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P5 presentation

26-01-2021

Covid-19 and the workplace

An explorative study of employee
experiences during abrupt
workplace change

Content

Why		Introduction
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How		Empirical research methodology
Research		Empirical research results
		Discussion of findings
		Conclusions & recommendations

Introduction

The spread of Covid-19

WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard
Data last updated: 2020/12/9, 9:34am CET

[Overview](#)

[Data Table](#)

[Explore](#)

Choropleth Map | Bubble Map

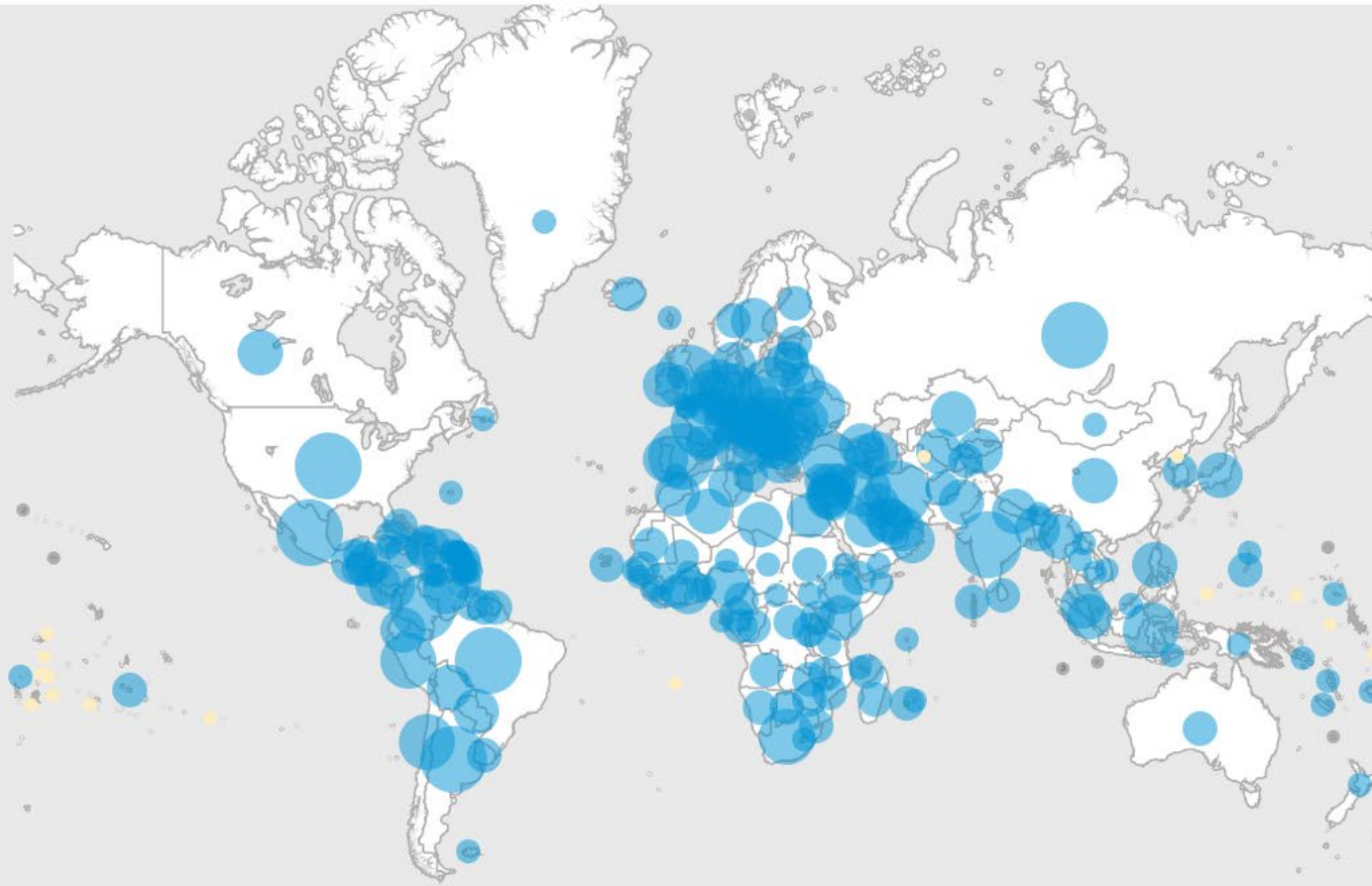
Cases | Deaths

Total

317,646
new cases

67,530,912
confirmed cases

1,545,140
deaths

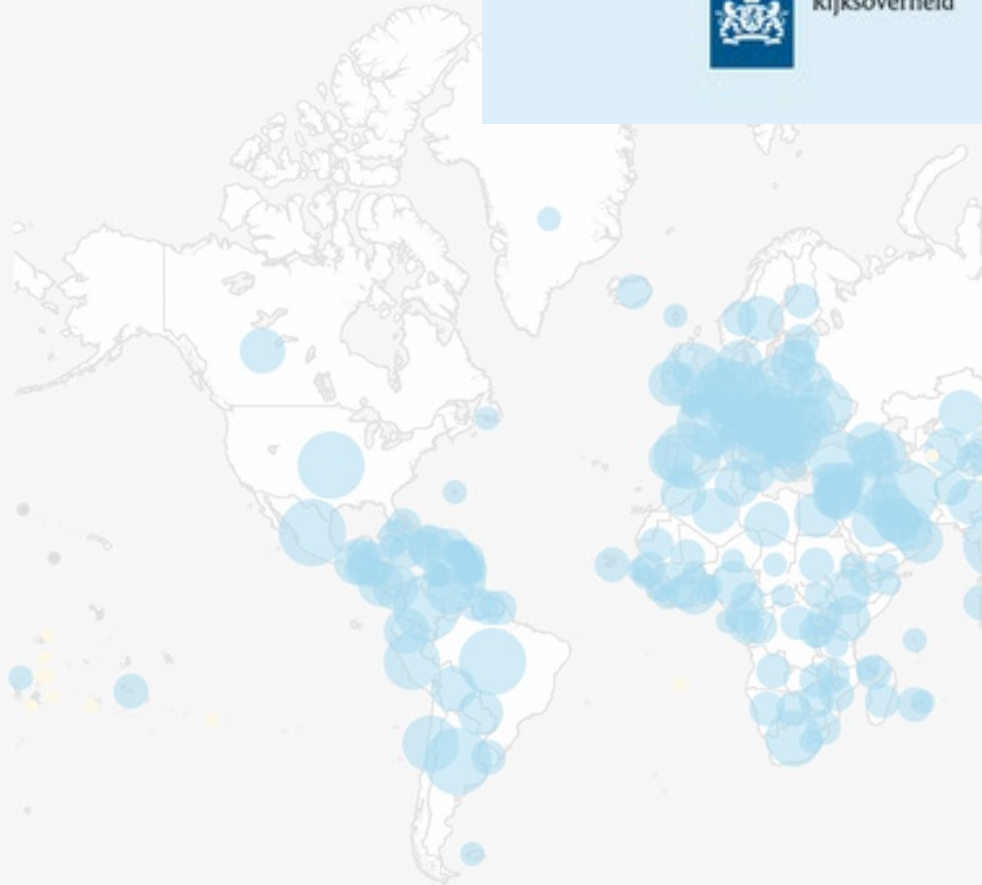


Download Map Data
Source: World Health Organization

Measures to stop the spread

WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard

Data last updated: 2020/12/9, 9:34am CET



23 maart 2020



23 maart 2020

Aanscherping maatregelen om verspreiding van het coronavirus te voorkomen



Blijf zoveel mogelijk thuis.

Ga alleen naar buiten voor werk als je niet thuis kunt werken, voor boodschappen, een frisse neus of als je aan iemand zorg verleent.



Blijf thuis als je last hebt van neusverkoudheid, hoesten, keelpijn of koorts.

Heb je koorts? Dan blijven ook je huisgenoten thuis. Met uitzondering van mensen in cruciale beroepen en vitale processen.



Kappers, nagelsalons en schoonheidsspecialisten sluiten tot en met 6 april.

Dit geldt ook voor andere zogenoemde contactberoepen op het gebied van uiterlijke verzorging.



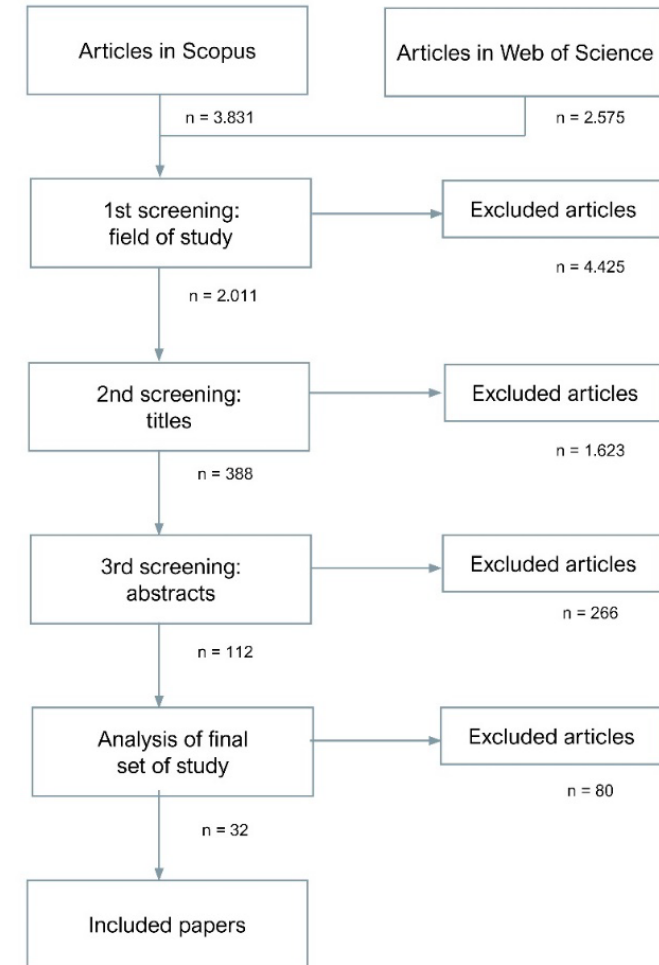
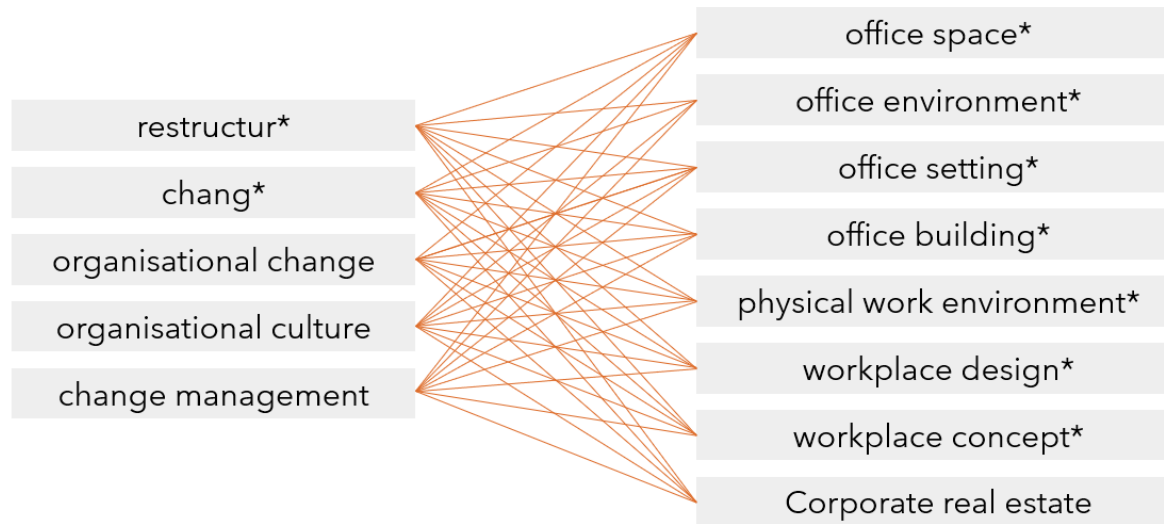
Alle bijeenkomsten en evenementen worden afgelast tot 1 juni.

Ook bij minder dan 100 bezoekers.

The knowledge-based workplace is constantly changing, albeit gradually

- Technological developments & trends make working from home possible ¹
- Change has emotional impacts on employee and cultural impacts on the organisation ²

Previous studies are categorised in a systematic literature review



Findings in literature (1/2): causes of change

Aim for organisational change

Transformation

- Change in workplace design affects organisational change and stimulates NWOW¹
- Improvements in the space aspire a higher satisfaction of the workplace²
- yet do not always achieve the desired outcome³
- Office redesign as strategy⁴

Relocation

- Relocation as strategic process to logistical move⁵
- Adaptations can be easier to anticipate and experiences better perceived⁶
- but are not always improved⁷

Aim for workplace change

1. Duffy et al., 2011
2. Hongisto et al., 2016
6. Christersson et al., 2017; Smollan & Morrison, 2019

3. Chilton & Baldry, 1997
7. Sundstrom et al., 1982

4. McElroy & Morrow, 2010

5. Rothe & Heywood, 2015

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Aim for workplace change

New ways of working

- NWOW: include⁸
 - I. activity-based working (ABW),
 - II. flexible working
 - III. activity-based flexible offices (A-FO) 's: activity-based workspaces with an open-plan layout
- Driven by potential cost savings through space-use efficiency⁹

1. Duffy et al., 2011

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6. Christersson et al., 2017; Smollan & Morrison, 2019

3. Chilton & Baldry, 1997

7. Sundstrom et al., 1982

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8. Gerdenitsch et al., 2017

5. Rothe & Heywood, 2015

9. Lahtinen et al., 2015

Findings in literature (2/2): an increased focus on the employee's perspective

- Increasing attention for socio-materiality ¹
- Participation and involvement of employees contributes to successful implementation of organisational change ²

Problem statement

Gap in knowledge

- Abrupt change and its impact
- Employee perspective and employee experiences in workplace change

Input for workplace configuration

- Reflection on NWOW and workplace configuration
- Provide workplace alignment.

Research aim

Investigate experiences of abrupt change regarding the workplace due to Covid-19 and analyse the individual and organisational factors that help deal with this abrupt change.

Research Questions

Theory

1. How can the abrupt change experience regarding the workplace be defined?

2. What are the employee experiences of abrupt workplace change caused by Covid?

3. What are the employee expectations and preferences of future workplace use, after response to Covid-19?

4. What individual and organisational factors influence the abrupt change experience?

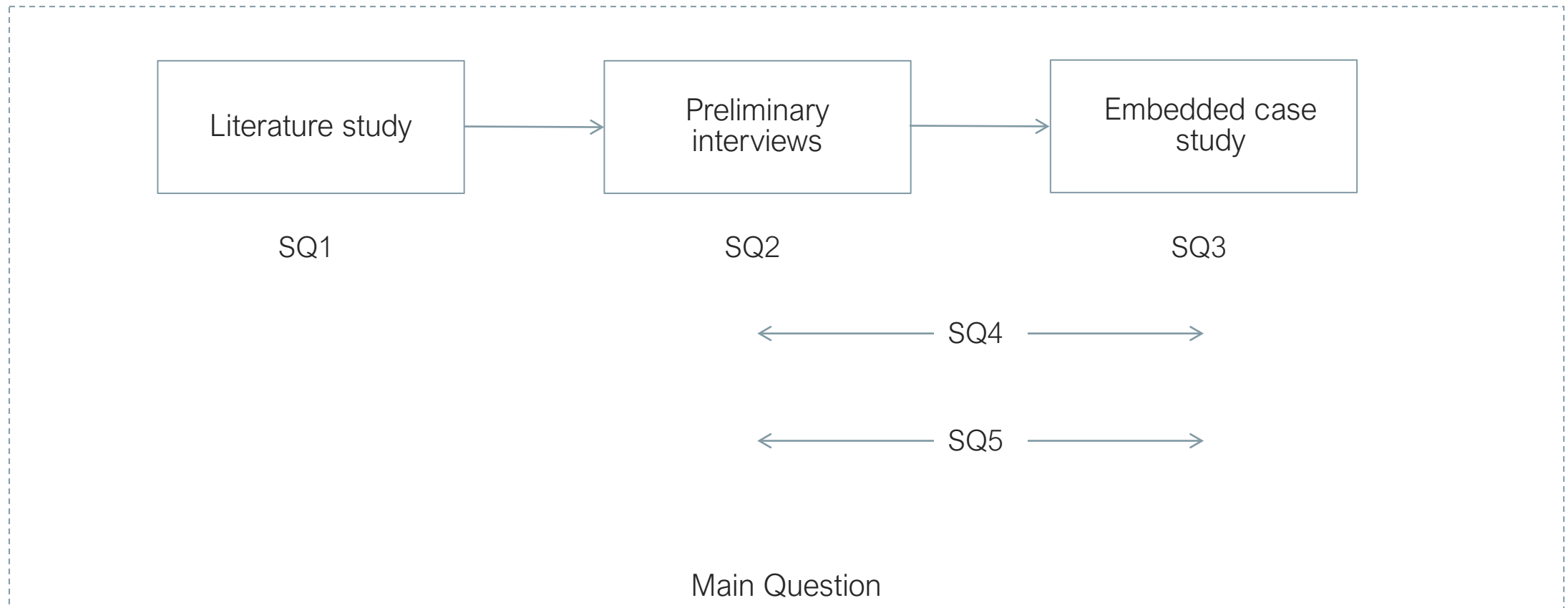
5. What are the coping strategies of individuals and organisations to deal with abrupt workplace change?

Empirical research

Conclusion

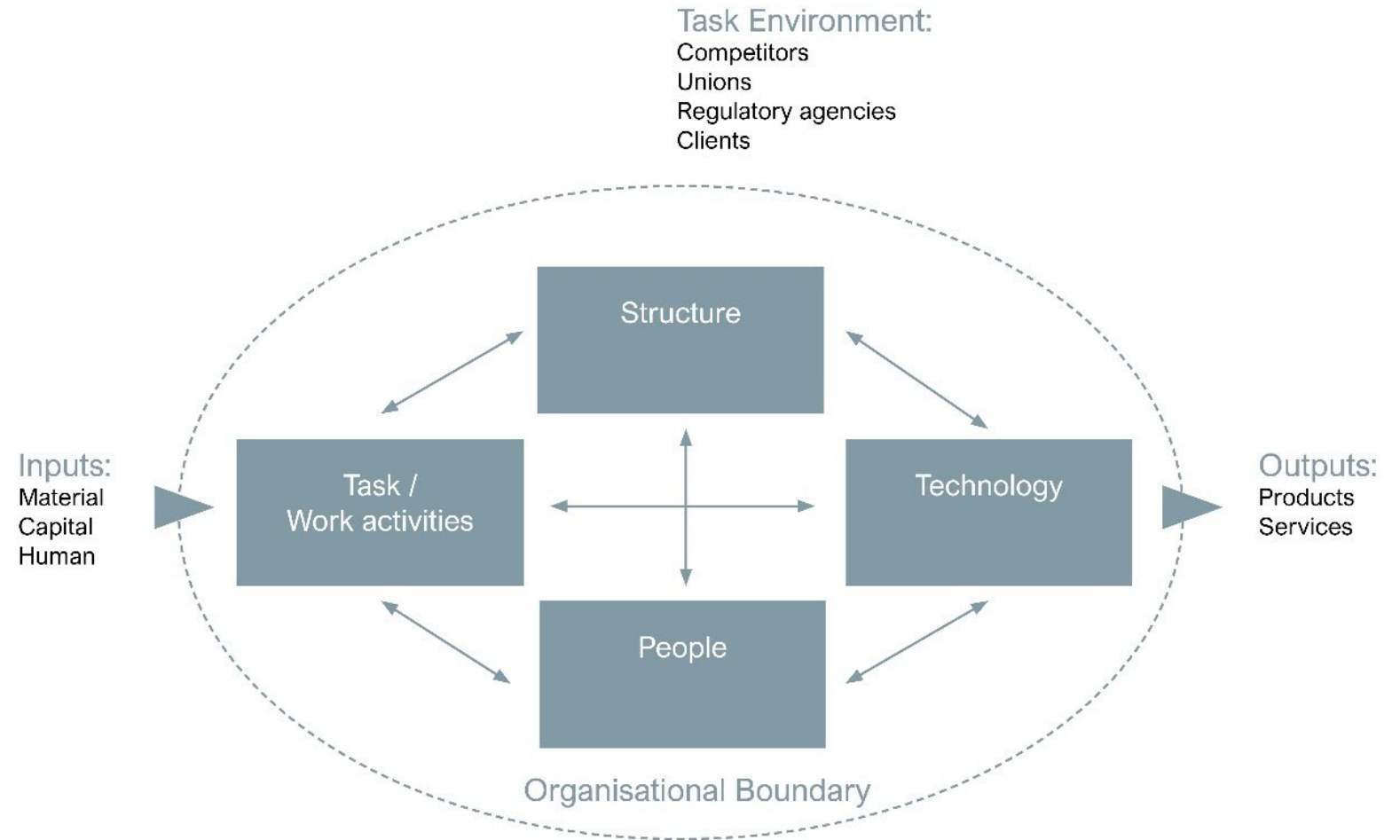
What are is the experience of abrupt change regarding the workplace due to Covid-19 and how do individual and organisational factors help deal with this abrupt change?

Relation of the research sub-questions regarding the methodology



Theory review

Organisational change does not occur in isolation



Trends add to the performance criteria of the workplace

- Traditional workplace:
Office, Corporate Real Estate
- Added value
- Health & WELL-being

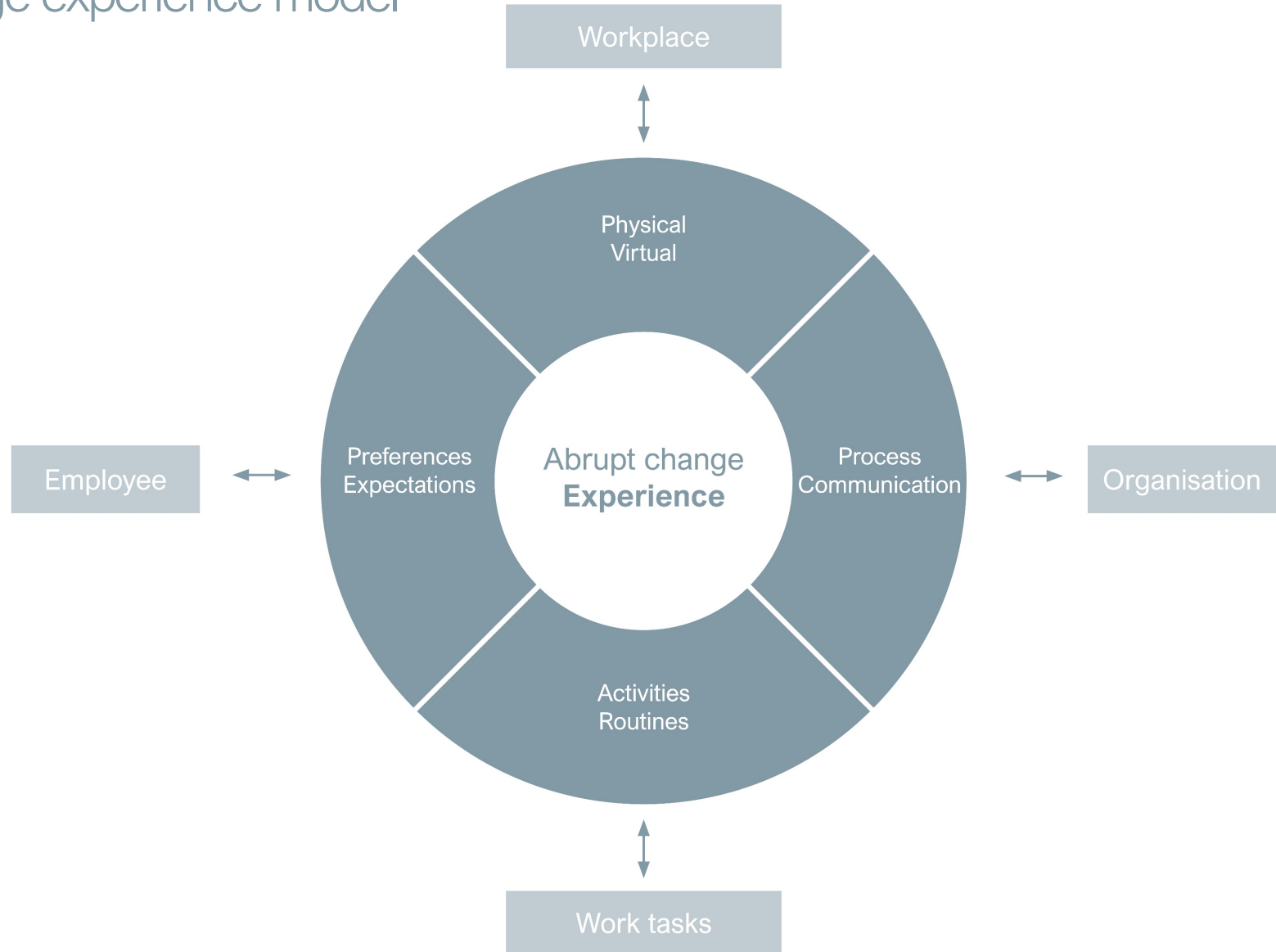
Till 1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness
	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency
		Productivity	Productivity	Productivity	Productivity
			Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
				Creativity	Creativity
					Sustainability

Experience as perception of reality

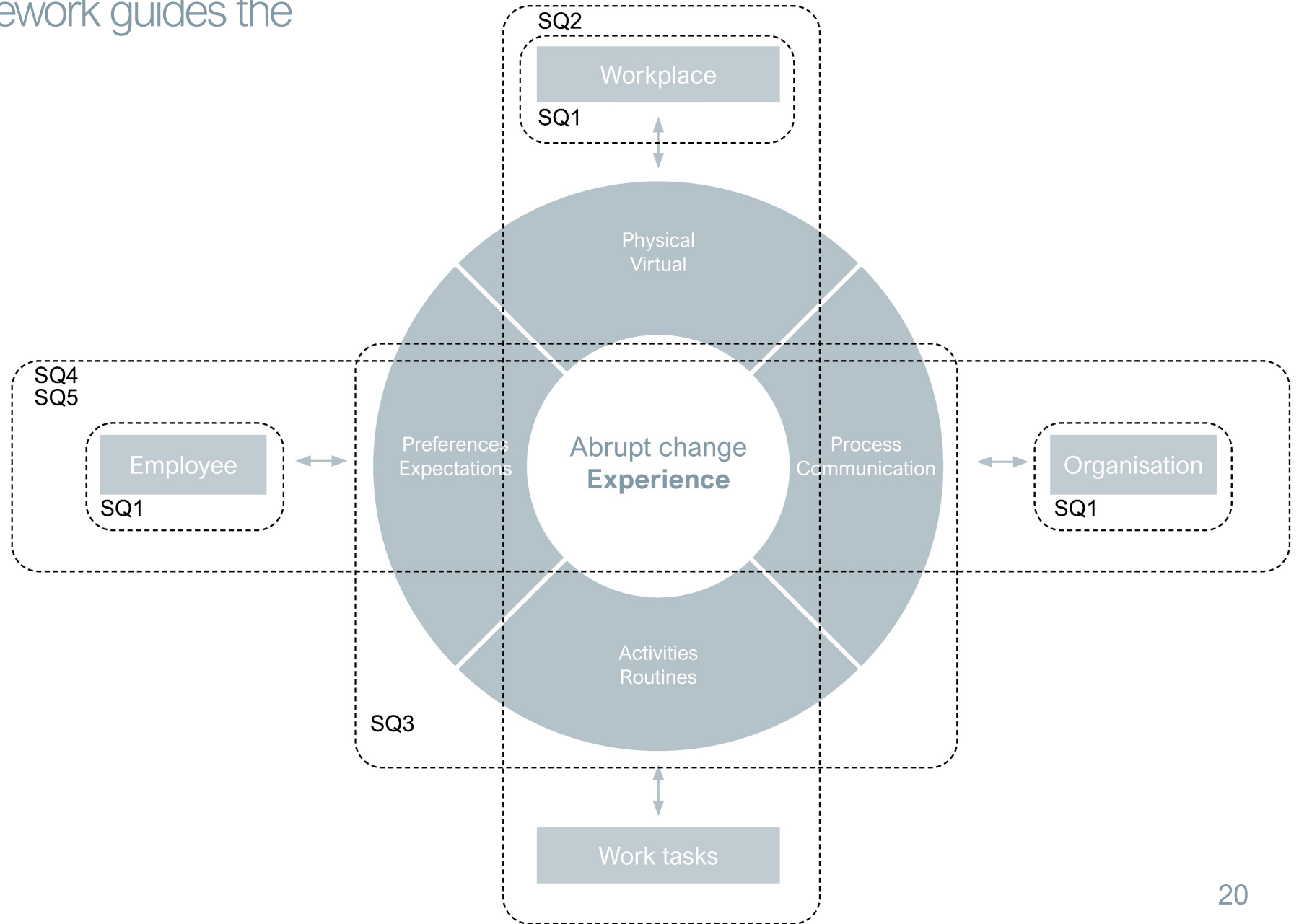
- Evoke meaning
- An experience is an interaction with the physical environment
- Deriving meaning out of experiences creates lived experiences
- This research studies the lived experiences of employees



Build up the abrupt change experience model

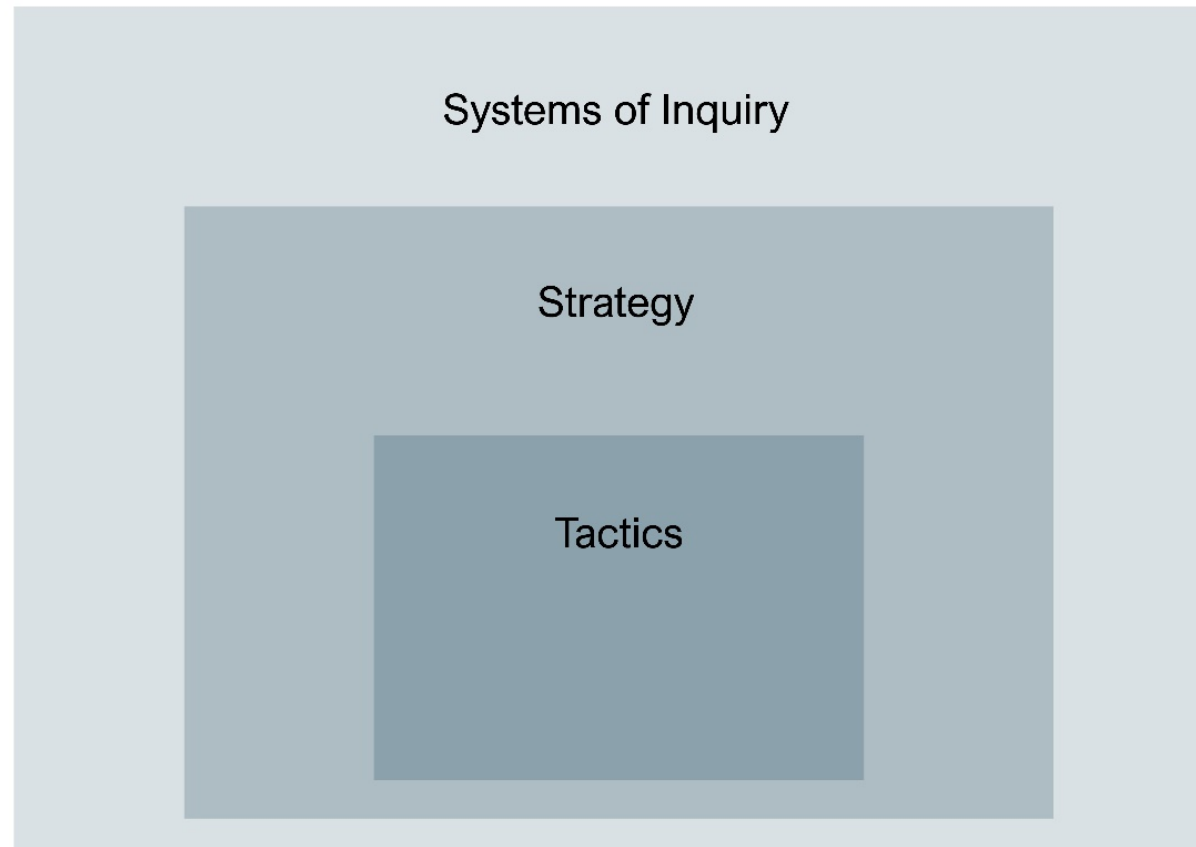


The theoretical framework guides the empirical research



Empirical Research Methods

Methodology



Systems of inquiry: school of thought

- Empirical research: lived experiences
- Socio-material approach: interplay employee and workplace
- Phenomenology: interpretation of (daily) experiences

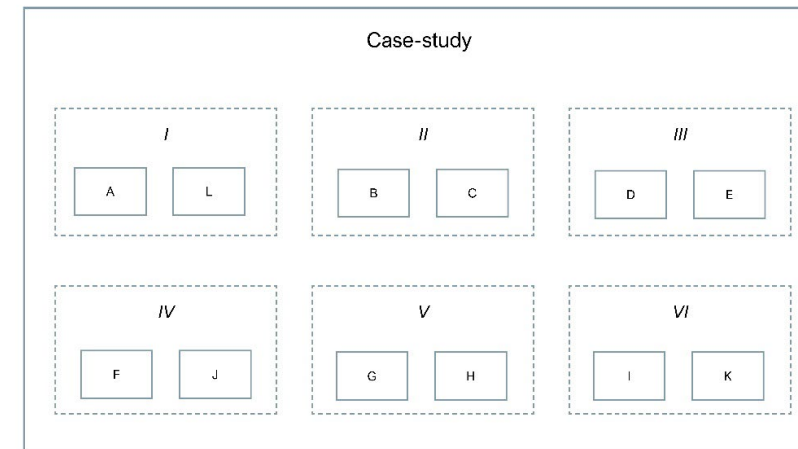
Strategy: explorative interviews followed by embedded case studies

Preliminary interviews



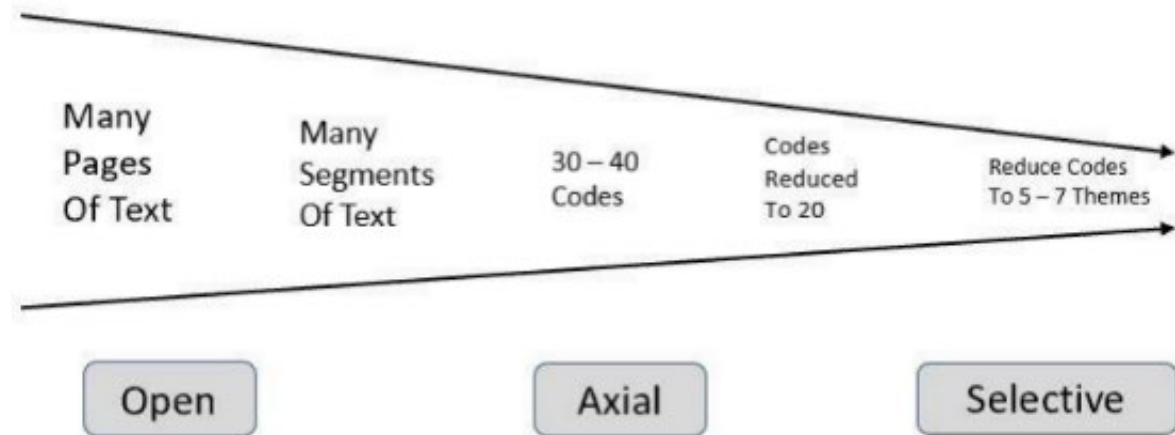
Embedded case study

Company	Sector
I	Engineering consultancy
II	Chemical engineering
III	Municipality
IV	Law
V	Tech
VI	Real estate services



Tactics: Data collection

- Semi-structured interviews
- Interview protocols
- Abductive analysis



Empirical research results

Part 1: Preliminary interviews

Working from home affects the work routine...

Personal life affects work

- Interview interrupted because kids come home
- More distractions at home

Work affects personal life

- Increase monotonous activities on the computer
- Fewer breaks

*“When you are sitting at the kitchen table and you are having lunch and you hear an email coming in: Then **you will quickly answer that email**. While at the office, when you have lunch, you are really in the lunch room” (Interviewee 5).*

... and alters interactions to professional necessities

Change in interactions

- Change to virtual meetings
- Change in communication-style

*“In face to face meetings, you can **switch faster between topics discussed, and confirm actions** without having to email them again. Now, in the mails I need to confirm what was discussed.” (interviewee 6)*

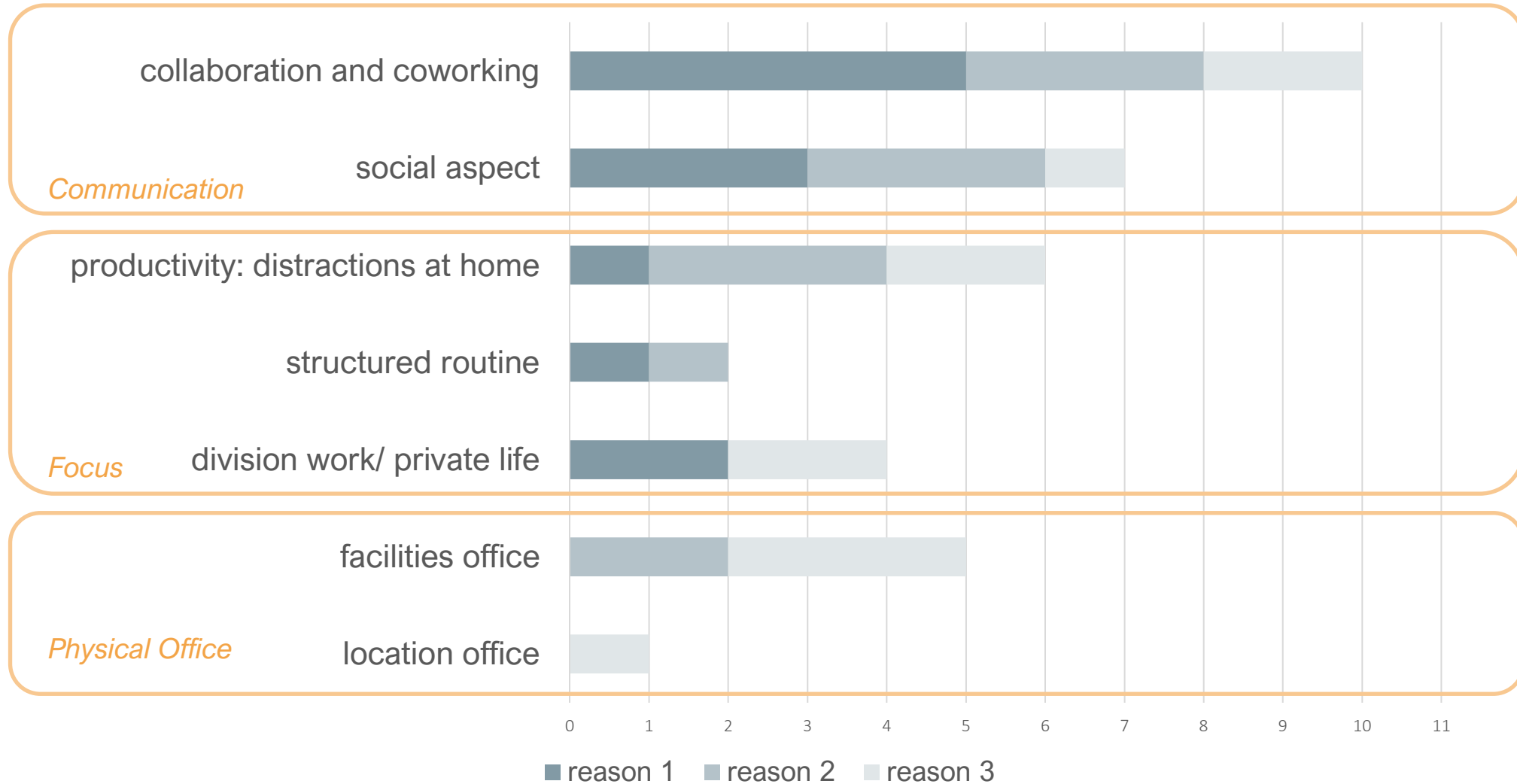
Fewer interactions

- Shorter meetings, less chit-chat
- Disappearance of informal contact

*“You know, **you have to make a conscious decision to phone somebody**, even if there is no particular reason to phone that person just to find out how they are and if there's anything bothering them.” (Interviewee 1)*

Part 2: Embedded case study

Why the office: communication as primary driver (1/2)



Why the office: communication as primary driver (2/2)

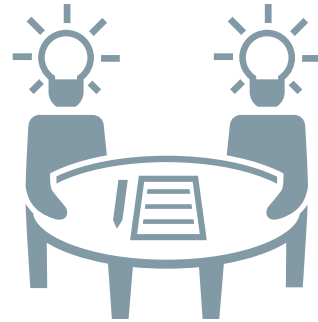
*“The collaboration with colleagues in the office makes it easier for you **to just explain something and pick it up together.** (..) That is difficult to replicate when you just come together in meetings, since it is very task-oriented, while a lot of the support and helping just happen while people are at work.” (interviewee E)*

*“On Friday afternoons you get to know your colleagues because **you hang out together.** That is just fun. It is fun to hang out with colleagues” (interviewee L).*

Contact already was the primary driver, but people now plan for a specific contact type



Planned formal



Planned informal



Spontaneous informal

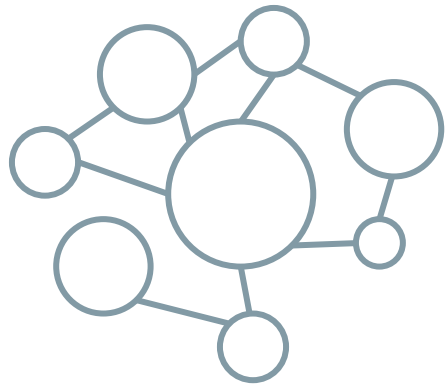
Working from home makes it difficult for employees to stay personally involved...

*"I think that something where a lot of companies struggle with, and it is also much discussed within our company already, of how do we keep **the bond within the company** strong?" (interviewee C)*

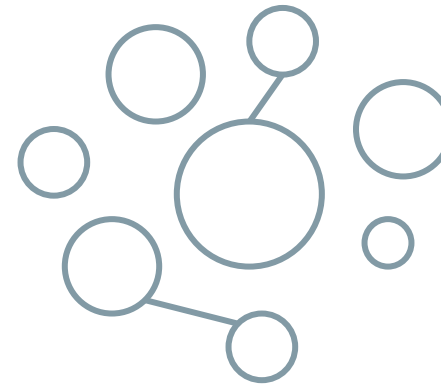
***"Spontaneity and being aware of what is going on** within the organisation and feeling involved, say within this organisation it is more difficult if you do that when you only sit at home."*
(interviewee H)

*"You feel less involved in the organisation than when you are actually in the office (...) it feels to me that **once you are there, you feel more like one part** than when you are at home, those are more loose links and you **really only talk to a regular circle.**" (interviewee D)*

As communication is reduced, contact between departments decreases



Cross-functional
collaboration



Collaboration within
the nested units

Discussion of findings

Organisational change

Interplay employee & organisation

- “Others not want to change”
- Safeguard organisational identity
- Employee participation. Emphasis on initiative and entrepreneurship

Coping with change

- Extra time and effort.
- Temporary character of changes.

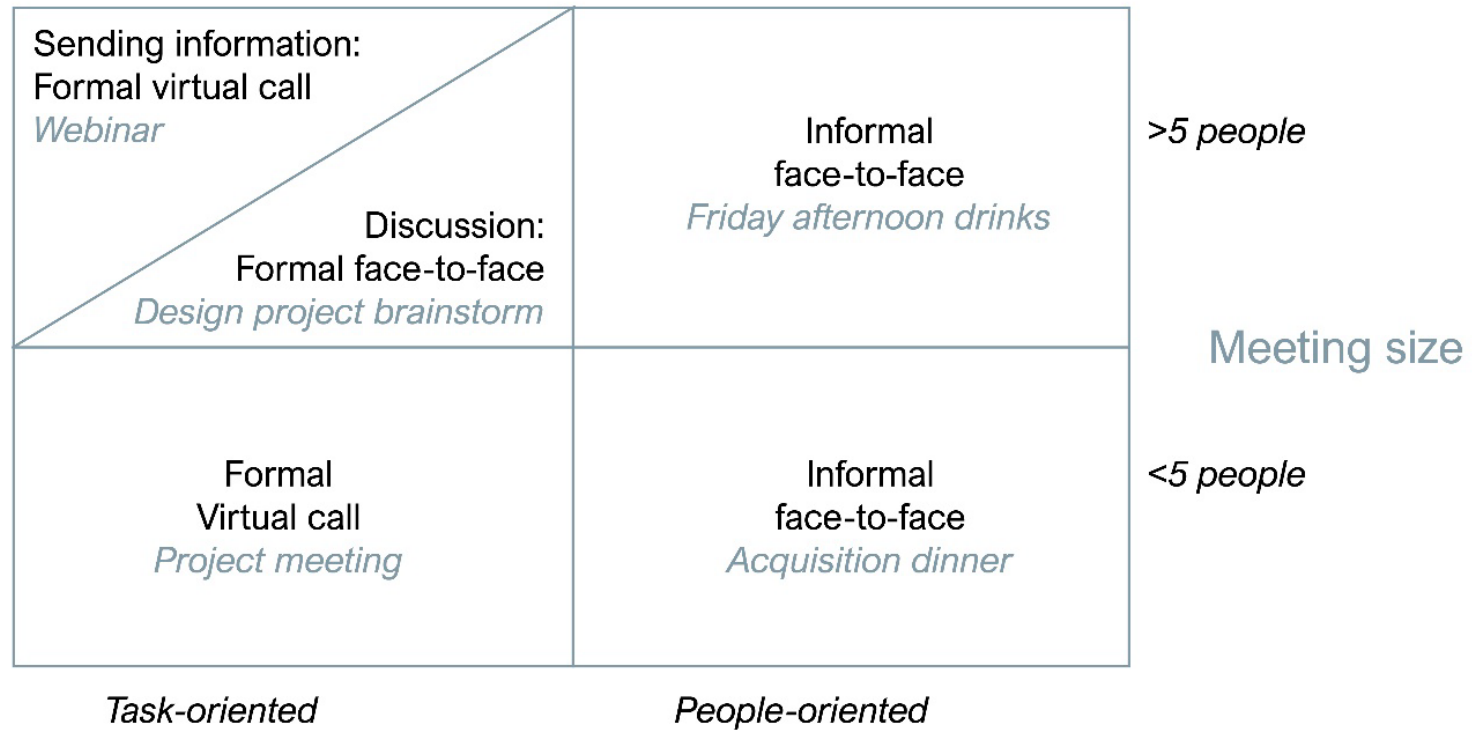
Added value of the office

- Organisational identity
- Competitive advantage

*"I expect that the **physical office will be a plus in the future**, where more and more offices could rely on working from home."
(Interviewee 1)*

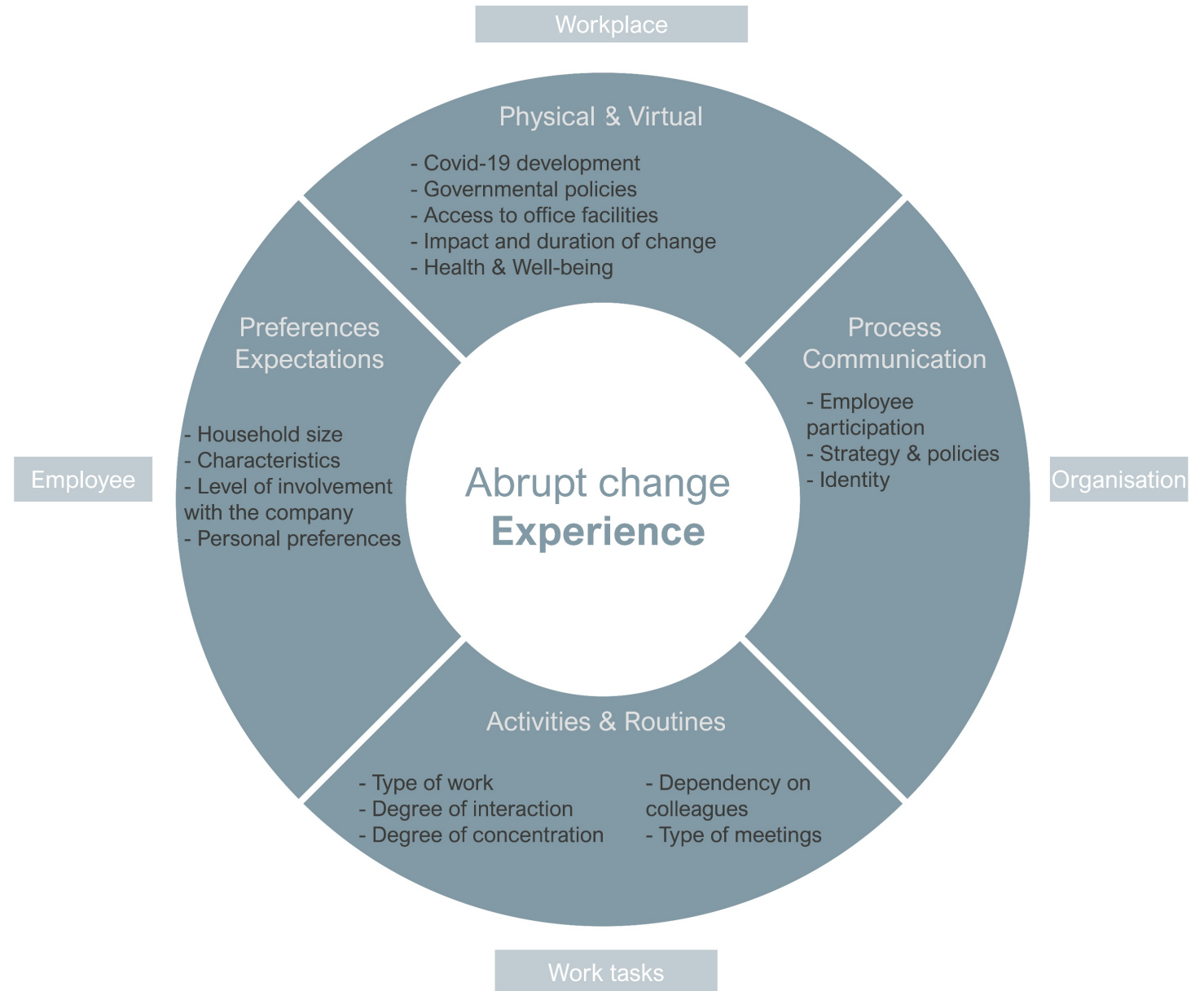
Based on the findings, workplace-use can be re-conceptualized

Reconfigure meeting-strategy



Meeting purpose

Abrupt change factors



Employee inputs stronger than work tasks and workplace contexts

Conclusions & Discussion

Main research question

What are the experiences of abrupt change regarding the workplace due to Covid-19 and how do individual and organisational factors help deal with this abrupt change?

Conclusions

- Monotonous way of interacting with colleagues harms motivation and productivity
- Large part of informal interactions is not replaced
- Reduced feeling of involvement hurts the transition even more
- Identified set of factors that constitute the abrupt change experience help improve alignment
- Experiences are personal rather than activity/role-based

Recommendations

Practical

- Implementation plan
- Re-evaluate the workplace
- Take subjective experiences in account: focus on the person not the role
- Align organisational and individual preferences and expectations

Scientific

- Additional research methods
- Abrupt change in relation to (gradual) workplace trends
- Implementability of the abrupt change experience

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