoom, etc.) for hybrid working? \**

- Kyllä, nämä riittää / *Yes, there is enough*
- Ei, haluaisin enemmän/parempia / *No, I would like to have more/better*
- Vähemmän olisi tehokkaampaa / *Having less would make working more efficient*

38. Koetko, että hyvien teknologisten työkalujen ansiosta työskentelysi on tehokkaampaa? \* / *Do you feel like technological tools makes your working more efficient? \**

- Kyllä / *Yes*
- En / *No*
- Hieman / *A little*

39. Koetko, että tarvitsisit apua teknologisten työkalujen kanssa? \* / *Do you feel like you would need help with technological tools? \**

- Enemmän / *More*
- Saan, jos tarvitsen / *I get if I need*
- En / *No*

40. Koetko, että verkossa työskenteleminen on turvallista? \* / *Do you feel like working online is safe? \**

- Aina / *Always*
- Usein / *Often*
- Joskus / *Sometimes*
- Harvoin / *Rarely*
- Ei koskaan / *Never*



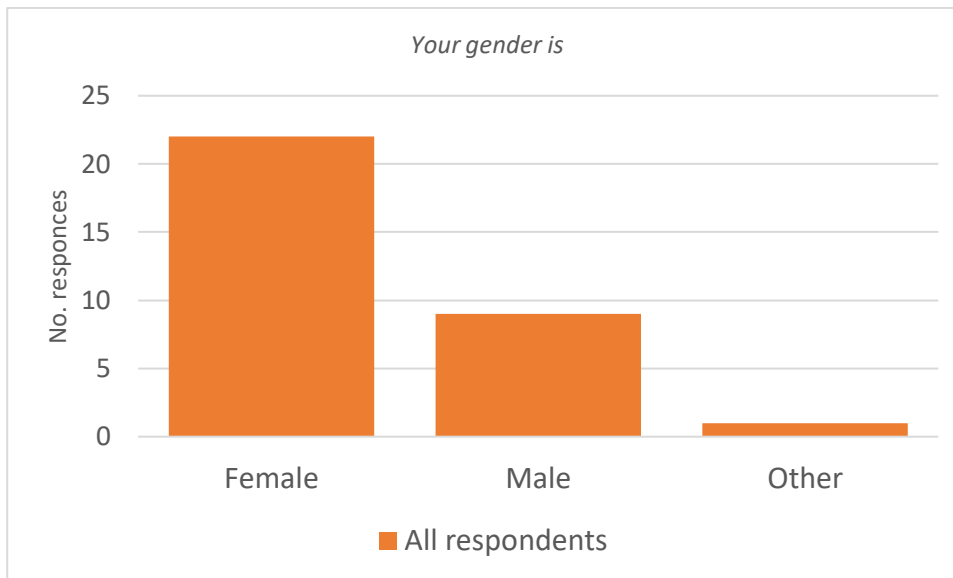
41. Millainen toimisto tukisi parhaiten hybridityömallia? (Valitse kolme (3) parhaiten sopivaa vaihtoehtoa) \* / *What kind of office would support hybrid working model the best? (Choose three (3) best suited answers) \**

- Lisää hiljaisen työn työpisteitä / *More spaces for quiet work*
- Enemmän yhteisiä tiloja kohtaamisille ja yhteiselle työskentelemiselle / *More common spaces for encounters and shared working*
- Monta toimistotilaa ympäri Suomea / *Many offices around Finland*
- Visuaalisesti miellyttävät tilat luovuuden edistämiseksi / *Visually pleasant spaces to promote creativity*
- Paljon työkaluja työskentelyn helpottamiseen / *Lots of tools to make working easier*
- Tiloja spontaaneille tapaamisille / *Spaces for spontaneous meetings*
- Muu, mikä? / *Other, what?*

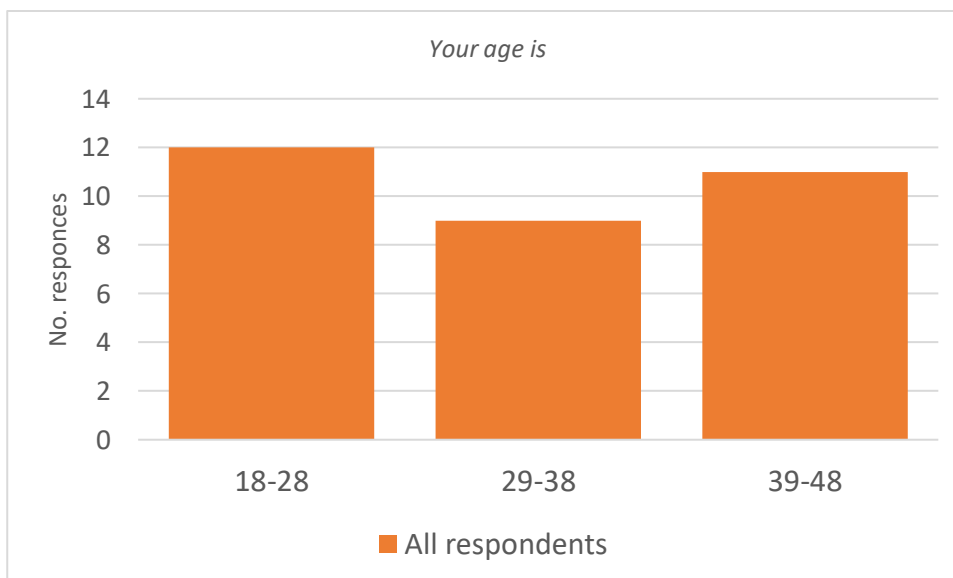
42. Onko sinulla jotain vielä, mitä haluaisit sanoa hybridityöstä ja/tai hybridityökulttuurista? (esimerkiksi mielipiteitä, ideoita ja pohdintoja) / *Do you have something you would like to say about hybrid work and/or hybrid organizational culture? (Open-ended question)*

## Appendix 4. General results from the survey in figures

### Gender division



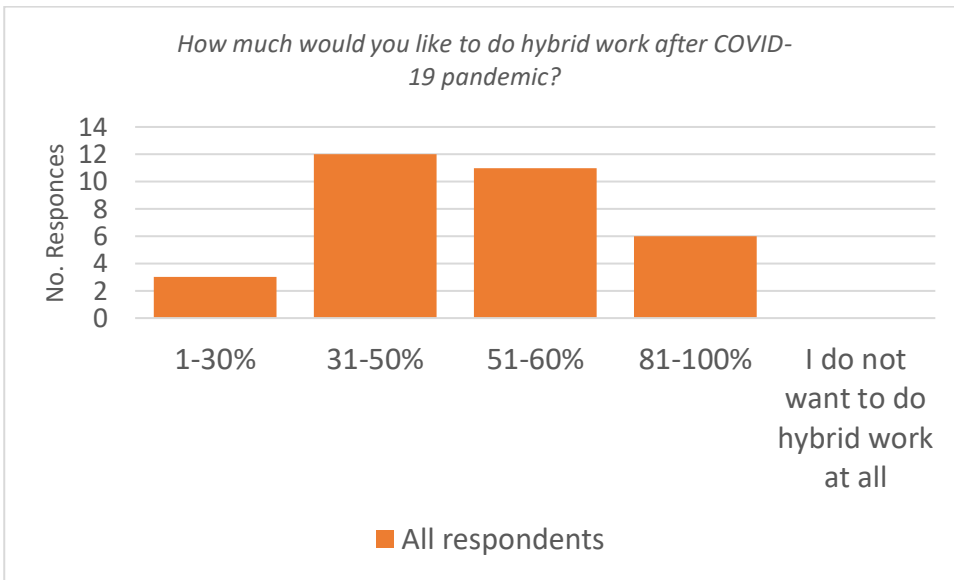
### Age division



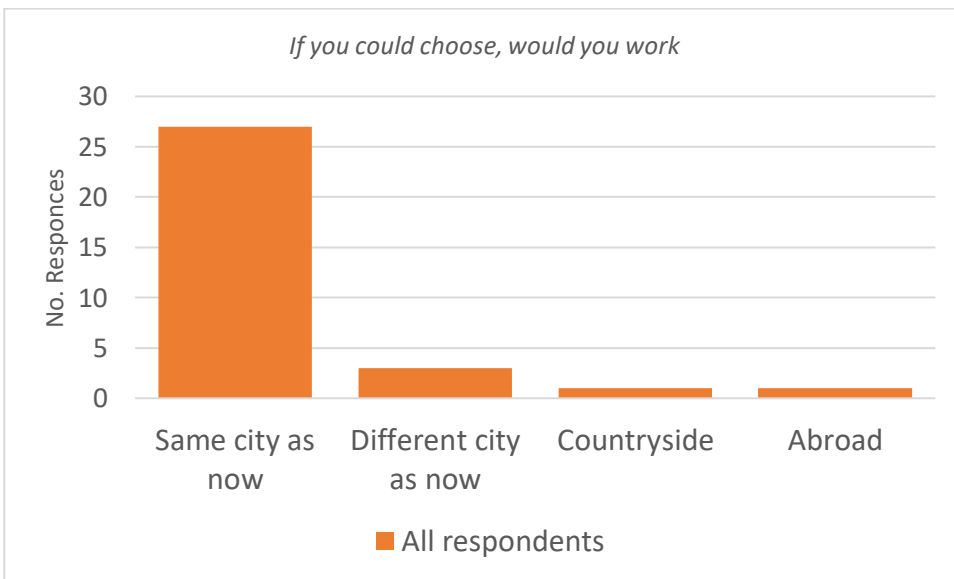
**Physical workplace**

**Location**

How much employees would like to do hybrid work after COVID-19:

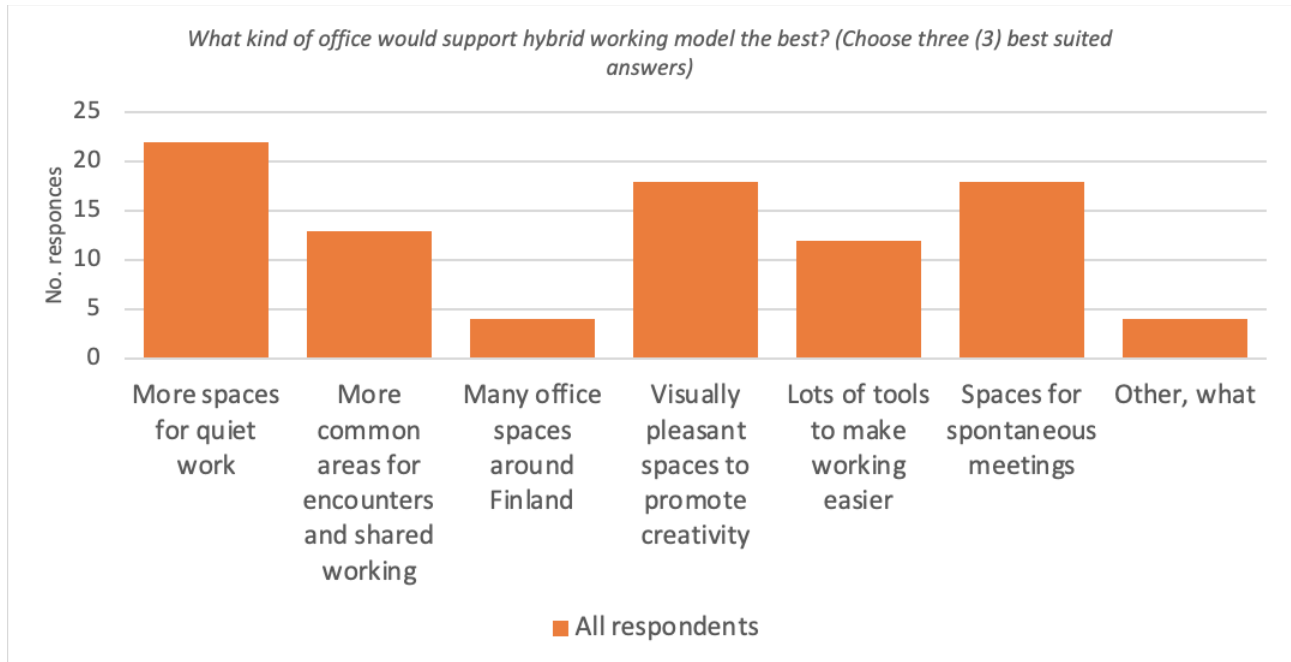


If employees had a choice they would like to live in:



## Office Space

The employees hope for office spaces:



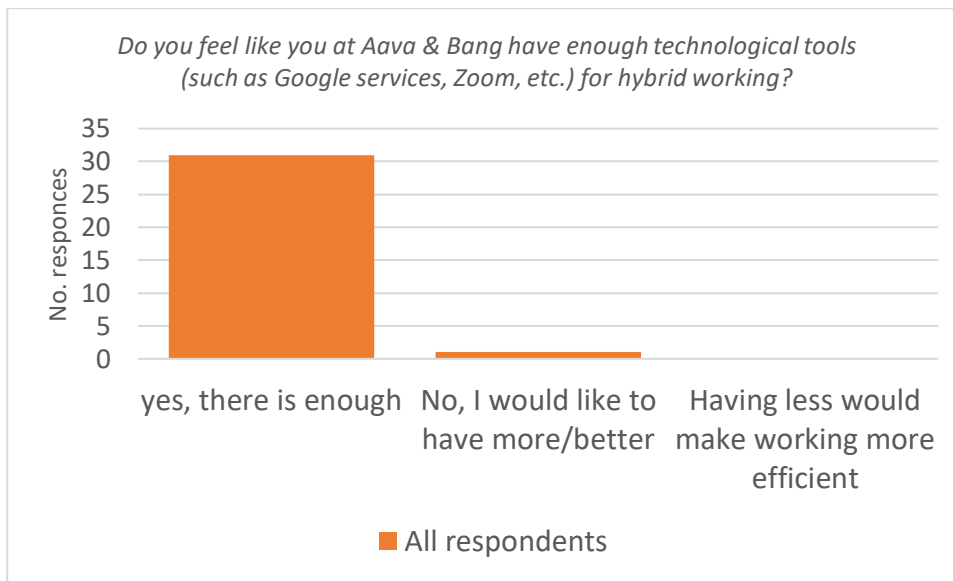
Other, what?

- Technically functioning spaces for remote workshops, lightning and network
- Bang already has gorgeous and visually pleasant offices spaces, but lighting could soften the atmosphere. Now we have harsh strip lighting
- Office where there is a lot of rooms, which allows to have meetings with remote workers and customers without interrupting others
- Could there be a straight connection to the offices in Helsinki and Tampere, which would be always open and simulates a common office?

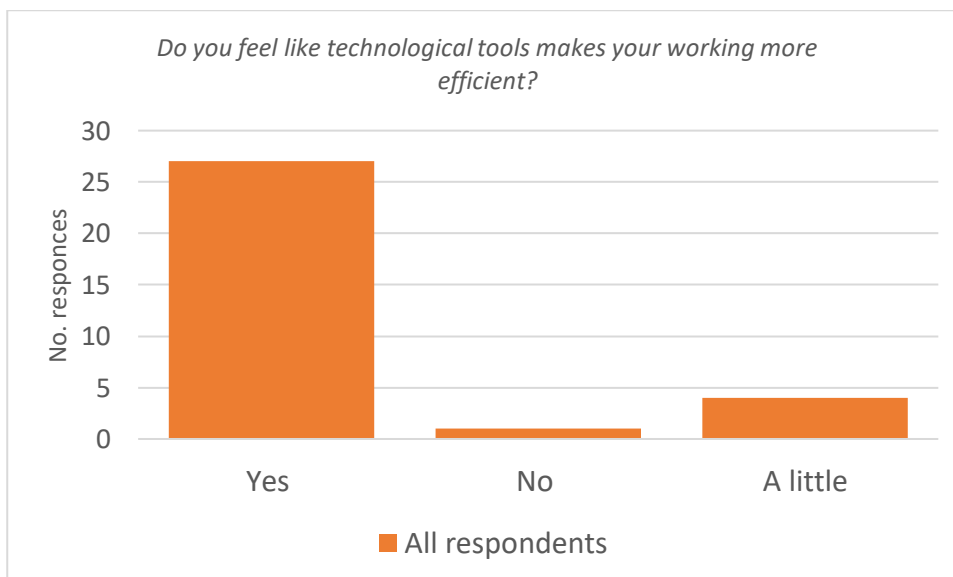
## Digital Workplace

### Technological tools

Are the employees happy about the number of technological tools for making their work better:



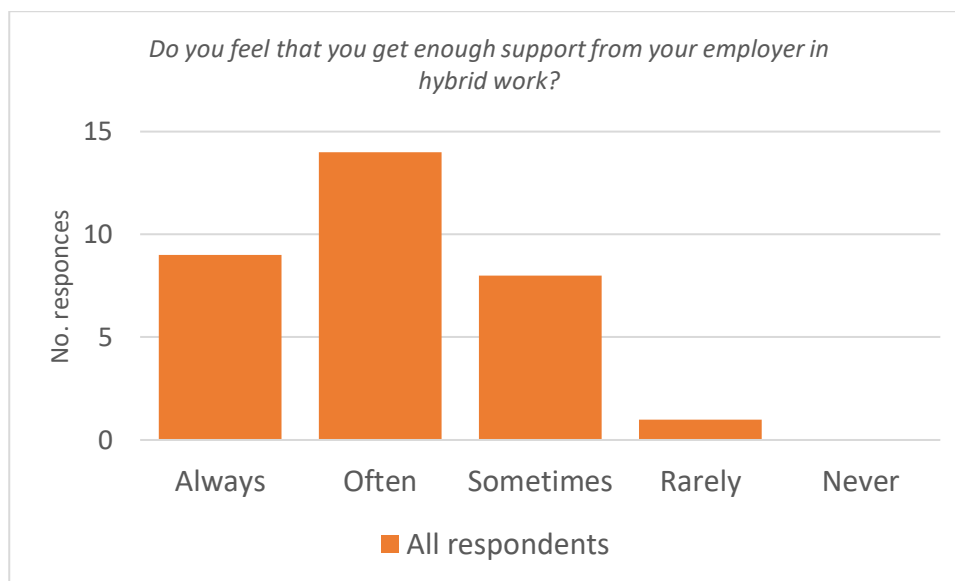
The employees' thoughts about technological tools making work more productive:



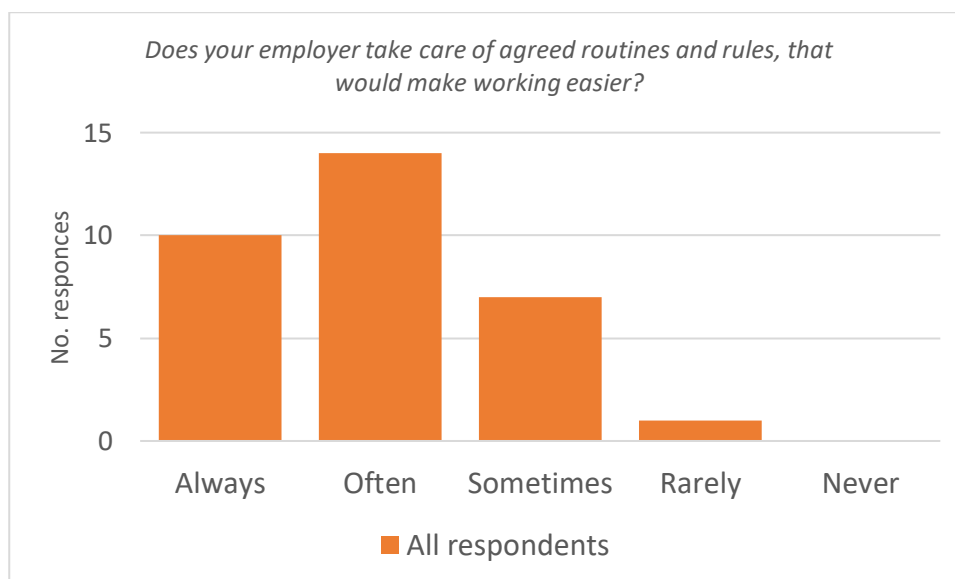
## Social Workplace

### Leadership

How employees feel about the support they get from their employers:

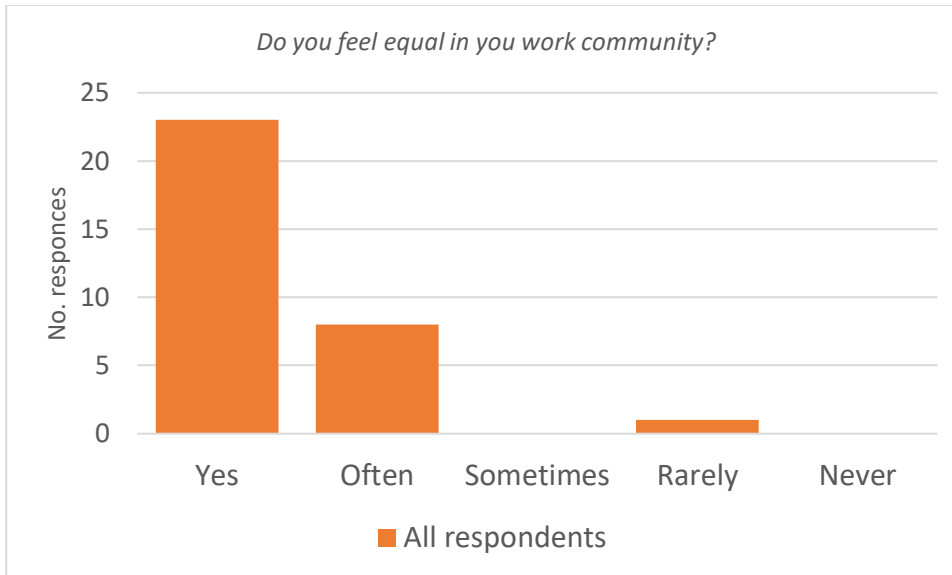


The employees feelings about the employers taking care of the common agreements and rules:



## Equality

Employees feelings about equality in their work community:



## Sense of community

Employees feelings about the sense of community in their work community:

