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Abstract [English]

In times of industry 4.0, information and communication technology make it possible for employees to work from home and connect with their co-workers. Sometimes this leads to teleworkers feeling too overwhelmed and the distance to the office shrinking, which is why they disconnect to maintain the benefits of their remote work. The described phenomenon is the so-called connectivity paradox. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced telework as a flexible work arrangement to many companies and made it an indispensable part of new work design. Connectivity within pandemic-induced telework plays a crucial role. The research at hand examines the connectivity paradox in this new context via in-depth interviews with affected personnel. A differentiation is made in the sample by dividing interviewees into two groups: HR employees, who are known to be more involved in organisational design, and non-HR people. Results show in the pandemic context, that home office brings along many advantages but also challenges, one of them being too intense connectivity and availability. This is due to low social interaction with colleagues, communication moving to the digital environment, and a general higher workload resulting in blurred boundaries between job and private life. Findings indicate that most employees can indeed identify with the connectivity paradox and the stress caused by it. Coping mechanisms were found to be rather on an individual than organisational level. In order to ensure wellbeing and maintain the benefits of telework, companies should create awareness and take measures to better support their employees in the long run when working remotely.

Abstract [German]

In Zeiten von Industrie 4.0 ermöglichen die Informations – und Kommunikationstechnologien den Arbeitnehmer*innen, von zu Hause aus zu arbeiten und sich mit ihren Kolleg*innen virtuell zu verbinden. Manchmal führt dies dazu, dass sich Telearbeiter*innen zu sehr gefordert fühlen weil sie ständig mit dem Büro verbunden und abrufbar sind, weshalb sie sich bei Überlastung ausklinken, um die diversen Vorteile ihrer Telearbeit zu erhalten. Bei dem beschriebenen Phänomen handelt es sich um das sogenannte Konnektivitätsparadoxon. Die COVID-19-Pandemie hat die Telearbeit als flexible Arbeitsform in vielen Unternehmen eingeführt und sie zu einem unverzichtbaren Bestandteil der neuen Arbeitsgestaltung gemacht. Die Konnektivität spielt bei der pandemiebedingten Telearbeit eine entscheidende Rolle. Die vorliegende Untersuchung betrachtet das Konnektivitätsparadoxon in diesem neuen Kontext durch Interviews mit betroffenen Mitarbeiter*innen. In der Stichprobe werden die Befragten in zwei Gruppen eingeteilt: HR-Mitarbeiter*innen, die bekanntermaßen stärker in die Organisationsgestaltung eingebunden sind, und Nicht-HR-Mitarbeiter*innen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Homeoffice im Pandemiekontext viele Vorteile, aber auch Herausforderungen mit sich bringt, darunter eine zu intensive Anbindung und Verfügbarkeit der Mitarbeiter*innen. Dies ist auf die geringe soziale Interaktion mit Kolleg*innen, die Verlagerung der Kommunikation in das digitale Umfeld und eine allgemein höhere Arbeitsbelastung zurückzuführen, die zu einer Verwischung der Grenzen zwischen Beruf und Privatleben führt. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass sich die meisten Arbeitnehmer*innen tatsächlich mit dem Konnektivitätsparadoxon und dem dadurch verursachten Stress identifizieren können. Es wurde festgestellt, dass die Bewältigungsmechanismen eher auf individueller als auf organisatorischer Ebene liegen. Um das Wohlbefinden zu gewährleisten und die Vorteile der Telearbeit zu erhalten, sollten Unternehmen ein Bewusstsein schaffen und Maßnahmen ergreifen, um ihre Mitarbeiter*innen langfristig besser zu unterstützen, wenn sie aus der Ferne arbeiten.

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List of Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
p.	page
pp.	pages
et al.	et alii
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
HRM	Human Resource Management
MNE	Multi-National Enterprise
HR	Human Resources
EU	European Union
IR 4.0	Fourth Industrial Revolution
EU-27	Average of all 27 Member States of the European Union

1 Introduction

It is common knowledge that due to the contagious Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, contact between persons is to be minimised, to avoid further contamination. This also includes the interaction between people in companies' offices. Consequently, the government allows employees to work from home during the riskiest periods, if their job allows.

This form of flexible working is referred to as teleworking and "could be defined as carrying out remote work activities at home, using information technology" (Chiru, 2017, p. 222). Up to this point, it has been reserved for certain individuals in specific branches and positions and simply has not been common in many companies (Bailey & Kurland, 2002, pp. 385–387). Since the beginning of the 20th century the digital transformation has already been visible in many businesses but their readiness differed a lot depending on their sector or general strategy and means (Radermacher, 2018, p. 21). Now, the pandemic induces a trial-period over a vast number of industries and jobs, in a range never seen before. This reveals the technological advancement in the 21st century, showing what is actually possible in practice if companies do not have another choice (Korunka et al., 2020, p. 17). According to a long-term analysis of the Austrian labour market, 10,2% of all people in paid work were in home office daily or several days per week before the outbreak of the pandemic, while this rose to 19,9% by October 2020 (Statistik Austria, 2020a, 2020b). In a study by Deloitte Austria and the Universities of Graz and Vienna the sample of 300 business representatives resulted in 80% of organisations stating that almost all their employees were working from home during the lockdowns (Kellner et al., 2020, p. 4).

This situation opens unprecedented possibilities for research since such a large-scale experiment in digital work prompts many questions and can support shaping the future design of work (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020, p. 15). Studying the general relation of telework and job satisfaction more profoundly can provide companies with a better response to their employees' needs (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, p. 357).

The number of teleworkers increased already greatly since the beginning of the 21st century (Golden, 2009, p. 241). Different researches' results throughout the year 2020 and 2021 show that many companies are eager to continue telework partially and keep some of the changes in their work design (Bartz et al., 2021; Carillo et al., 2021; Clancy, 2020). Despite the issues caused by the rushed implementation, the advantages of teleworking seem to be prevailing and

whilst it was initially seen as a short-term solution, for many the preference is that it becomes the norm. In a guide commissioned by the Austrian government, it is estimated that 40-60% of all Austrian employers are planning to keep telework as a possibility in comparison to only 10% before the pandemic (Bartz, 2021, p. 7). Regardless of the actual future of remote work arrangements, companies are now much more likely to implement them (Elldér, 2020, p. 9).

When teleworking, connectivity among co-workers is significantly different due to a distinct lack of physical interaction during this period and the usage of information and communication technology (ICT) compared to usual office contact (Fonner & Stache, 2012, pp. 249–255). Online connectivity through virtual presence and permanent availability can become uncomfortable for employees to such a degree that they disconnect on purpose to counteract the information overload they are constantly exposed to, in order to be able to focus and get their actual work tasks done. In this work layout, ICT is understood as both the enabler and the disruptive factor as the originally created physical distance from the office environment no longer exists in the positive sense of reconnection while being distant, but also the negative way meaning increased stress (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Leonardi et al., 2010).

Companies continuously search for ways to improve advantages and decrease disadvantages for their employees to work more remotely (Popovici, 2020, p. 471). Therefore, learning from the pandemic-induced trial period of telework is crucial to gain knowledge for the future (Korunka et al., 2020, p. 19). When scrutinising over 200 publications, Kornau et al. (2020) found that in general employees rarely are the target of Human Resources Management (HRM) research. This is why it is crucial to examine pandemic-induced teleworking from their perspective, to grasp and understand behaviour as well as perception of directly affected personnel (ibid.).

In order to learn from the experiences of these particular employees, the phenomena that have already been researched must also be reviewed and explored in the new situation to adapt future work accordingly. Due to COVID-19 the mode of contact between co-workers within affected companies has changed significantly (Cirrincione et al., 2020, pp. 6–8). This makes the theme of connectedness interesting for re-examination.

The connectivity paradox in teleworking is a frequently occurring phenomenon in businesses. It implies that employees who are able to connect and work while being far away from the office, sometimes feel too connected, since their co-workers assume they are constantly available. As a consequence, the teleworker disconnects as they become overwhelmed, are not able

to focus on their tasks, and all benefits coming along with distance working seem to no avail (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Leonardi et al., 2010).

Extensive research on this matter from an employee perspective is yet to be identified, in the new context of pandemic-induced telework. The thesis at hand offers a first comprehensive study of these relations, on an expedient and attainable scope. More precisely, the changes in connectivity for co-workers in the pandemic context will be analysed with the overall objective to learn for future work design by gaining insights from employees directly involved in remote work during the pandemic period.

The empirical part of this study is backed up by in-depth interviews. This qualitative method provides the right level of insight, to a matter that is rather new to research (Johnson & Harris, 2002; Ridder & Hoon, 2009). Open questions allow participants the opportunity to portray their genuine individual experiences, without any bias through pre-defined answers (Adams & Cox, 2008, pp. 21–33).

Observed people are from Austrian multi-national enterprises (MNEs), to gain an understanding for this specific area and comprehend connectivity in a cross-border context. This aspect is of great importance to consider, since internationality plays a major role in one way or another for a majority of companies today. For instance, the overall sales revenues of foreign subsidiaries in 2019 before the pandemic, were around 450 billion euros, which conveys about 55% of the total Austrian domestic sales that year (Statistik Austria, 2021).

Apparently, the involvement and commitment of Human Resources' employees differs from that of other employees not engaging on the same level of intervention (Veloso et al., 2015, p. 14). Hence, addressing them separately makes it possible to draw a full picture and obtain an appropriate overview.

Therefore, the following research questions have been derived:

1. How do employees in Austrian MNEs perceive connectivity among co-workers in reference to the connectivity paradox throughout pandemic-induced teleworking since March 2020?
2. How do employees in human resources in Austrian MNEs perceive connectivity among co-workers in reference to the connectivity paradox throughout pandemic-induced teleworking since March 2020?

-
3. How does the perception of connectivity since March 2020 among co-workers in Austrian MNEs influence new work design?

In pursuance of answers, in-depth interviews were conducted with affected employees of human resources and other departments in Austrian MNEs. The latter are summarised in the category of non-HR personnel and serve as a comparison to HR employees, legitimately having a different perception. At a later stage, the collected data was coded systematically and analysed. Codes have been derived from participants' input and the research questions, and then ordered by theme to the different parts touched upon in the conversations (Hackley, 2019, p. 20). The personal perceptions of employee's teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic were compared to one another, as well as in the two departmental groups. Furthermore, codes and their significance are ranked against each other and elaborated for the purpose of reaching the paper's objectives (*ibid.*).

The structure of this thesis leads with the derivation of the topic and follows on towards the analysis. The second chapter explains the background of the topic in detail via a thorough literature review of the relevant phenomena. Work design is defined, the history and the course of teleworking are outlined and the connectivity paradox among co-workers is exemplified and deconstructed. Chapter three deals with the empirical process of the thesis, stating the used methodology of in-depth interviews, the adherent sampling approach, its limitations, the mode of data collection and the coding procedure. The next part builds the analysis of the dataset obtained, as well as its interpretation. The codes relevant for the objectives of this research are listed and discussed exhaustively. Later the results are debated to answer the research questions. A conclusion completes the work and outlines all pertinent output and learnings. One section gives advice for future investigations in the same field by embedding the limitations of this project at hand.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Designing Work

The way work is designed is not a static construct but instead, companies' steady adjustment to economy. This means, changes in work design do not stand alone but go hand in hand with other developments in the labour market (Parker et al., 2001, p. 434).

The advancement of tasks and jobs has been an ever ongoing process to the level that we know today like human evolution (Sreeram, 2019, pp. 22–26). However, people first consciously started to shape work structure, and naturally efficiency, only in the late 18th and early 19th century. Back then, also our now common understanding of the contemporary world is derived (Berlanstein, 2003, p. x–66). During the first industrial revolution, a major development in work division was already made after Adam Smith’s well-known book *The Wealth of Nations*. Frederick Taylor went one step further and drastically simplified and clearly defined specific tasks to be executed by workers in the second industrial revolution. Later the deconstructed steps in manufacturing where precisely timed and controlled through sequencing and synchronisation of the production by Henry Ford (Kamitake, 2008; King & Lawley, 2016). However, it is identified that this optimisation creates a loss of satisfaction, reduces work experiences and performance as well as increases mental health issues (Parker & Zhang, 2016, pp. 136–137).

For these reasons, in the 1960s and 1970s, researchers became interested in investigating quality in the sense of purpose, motivation, and joy for employees at work. The term *job design* or *work design* arises only then, while it is actually “rooted decades back in the academic disciplines of the behavioural sciences and in the practical techniques of management.” (Kirkman, 1981, p. 3). This means, only once wellbeing and management both were decisive factors in the composition of jobs, the name was formed and established in theory as well as practice.

After 1970, attempts around changing productivity and satisfaction of workers as well as involved costs are carried out (Taylor, 1977a, p. 24, 1977b, p. 26). Alternative setups of organisational design have been assessed and positive and negative aspects evaluated (Mumford, 1976, pp. 38–39). It becomes clear that management and research want to find ways to optimise both, work experience as well as output.

Birchall (1978, p. 329) understands that work systems can only function successfully when the individual worker is satisfied with the job, the inherent context and the involved tasks. Meanwhile, improving quality at work in theory and practice is seen as a door to organizational development, solving problems, and strategy building (Jenkins, 1983). This way of thinking indicates that HRM, as it is practised, found its origin back then.

In the meantime, employers are no longer the only ones who set the tone as a response to the market. Employees’ bargaining power increased with the rising density and availability of work. It is nonetheless the employers’ task to build and foster attractive work arrangements according to the developing demands of the workforce in the long run. This shows that labour

relations changed considerably including leadership and HRM (Cappelli, 1999, pp. 1–3). At the same time, factors like responsibility, motivation, involvement, proactivity, trust, and more can be triggered and encouraged but have to be cultivated by the employee (Fuller et al., 2006, pp. 1110–1112). The different roles of the involved parties develop further and become more advanced while the relationship becomes more intertwined and complex.

Ultimately, change is inevitable with advancing technologies and digitisation. With the third industrial revolution in the 20th century the world transformed entirely and so did businesses (Dosi & Galambos, 2013). Together with increasing ICT possibilities, the opportunities to shape work in itself are evolving as well. Location and other increasingly less relevant barriers are giving way to a new form of work design – virtual work and flexible work arrangements. Here, even more factors must be taken into consideration, as these forms introduce drastic changes. Still, for the moment local culture and its evolution due to globalisation are still underestimated in their influence on work design (Parker & Zhang, 2016, pp. 141–145). Also, cross-functional psychologists found HR processes within a company have to adapt to changing work design, due to inflicted information overload, multi-tasking, stress with technology as well as occurring changes in the overall well-being of employees (Sparrow, 2000, p. 217). A company implementing modern work concepts is subject to change and definitely has to “burst its traditional boundaries and in doing so loosened existing networks of identities, practices and patterns” (Tietze, 2005, p. 59).

2.2 Teleworking

2.2.1 Evolution of Teleworking

As an effect of technological advancement and growing possibilities through increasing flexibility, the concept of *teleworking* or *remote working* developed over the last decades (Huws et al., 1993; Korte & Kordey, 2003). The term describes working away from the office regardless of the actual location while being connected by phone or other modern ICT to one’s workplace and colleagues (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020, p. 2). Another related term is *telecommuting*, which originally refers to an only virtual commute from a decentralised office site closer to one’s home (Nilles, 1975, p. 1143).

Home office or *Work from Home* is but a specific format of remote working, whereby the workers do their job from their homes. It is not a new type but exists as official mode of work already

since more than ten years (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020, p. 14). In the pandemic context it is considered the safest form by governments and health experts since people are not leaving their personal spaces to go to their job location (Alraouf, 2021).

All this terminology supports the development of understanding work not anymore as a physical place a worker commutes to on a regular basis but rather as a set of relationships and assigned tasks (Huws et al., 1993; Leonhard, 1995).

At first, teleworking has been available only to certain employees, such as professionals who can work reliably and independently, and whose job as well as personal and professional characteristics are not negatively influenced by little contact with colleagues in the office. These are often working mothers not wanting to pause their professional life and fathers whose intention to spend time with their family outgrows their wish to climb the career ladder (Pratt, 1984). Most of them worked part-time away from the office, while their duties were solo tasks that could be done autonomously since their only connection to the office was the telephone (Golden, 2009, p. 242).

The actual amount of time a teleworker needs to work out of the usual office to be considered as such is difficult to define due to the lack of clear rules. But it is known that the number of people teleworking increases steadily over the years since its emergence (Bailey & Kurland, 2002, p. 396). With the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) experts have expected that more people would have the opportunity to work remotely and this is also reflected correspondingly in figures (Schwab, 2016; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016).

Figure 1 depicts the practice of regular telework according to a study by the European Commission. In 2009, on average around 10% of all employed in the European Union's (EU) member states worked away from the office with a different frequency. Until 2019, the year before the pandemic, this increased to approximately 14%. In Austria, the focal area of this thesis, the numbers are slightly above the average of all 27 EU members (EU-27), with 20% in 2009 and a smaller increase to 22% until 2019 (European Commission, 2020, p. 4).

This means the IR 4.0 paved the path for more flexible work arrangements and introduced it to some early adopters. The pandemic boosted the process and brought it to those companies that previously were hesitating or doubting the concept and did not yet implement it among their personnel (Akkaya et al., 2021, p. 60). Other studies of service providers confirm the quick rise of home office implementation, for example Ernst and Young (2020) and Kellner et al. (2020).

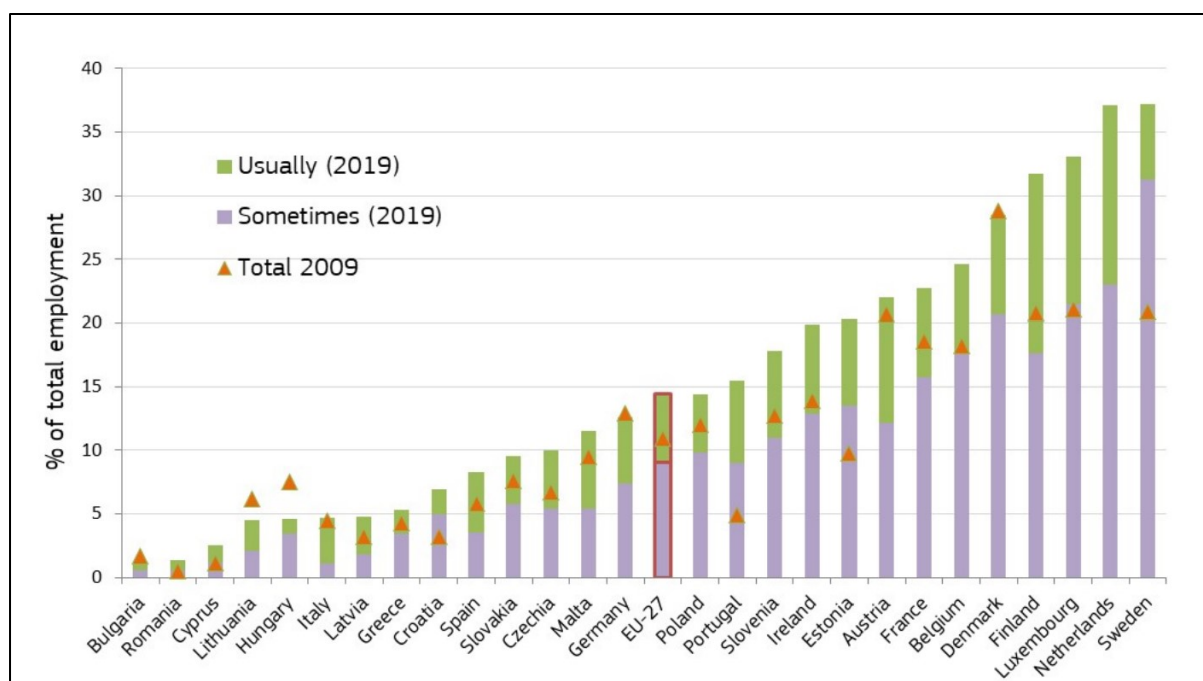


Figure 1 "Prevalence of Telework across EU Member States"

Source: European Commission, 2020, p. 4

The study of the European Commission (2020, pp. 5–7) breaks down this outcome into employment sectors and occupation type. It is natural that employees in management or ICT professionals have a higher chance of teleworking, since they are able to do their job virtually. Moreover, there is a differentiation between employers with more and less than 50 employees. Larger companies are more likely to have telework implemented in countries where they account for the higher share of all employees. The following graph (Figure 2) shows the occurrence of telework for this sector of knowledge-intensive services and company-size by the EU Member States. This group was interviewed for the empirical part of the research at hand. The EU-27 lies at roughly 25% in 2018, while Austria (AT) is again at around 22%. Countries like Sweden, Finland, or the Netherlands are more advanced, which is also reflected by the number of people who already worked remotely, before the pandemic. The low quantity of beneficiaries in Bulgaria can be attributed to the fact that digital skills are rather low in comparison to other EU countries (ibid.).

This gives the impression that Austria has been performing well overall, in terms of home office before the pandemic. In relation to other EU countries, the Austrian share of people working from home lies in the middle range, and is very close to EU-27.

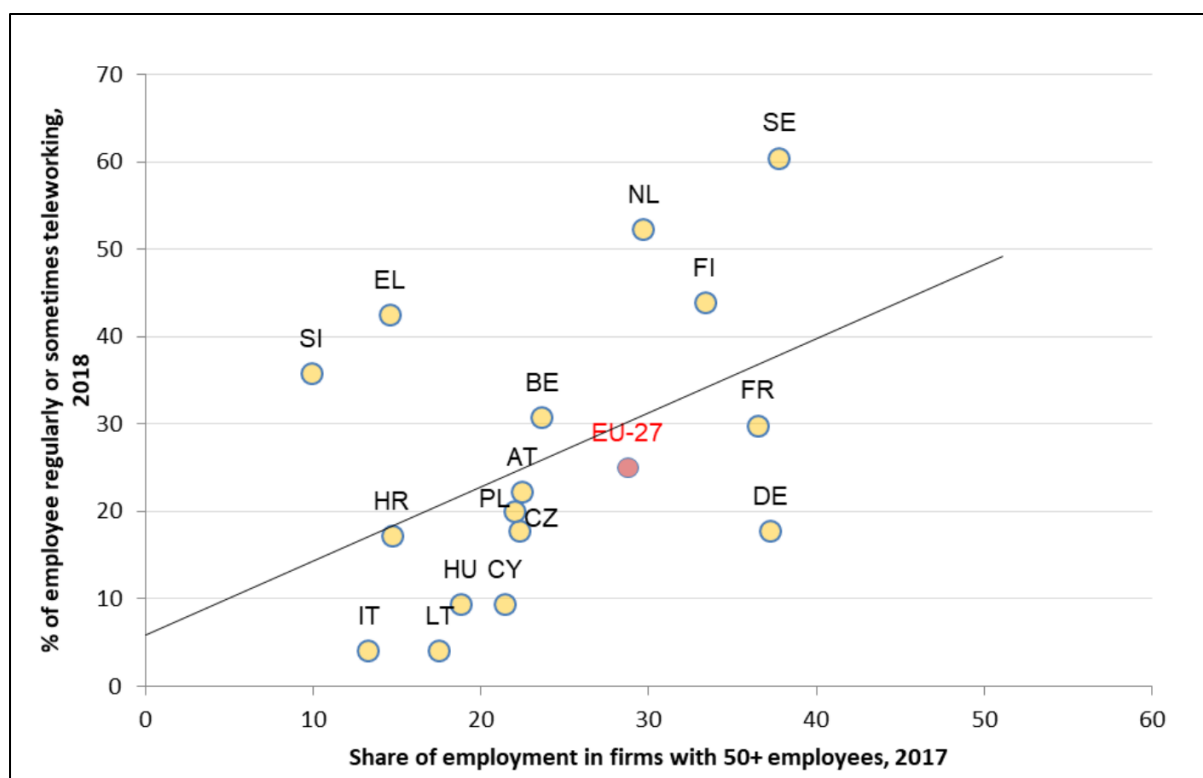


Figure 2 "Telework by Firm Size, Knowledge-Intensive Business Services"
Source: European Commission, 2020, p. 7

2.2.2 Teleworking in Practice

2.2.2.1 Employers' Perspective

Parker et al. (2001, pp. 433–434) compare telework with many other work environments and discover that frameworks of modern work design are not complex enough, as they are not including all relevant aspects. Instead, a framework with categories and applicable variables has to be established as a base (ibid.). In Austria, guides are developed to provide companies and individuals support and give advice in pandemic teleworking (Bartz, 2021; Bartz & Schwand, 2021). Looking into the practical part of the unprecedented context at hand concerning connectivity, it is even more crucial to learn and shape the future of telework from an employee perspective. However, teleworking already existed before the pandemic, giving a glance at the influencing factors and what has to be considered to ensure a successful implementation.

From a company's perspective, offering employees the possibility to work from home is a way to be more attractive and keep people within the business. Done right, this can positively influence people's satisfaction. It is a cost saving factor at the same time since office space and

other expenses there are reduced significantly with an increasing number of teleworkers (Golden, 2009, pp. 242–243). Likewise, employers assume higher productivity due to reduced travel time and consequently more available working hours (Wellman et al., 1996, p. 214). Benefits from a more global perspective are far reaching and include for example a lower CO2 footprint due to reduced traffic by commuters (Kaczmarczyk, 2008, p. 67).

Introducing teleworking measures, however, does not always have positive impacts and is not easy to implement. A potential threat for companies can be, for example, changing organisational identification of employees. If they are not regularly reconnected to their professional home base they can lose contact and maybe do not feel part of the company (Golden, 2009, p. 244).

As indicated before, telework eventually demands certain organisational change, foremost in culture (Kaczmarczyk, 2008, p. 65). Employers first need to establish the right HR practices and create the suitable environment to introduce telework. Practice has shown that telework works best when implemented together with other flexible work arrangements. Often this includes offering employees more freedom in working times, task development etc. (Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2008, p. 24).

Modern work forms are often praised only for the accompanying flexibility. Nonetheless, in practice, they are actually a competitive advantage and meanwhile a necessity. Foremost, it is ICT that makes those arrangements possible (Offstein et al., 2010, p. 33). Its fast development and accessibility in costs and reach is responsible for the rapid growth (Golden, 2009, p. 242).

Earlier, information access and storage used to be a major issue for full-time teleworking employees. Ensuring they received all valuable information required to fulfil their tasks, as well as providing enough space to collect it in their home office, was difficult. These days ICT is better developed and the main source and repository for data (Fulton, 2002, pp. 211–213). Until today, ICT did not only enable teleworking in the common format but essentially transformed work, personnel, tasks, schedules, as well as the understanding of efficiency and productivity in the general work environment (Parker et al., 2001, pp. 417–419). Some of those elements change even more discernibly in a home office setting. When ICT is evolving too quickly, it can also make teleworkers feel overloaded and conflicted. This eventually increases the perceived stress, influences productivity, and even staff turnover depending on how much an employee is dependent on ICT in their job (Suh & Lee, 2017, p. 153).

Telework can only function if the right level of productivity can be reached through ICT. A company that is not ready to provide the required equipment, is not supporting telework and consequently not making it attractive, nor convenient, for their employees. Teleworking has to be of interest to both employer as well as employees (Chiru, 2017, p. 223).

It was found that a manager's role is of outstanding importance for backing teleworkers', supporting them and ensuring their happiness (Popovici, 2020, p. 471). Leadership styles' development fell behind in realising the influence of remoteness and causing the physical focus of usual techniques to confound with the new digital setup. It is very challenging for leaders to establish a good team and guide adequately on a virtual basis. It is found that "blended experiences" of virtual and physical, mutual trust and outcome-based performance evaluation are key here (Offstein et al., 2010, pp. 33–36). The few snap-shots a manager has of a teleworker's attitude towards their job, simply are not expressive enough. Therefore, a valuation type where a worker's output is favoured over their input makes more sense (Felstead et al., 2003, p. 248; Groen et al., 2018, p. 728). Also Kaczmarczyk (2008, p. 65) concludes that a performance-based management approach is recommended in order to guide teleworkers while not restricting them. Company policies, which should be a guideline for both managers and workers, should be constantly adapted and developed and not put off until later (Golden, 2009, p. 249).

2.2.2.2 *Benefits for Employees*

Like any other work form, teleworking also comes with its positive and also its negative aspects some being more evident than others (Pyöriä, 2011, p. 394). "Organizations and communities have a moral duty to fight against lack of awareness and indifference towards these issues that have become increasingly but also invisibly threatening to modern virtual workspaces." (Popovici, 2020, p. 471). This means specifying advantages and drawbacks is not only relevant for the outcome of this thesis, but also paramount from a human perspective and for the future perception of telework.

Among the concomitant benefits of teleworking are undoubtedly more flexibility, reduced commuting time and costs, and consequently less stress and more leisure time (Bentley et al., 2016, p. 213). Lower stress levels are said to result from fewer distractions by appointments and present colleagues as well as a better work-life balance uniformly providing more flexibility when working from home (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, p. 353). Hardill and Green (2003, pp. 212–221) further scrutinise the depth of benefits from not having to commute to work on a daily basis by its influence on choice of housing, access to a specific mode of transport, general

life planning, family life and even gender. The daily commute is even more impactful for example in Asia where it is associated very negatively due to extreme traffic. In European latitudes the time spent commuting on a daily basis does not affect the general happiness of employees since the overall circumstances are perceived less severe (Sun et al., 2021, pp. 904–905).

It becomes obvious that the option to stay at home for work has a tremendous and far-reaching effect on everyday life but also general lifestyle. Many important decisions and investments and even phenomena such as urbanisation or rush hours seem irrational against the background of being able to work from home. Accordingly, one of the observed benefits of teleworking can also be an overall higher quality of life (Kaczmarczyk, 2008, p. 67).

Fonner and Roloff (2010, p. 353) have observed in their study that overall, employees often working from outside of the office are happier in their jobs than those regularly on site, or without this possibility. This makes them often more productive, can tie them to the company and enhance the output of the company as a whole (Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012, p. 612). Research has also revealed that productivity is usually very good due to a general high concentration level when working remotely and rises with steadily improving ICT. Unconcerned by industry and particular corporate characteristics, productivity is lower for those jobs where knowledge transfer or mutual support between co-workers is necessary to fulfil their tasks, increases efficiency, profits from higher quality or where work simply cannot be done remotely. However, advancements in ICT mean the reach of knowledge is extending and is no longer location-bound. This also brings another advantage of teleworking since especially in MNEs; covering larger distances geographically is possible. After all, this translates into more opportunities to obtain a job that matches one's own skills for the workforce and at the same time more suitable employees for a company (Clancy, 2020, p. 28). In the United States it was observed that flexible work arrangements themselves often bring along new skills in technology and self-management, increased responsibility, even among industrial or production, so called 'blue-collar', workers (V. Smith, 1997, p. 332).

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, an enormous advantage of being able to execute one's job from home is having a relatively secure income and position even during crises (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020, p. 17).

2.2.2.3 *Disadvantages for Employees*

It is apparent that the nature of flexible work arrangements depends on the individual industry, hierarchy level, job, and tasks. However, when implemented without proper guidance, they can bring employment instability, reduced control and work intensification. Additionally, this also implies a certain managerial effort for the people working flexibly, whereas this can mean that their work-life balance suffers (V. Smith, 1997, pp. 332–334). Bellmann and Hübler (2021) even invoke that labour agreements should limit work “outside of the contracted working hours to a minimum” (ibid., p. 438) and employers “should not make timing too tight so that the tasks can be handled by employees within the prescribed timeframe without resulting in job strain” (ibid., p. 439), since work times and timing seem to be often the biggest concerns for teleworkers.

Distant employees are not as well informed about organisational happenings as office employees and are therefore more self-contained (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, p. 353). Besides, there is a certain danger for teleworkers to be “forgotten” by their managers and colleagues simply because they are not physically seen and talked to on a daily basis. This can signify more stress, a higher workload, and less adapted tasks for remotely working personnel since it is hard to know how they are actually coping. In fact, managers should take extra care of them, catch up with them on a regular basis and secure their contentedness and well-being. In addition, they should also be supported psychologically to learn how to manage stress, draw boundaries between work and leisure, etc. when working independently. These skills can subsequently improve the quality of work and offer a more pleasant private life (Grant et al., 2013, pp. 543–544).

When working from home, the usual safe space in which leisure happens turns into the office alike. This already can be hard for some, to keep work and private life apart and cater to both adequately. Blurred boundaries also mean a novel situation for people living together at home, since they usually do not interfere with the teleworker’s work. Juggling both a private and a professional life with the same people in the same home space has to be learned first (Tietze, 2005, p. 59). Additionally, there is a certain threat of “alienation from one’s home – as employees are at home, and yet they are also at work with the employer’s ‘gaze’ penetrating their private spaces” (Manokha, 2020, p. 276). Having to live two such disparate parts of life within the same four walls, is admittedly not convenient to some and definitely takes some adaptations for everyone directly or indirectly involved to create a good atmosphere in the home office.

An aspect that should not be forgotten is the influence the change in everyday routine can have on one's health. Having to get to the office building already requires more physical activity than simply walking to one's desk at home. In many cases the way to the office in the morning and evening has even more significant health benefits when the commute is done actively for example by bike (Humphreys et al., 2013, p. 138; Kemen, 2016, pp. 120–122; Shephard, 2012, p. 304). When this part of one's routine is changed in home office, it for sure can have a bad impact physically but also mentally (Ohta et al., 2007, p. 48).

Telework is a new form of organising and managing a business as well. In general, among the most challenging parts of introducing telework is the organisation setting change in itself. Others derive around communication, coordination, and dynamics of how telework is granted to whom. In companies where not all tasks can be conducted from outside of the office via ICT, there is a certain disaffection between employees who have to physically come to work and those who do not (Mahler, 2012, pp. 415–416).

Another downside are the generally higher costs for employees. The costs for actual office expenses are commonly paid by the workers rather than the company when working at home since borders are blurring, for example faster internet connection, office room furniture, higher heating/ cooling and water utility charges, food and drinks etc. This may bring advantages for organisations, but means a great imbalance for employees since this is originally the task of the hiring unit. In this case, governments' regulations are crucial to prevent companies from exploiting workers using the supposed benefits of home office as cover (Lord, 2020, pp. 64–66).

Apparently, Olson (1983, p. 187) already expresses in her journal article the true potential of telework, all the while being conscious of its downsides, organisational and individual challenges, management difficulties, the significance of its impacts on motivation, efficiency and wellbeing, as well as the need for general guidelines valid for teleworkers throughout entire businesses. This highlights that all the relevant factors for the successful implementation of telework, were well known from an early stage (ibid.).

The previous two subchapters highlight the ambiguity of telework and the fact that not all teleworkers can be considered the same as the interpretation depends highly on personality traits, business, position, and actual job. The need to identify and provide solutions for teleworkers within a company to make their experience as positive as possible is evident (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, pp. 354–355).

2.2.3 Teleworking in the Pandemic Context

In March 2020, the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) started to plague Europe and affected its economy and businesses. Due to political and legal safety-restrictions such as social distance-keeping, many companies, also in Austria, had no choice but to “shift entirely to teleworking for all employees where possible” (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, 2020, Reduce social contacts section, para. 1). Companies could minimise the risk for their employees induced by social gatherings in the office (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020, p. 11). Since these implementations were wide-spread over several countries, researchers speak of a period of pandemic-induced teleworking in opposition to the conventional type (Carillo et al., 2021, p. 70).

In Austria, companies were asked to estimate the number of employees in home office and found the results shown in Figure 3 below. The first bar refers to the possibility for home office before the pandemic, the second to the actual use of home office before COVID-19 and the third to the actual use of home office during the lockdowns. During the pandemic, around 90% of companies in scope of the survey indicate that at least half of their employees are in home office in the pandemic context. Indeed, in almost 60% of the companies it is basically all employees (Kellner et al., 2020, pp. 3–6).



Figure 3 "Estimated Percentage of Employees in Home Office in your Company"
Source: Adapted and translated from Kellner et al., 2020, p. 6

Another study focuses explicitly on the difference of home office for workers versus employees. It is noted that there is a drastic difference in home office opportunities for workers. It is known that every 3rd white-collar employee has the chance to work from home during the pandemic, whereas only every 15th blue-collar worker benefits from the same privilege (Ernst & Young, 2020, p. 6). In general, however, there is a justifiable explanation for this controversy being the underlying nature and industry. Technology-based jobs as in IT for instance, are easier to be done away from the workplace than location-bound work in for example manufacturing, where specific tools and machines are required (Golden, 2009, p. 242).

In the United States President Bush established an *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* in 2006 preparing companies for home office and keeping up business in the case of an emergency (United States Homeland Security Council, 2005; Kaczmarczyk, 2008). The potential of telework has been long known in Austria and in Europe but several test projects in the 1980s have been dismissed after some time and there are no records of a similar plan (Brandes, 1999; Gschaider, 2002).

In 2020, the enforced trial-period has introduced digital working as a general practice to many employers, employees and different work divisions, who have not engaged in it ever before all over the world (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020, p. 8). "For telework programs to be effective during an emergency, they must already be in place" (Kaczmarczyk, 2008, p. 65) reckoned this researcher long before pandemic-induced teleworking actually arose. Due to its ad-hoc implementation, teleworking also came along with many challenges (Carillo et al., 2021, pp. 78–79; Como et al., 2021, p. 50). Employees need to be equipped and trained adequately for teleworking and companies have to adapt their organisational culture to fit the new work design (Carillo et al., 2021, p. 82). Continuous training and monitoring is needed to make telework function well in the long run and guarantee contentment throughout the entire workforce (Como et al., 2021, p. 52). These respective difficulties still have to be precisely identified and resolved in many companies (Bartz, 2021; Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Carillo et al., 2021; Como et al., 2021).

2.3 New Work

Modern crises like the COVID-19 pandemic shape the business world and therefore need to be included in future work design to continue global cooperation (Kniffin et al., 2021, p. 74). Meanwhile, more than two years have passed with the pandemic still shaping people's everyday lives. For this reason, many employees have worked fully or a great part of the last one

and a half years from home and some even continue the “new normal” (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, 2021, Home office survey section, para. 1; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020).

In a study scrutinising the influence of the pandemic on digital work, results (Figure 4) contrast how much digital work and traditional work are considered a secure source of income, comparing before and during the pandemic, as well as in the future (Nagel, 2020, pp. 865–872).

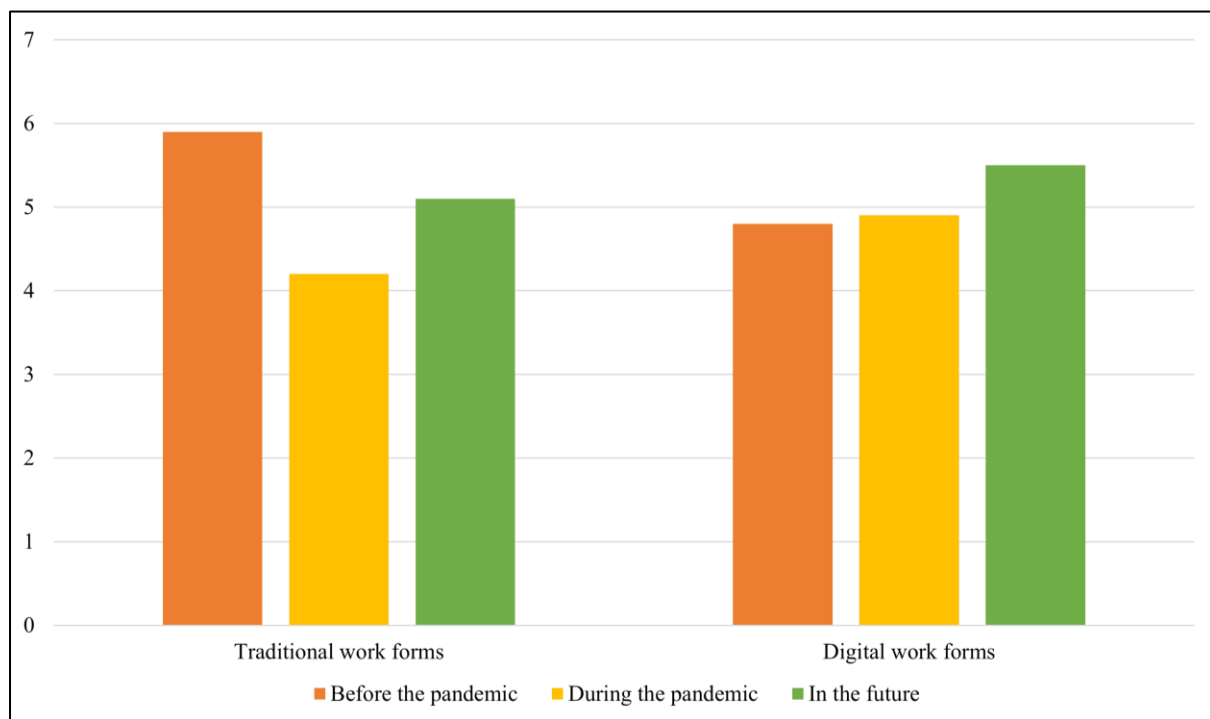


Figure 4 " Importance of Work Forms as a Secure Source of Income (Mean) "

N = 554; $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$

Source: Author's chart adapted from Nagel, 2020, p. 867

Survey participants evaluated via a Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree), though the graph indicates the mean perception of all respondents. On the one hand, it demonstrates that overall traditional work forms lose their security during the pandemic and are regarded potentially more secure in the future. On the other hand, digital work forms' security increases steadily over the indicated timeline (Nagel, 2020, pp. 865–872). These findings clearly show the general confidence in digital working, the notion visible in companies nowadays and hence the direction that work design will take in the near future.

Ortlieb et al. (2021, p. 6) who surveyed over 500 Austrian companies as part of their research, estimated that two thirds meanwhile implement or at least draft a company agreement for tel-

ework. However, the governments' national regulations often require more time to be published and enforced (Iftekhar et al., 2021, p. 6). In Austria a general *Home office policy package* (i.e. *Homeoffice-Maßnahmenpaket*) was finalised by the authorities in early 2021 (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Familie und Jugend et al., 2020).

As a result of widespread telework, over 80% of Austrian companies nowadays use more ICT than before the pandemic, acknowledge the range of tasks that can be done when physically absent and consequently expect more employees to work from home after the pandemic has passed (Kellner et al., 2020, pp. 5–16). The IR 4.0, also Industry 4.0, will continue to significantly change jobs per se with the emergence of more and more automation and technological support. New activities will arise, at the same time others will not require human interaction anymore. This depends on the one hand on the relevance of decision-making, the responsibility and the compassion and creativity needed for the work, but on the other hand also on the level of optimisation and regularity (Anshari, 2020, pp. 2–7).

Humans will have to learn to socially interact better with technology through the increased presence of machines and automation (Romero et al., 2016, p. 10). Communication and collaboration with other teleworkers or between office employees and teleworkers also needs to be learned (Blok et al., 2012, p. 2610).

Figure 5 refers to the remote working study conducted in 2021 among 6,000 employees in six different countries. It shows the feeling of belonging has dropped by 9% from 2020 to 2021. During the same period, the perceived team cohesion has fallen by 7% (Price, 2021, Flexibility is a top priority section). A negative impact on this factor was also found by Ernst and Young, (2020, p. 12). The first research also showed 74% of the people interviewed, want to keep telework in their job. The study considered new employees but also those that work already longer in the company (Price, 2021, Flexibility is a top priority section).

This means intense home office has a great impact on employees' work experience and their social interaction, which in the long-term will eventually influence their job satisfaction and performance. Their general perception of home office does not seem to be influenced. It is a leadership task to bring employees closer together, despite the distance inflicted by working from home.

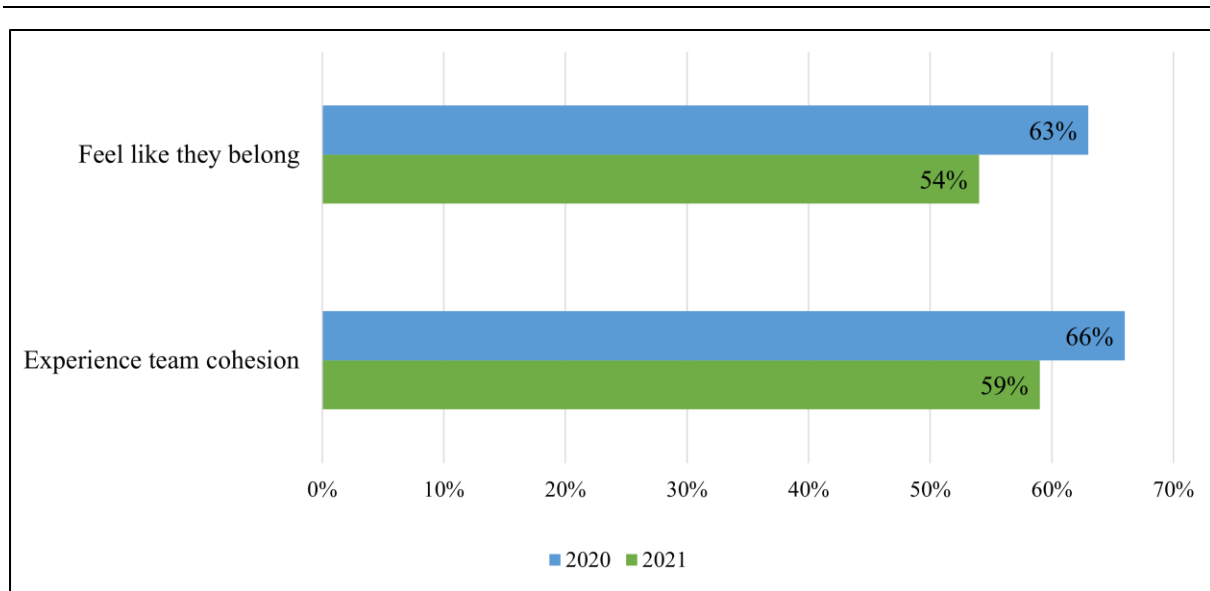


Figure 5 "Belonging and team cohesion"

Source: Author's chart adapted from Price, 2021, Optimize your onboarding process for remote workers section

Managing changes in a vastly developing work setting, is challenging and requires a lot of flexibility and swift responsiveness from leaders. The demand for innovative management puts a lot of expectations and pressure on leaders' shoulders. They are asked to design and maintain a modern work environment for their employees all while facilitating innovation (Pitsis et al., 2020; Schlotmann, 2018). Already McDonough and Braungart (1998, p. 10) conclude that technology is only a tool and what we make out of it depends on us humans. The impact of the IR 4.0 on organisations is still greatly underestimated, as well as the importance of humans' role in it. HRM practices are not well researched in this context since the focus is rather put on technology itself despite its importance (Gan & Yusof, 2019, pp. 620–622). HRM especially plays a crucial role to implement the IR 4.0 successfully and therefore becomes Human Resources 4.0. This is a dual relationship as the IR 4.0 shows that changes in companies' HRM are becoming a requirement at this point in time (Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2021, Conclusion section, para. 1).

Research suggests the term *Human capital 4.0*, which implies the skillset and assets the workforce has to have in order to be fit and succeed in industry 4.0, the new work implications and changes (Figure 6). The four identified elements are innovation, education or training, competences, and wellbeing. As previously described, creativity and novel developments are needed to stay competitive not only for leaders, but also for the general workforce. Wellbeing means an advanced version of health awareness in a demanding job, while education refers to general

expertise and continuous learning. Among competences researchers see five interdisciplinary abilities, including soft skills like flexibility and sociality, hard skills which are increasingly linked to technology, cognitive skills such as analytical thinking, emotional intelligence, and vital digital literacy comprising the capability of interacting virtually with the respective media (Flores et al., 2020, pp. 687–699).

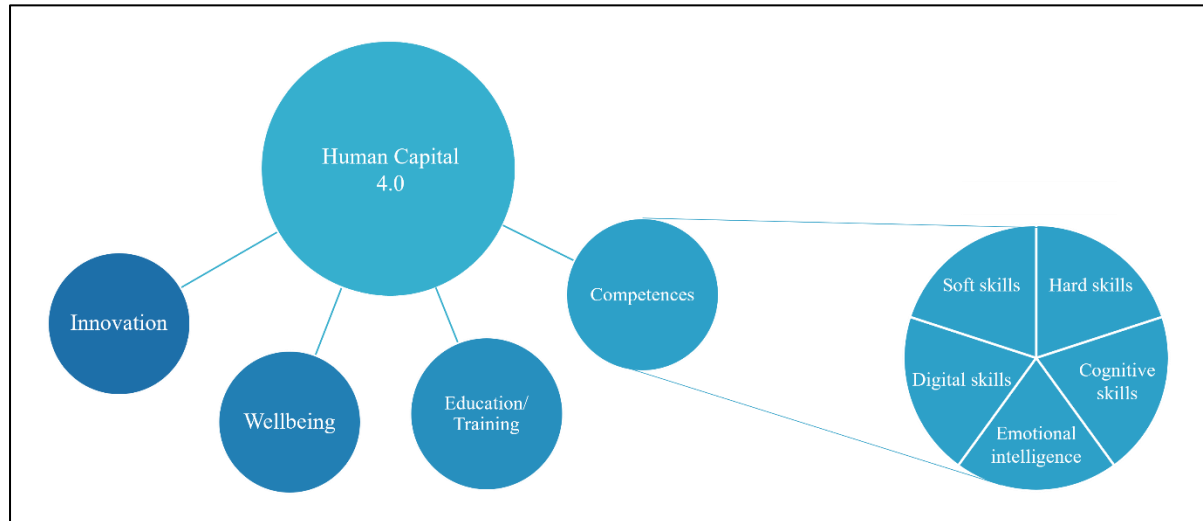


Figure 6 "Main components from Human Capital for Industry 4.0"
Source: Author's chart adapted from Flores et al., 2020, p. 695–696

2.4 Connectivity

2.4.1 Connectivity among Co-workers

Connections with others at work are strongly influencing an employee's accomplishments, efforts, and dedication, and should not be underestimated (Maciel & Camargo, 2016, p. 384). Smith (1997, p. 334) concludes flexibility in the work environment is still a research area in its infancy with many grey areas around organisation, relations etc. For sure, there have been many publications in the last years filling those grey areas. The ongoing improvement in digitisation and the world's connectivity continuously bring new challenges (Radermacher, 2018).

Teleworkers, in general, are expected to be equally connected and informed as they would be in the office (Fulton, 2002, p. 209). This unfolds one of the greatest challenges of having employees working from home, namely collaboration. A lot has to be reconsidered to make teleworking effective and keep up good work: new routines, different time management, other tools and software, etc. (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020, p. 11).

More recent research distinguishes that teleworking is a mode of work better suitable for only those tasks that require silence and concentration. On one side, the idea of disconnecting fully when working out of the office is suggested conducive to prevent interruption. On the other side, the individual's accomplishment boosts the work team's performance and personal experience in the job and vice versa, which enhances the organisation's yield (Pyöriä, 2011, p. 394).

A positive relation can be deviated between the required connectivity with co-workers, whilst too much interaction can cause disturbance in a teleworking environment. It becomes clear that connectivity and teleworking raise several issues.

Pandemic-induced telework is a very extreme case exhaustively pushing people to their limits (Dolce et al., 2020, pp. 2–3). When discussing this in the COVID-19 context, office employees had no other choice but to work from home, giving connectivity a completely new angle. An analysing under these circumstances may give insights that usually remain unnoticed when people choose to work from home, have more colleagues present in the office and usual social contact (Kniffin et al., 2021, p. 74).

Teleworkers lacking human interaction at work and maybe also at home, potentially suffer more from isolation (Bentley et al., 2016, p. 210). For example, it is apparent that informal conversation in the form of small talk at the coffee machine, at lunch or after-work drinks especially outside of single work teams is naturally omitted. More than half of the employees agree that they miss out on informal exchange (Kellner et al., 2020, p. 15). In order to counteract companies shall support their employees in their wellbeing not only with the needed technical equipment but also socially (Bentley et al., 2016, pp. 213–214). Things like this have never been perceived so evidently before and enrich telework research. The practical implications for all involved alike make “discussions about the pros and cons as well as the organization of remote work at both the establishment and the team level seem to be indispensable” for the future (Bellmann & Hübler, 2021, p. 438).

2.4.2 The Connectivity Paradox

The benefits employees acknowledge from teleworking, link strongly to independence and distance from the hustle and bustle in the office. It is found true that employees at home have less contact and fewer conversations with their colleagues, enabling them to purposely distance themselves for focus reasons or preventing them from engaging more. There is an indication

that less communication in physical presence with office colleagues is not necessarily perceived as a negative aspect of telework (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, pp. 353–358). However, there are two sides to every coin and reduced general contact is not always as easy as it seems in the first place. In most office jobs, simply being absent from the office and colleagues does not comply with how work is arranged and hinders cooperation for obvious reasons.

To collaborate, exchange information, and perform better, teleworkers have to have a strong virtual connection to colleagues. This implies they are communicating online via different media to cooperate on a regular basis. Surprisingly, their organisational identification was not found to be diminishing by the lack of face-to-face interaction but by too much connection. Through increased connectivity some assets of physical absence may be lost when teleworking negatively shaping the telework experience. True focus and concentration on relevant assignments may fall short when messages keep coming in and disrupting the workflow. Even though indispensable for teleworkers, permanently being available and online via various communication channels may reverse the original convenience, by virtually decreasing the distance to the office again. In this situation, the advantages of being away from the physical workplace are no longer perceived as such. Continuous interruption and consequently higher stress levels have indeed the potential to lower organisational identification for teleworkers (Fonner & Roloff, 2012, pp. 208–228).

This means virtual connectivity to the workplace can have significant downsides. ICT plays two contradicting roles here, at first the enabler in making working from home possible, but after some time also the stress factor spoiling the positive experience. Researchers refer to this phenomenon as the *connectivity paradox* which builds the core of this research (Leonardi et al., 2010). Since the COVID-19 telework is of a different nature than the usual type under normal circumstances, the perception of this connectivity concerning this paradox in the new context is the objective.

Another relevant aspect of this ambiguity is the employer's expectations of the teleworkers' availability. Leonardi et al. (2010, pp. 98–102) further investigated that the naturally increased availability due to job commitment of teleworkers results in a problematic perception of them being more available for other tasks, meetings etc. by co-workers and managers. In general, teleworkers have very little influence over which part of their work is actually noticed by colleagues and superiors, as they simply work in a different way than physically present employees. Increased pressure triggers the previously described connectivity paradox for teleworkers,

causing them to learn how to cope by decreasing their connectivity again trying to “strategically create the effect of distance (through mediated communication) from their managers, co-workers, and clients” (Leonardi et al., 2010, p. 99). This brings a certain freedom to teleworkers in structuring their work time but shields their whereabouts to their organisation. A certain duality is established as the hidden individual arrangement taken by teleworkers themselves hinders the general enhancement of the company's general telework structures (Leonardi et al., 2010, pp. 98–102).

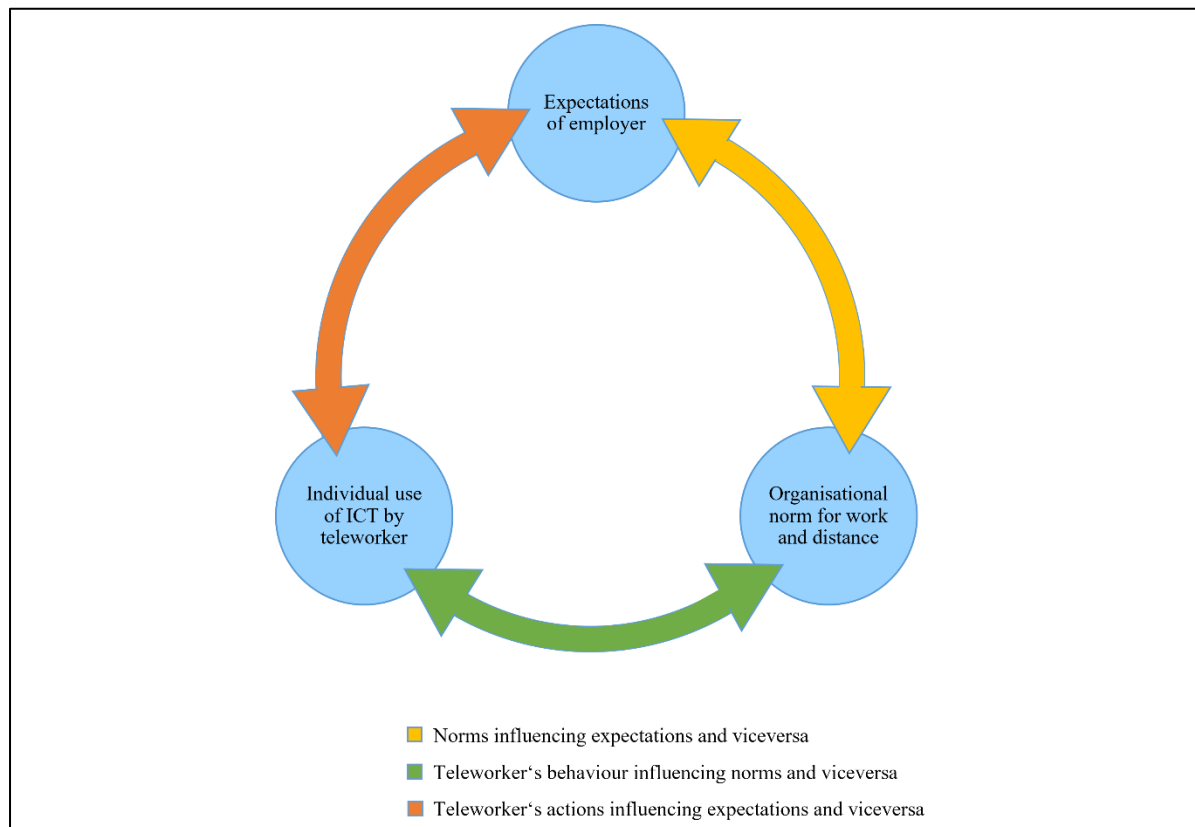


Figure 7 "The Connectivity Paradox illustrated"

Source: Author's chart adapted from Leonardi et al., 2010, p. 100

A simplified model of the connectivity paradox is depicted in Figure 7. The three elements of how intensively a teleworker uses the ICT to be virtually available and connected, the general understanding of work and distance within an organisation and the assumptions of the employer but also of co-workers, are visible in the blue circles. They are all interconnected with one another illustrated with two-sided arrows. The yellow arrow shows the relation of norms and expectations and their dependence on one another according to the teleworker's actions. The green arrow refers to the teleworker's behaviour and the norms regarding work and distance influencing each other via the expectations towards which teleworking employees live up. The

orange arrow demonstrates the teleworker's actions influencing the overall expectations, by trying to reach usual availability when being distant and the employers' shifting perception through this reaction. If those factors are not balanced, regulated or communicated correspondingly the teleworker will feel stressed, too connected and reduce their connectivity once more (Leonardi et al., 2010, pp. 98–102).

The observed facts clearly reveal the problems that such a lack of transparency, unclear communication and the resultant absence of adequate rules and standards create are more far-reaching and more interconnected than it appears on the surface. Connectivity can be recognised as essential, as it is the only link between office and home office through ICT. If the importance of connectivity and ICT in telework plans is underrated within an organisation, the outcome can be truly problematic for teleworkers, negatively affecting their performance and satisfaction (Suh & Lee, 2017, pp. 140–155).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and scientists describe another type of a so-called *connectivity paradox*. This one is referring to mandatory physically distancing from others in order to not spread the COVID-19 virus and get sick, while it is well known that human beings need social interaction and human contact to live healthy (M. L. Smith et al., 2020).

This presents us with the following problem of having to rethink already researched phenomena in the pandemic context. It is to be analysed how those factors are changing when all employees are turning into teleworkers, and how it is changing when there is no possibility to have certain physical interaction with other human beings, with the exception of cohabitants.

In this study, the term connectivity paradox always refers to the teleworking connectivity paradox, whilst keeping the social connectivity paradox in mind, since the aim is to analyse the first in the context of COVID-19.

3 Research Design

3.1 Applied Method

This investigation is of exploratory nature and therefore requires primary data collection which will then be analysed together with already existing literature on the topic (Hackley, 2019, p. 50). It is evident that results from quantitative studies are easier to be generalised due to their larger scope. However, qualitative research allows for a more detailed and less predetermined data collection ideal for investigatory projects (Johnson & Harris, 2002, p. 114).

In HRM, research is still mostly quantitative, although qualitative results are nowadays considered more fruitful when examining human behaviour, perception, and relationships in modern business contexts and can be supportive for new management theories and strategies (Ridder & Hoon, 2009, p. 93; Samul, 2017, p. 117). Since the research at hand addresses employee's personal experiences, a qualitative approach was favoured here, aligning a subjective ontology with an interpretivist understanding (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2016, pp. 57–60).

When choosing a specific qualitative method various factors have to be considered. Adams and Cox (2008, p. 17) argue that research investigating sociological matters within a business context often makes use of focus groups, questionnaires, or interviews.

These research questions require comprehensive input of two employee groups, general white-collar and human resource employees, to compare. On the one side, questionnaires would not cover the necessary depth of questioning but would give a greater reach not pertinent for this analysis. On the other side, a focus group with two opposing parties is not feasible in practice, due to timing and logistics and would go beyond the scope of this thesis. In-depth interviews offer a very insightful form of questioning and are considered to provide the most detailed information of individual participants since they have freedom to express independently (Adams & Cox, 2008; Johnson & Harris, 2002; Ridder & Hoon, 2009). Interviews with directly involved persons are recognised as the right method to learn for the future of teleworking arrangements since a very long time (Olson, 1983, p. 187). With all the above in mind, in-depth interviewing is considered the appropriate choice here within the supposed timeframe and capacity.

In in-depth interviews, a sample of people are asked individually about their perceptions and experiences with a certain topic. The questions are not randomised around a theme but have to be well prepared and follow a specific structure. Such an interview is a longer conversation where the interviewer is leading the participant to look at the subject from all sides relevant to the research. This way the interviewee can intuitively reply without overthinking in a familiar talk-like setting (Mears, 2012). A semi-structured guideline has been developed (see Annex 1) to give each interview the same standard framework, whilst maintaining a certain flexibility for participants as well as for the right probing questions from the interviewer (Adams & Cox, 2008; Hackley, 2019; Johnson & Harris, 2002). The questioner's language should be free of opinion or judgement throughout the conversation in order to refrain from biasing the interviewee's response and ensuring a genuine and candid outcome (Saunders & Tosey, 2015, pp.

201–203). Interviews are divided in two phases that all conversations followed, regardless of whether respondents were HR or non-HR representatives. The first phase was a general one providing questions regarding their general home office situation, its deployment over the duration of the pandemic and their personal perception of interpersonal relationship and communication in this context. Phase two centred on the research questions, by inquiring their individual experience of connectivity and the connectivity paradox. The guideline was not handed to participants prior to the appointment, to safeguard a specific spontaneity and honest flow of thought throughout the interview.

3.2 Sampling

In such research it is important to focus on "theoretically informed and well-supported interpretations of what is really happening in social situations" rather than generalising assumptions (Hackley, 2019, p. 13). For this purpose, a sample establishing the right data and reaching the appropriate range had to be drawn.

Data collection foresaw a convenience and purposive sampling approach, allowing the interviewer to select people according to their proximity and the following criteria (Hackley, 2019, p. 92). Participants needed to be available for a one-time online interview in December 2021 or January 2022, be human resources or general white-collar employee in an Austrian MNE, have performed telework throughout at least three consecutive months during the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, or still continue to do so and have rarely worked from home before.

During data collection, the number of interviewees needed to be steadily aligned with the themes' point of saturation. In case the gathered input would have been too little or too broad, the research's outcome would have been influenced negatively in quality and depth (M. M. Hennink et al., 2017, pp. 592–593). It is said an interview sample size of twelve participants generates appropriate data and output in the setting of a single thesis (Rowley, 2012, p. 263). Upfront a sample size of approximately 14 participants, composed by an equal number of human resources employees and general employees, has been estimated to be reasonable for this topic. The higher scored number would have ensured the research objectives are met, in case of last-minute dropouts or other unforeseeable circumstances. The amount would have needed to be adjusted during implementation to reach the proper point of saturation on this paper's scale. Duration was set to around 25 minutes for each interview. Afterwards, the previously

recorded interviews were transcribed into a written text and a coding system was developed to make examination and interpretation possible (Hackley, 2019, p. 20).

3.3 Limitations, Risks and Ethical Aspects

Since the topic at hand addresses an ongoing worldwide humanitarian crises, a certain risk was inevitable. The focus of this paper was put on employees' perception in the "new normal" (Pattnaik & Jena, 2020, p. 1) purposely unrelated to the pandemic's further development and duration. This means the current and future happenings in the pandemic's course have been kept in mind but are not relevant for the findings of this paper.

The research results depend on the interviewees that were found for a conversation. Especially, in students' work data access can be a problem (Hackley, 2019, p. 17). In order to reduce this risk, potential participants were gathered in a list already early on in the process of developing this work. After a fruitful conduction until the point of data saturation, this risk could be further minimised at an appropriate stage of this thesis.

One disadvantage has been the virtual conduction via online calls, due to the virus still making face-to-face meetings difficult. To diminish the risk of losing valuable input due to the lack of physical interaction, whenever technical equipment allowed it, the interviews were operated via video calls. Also, questions were designed in a way that the focus was on the response rather than expression, mimic, or body language (M. Hennink et al., 2020, p. 133).

Higher numbers of interviews result in considerable time consumed throughout the procedure of finding suitable participants, executing, transcribing, and analysing what was said. This could have caused problems in the implementation of this thesis and is the reason why a lot of attention has been paid to a timely realisation of the interviews (Coombes et al., 2009, p. 202). The online conduction provided an advantage here as it allowed more efficient scheduling.

Another negative aspect has been the potential bias by the author of the thesis. This has been kept in mind throughout the whole process to avoid it in the best possible way. Striving for the saturation point in data collection helped to minimise personal bias additionally (ibid.).

It is inevitable to continuously ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and consent of the interviewees, throughout the whole process to provide them a save space to share their personal experiences (Adams & Cox, 2008, p. 26; Hackley, 2019, p. 154). Therefore, handling personal data carefully was important. In the transcription process, the participants were assigned numbers,

instead of their real names, and all company-specific references were anonymised. Their respective numbers are in order of their consent to give an interview, to secure data even more, and not related to the company they come from or otherwise.

The feasibility within a single master thesis built a limitation for this project. With this in mind, the objectives were adapted to an attainable scope that offered a reasonable outcome. Nevertheless, this research is a small-scale observation for which results cannot be generalised. However, they can be consulted for bigger research projects in this field, support before-and-after research in the same scope once the pandemic is history for good, and act as a reference for comparison.

3.4 Data Collection

The primary data access in this thesis builds a collection of data through in-depth interviews with the previously defined sample. As the provision of interviewees has been of utmost importance for the findings, the contact to potential interviewees was carried out early on. As planned, requests for appointments were sent out in November and December 2021. Through the use of the convenience sampling approach via contact persons within companies the response rate was 100% and 14 interviewees could be attained. The interviews were scheduled and conducted over a period of approximately one month, between 9th December 2021 and 11th January 2022. A similar structure in each conversation was granted by the aforementioned interview guideline (see Annex 1). It was not sent out to the participants in advance, to ensure honest replies without too much preparation and thought spoiling the authenticity of answers. All interviews were conducted via MS Teams, due to its widespread use within companies and the software consequently being a well-known tool to the participants. Cameras were switched on wherever technology allowed it, to overcome the distance and have a more personal encounter rather than just a phone call. That way, the interviews came as close as feasible to face-to-face interviews (M. Hennink et al., 2020, p. 133). This approach was also favoured due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing, and to ensure safety of all participants. Another useful asset supporting the choice of this tool was the possibility to record the sessions and be able to download an automatic transcript saving a lot of time in the data handling process. The selected language of conduct in all conversations was German, in order to enable genuine data collection and establish the right level of trust and understanding between interviewees and interrogator, since the focus area in this thesis are Austrian businesses.

After an introduction explaining the procedure within the interview, the participants were asked for their approval to have the meeting recorded, later anonymously transcribed, and analysed within the scope of this thesis. Then the guideline was followed to have a common thread throughout all interviews. Later transcriptions were scripted and proofread immediately after the interview, to guarantee data quality as recommended by literature. This also allowed probing questions through comparisons between participants and an early pilot analysis (M. Hennink et al., 2020, pp. 213–216).

Overall, all 14 interviewees replied openly to the questions and were willing to share their very personal experiences with home office in the pandemic context without any hesitation. This confirmed the right choice of method as open questions allowed each individual to answer from their very own angle (Adams & Cox, 2008, p. 33). Each interview lasted between 25 and 30 minutes, which had been anticipated. The conversations gave a deep insight and left nothing open that would have been relevant for answering the research questions at hand and the point of saturation could be reached with the anticipated number of interviewees. For that reason, data collection stayed within the feasible scope of this thesis and was very fruitful.

Based on the random assignment of participant numbers for anonymization purposes, it has to be stated that HR interviewees are participants 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 12 and 13, while participants 1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 14 are working outside the respective HR departments. Already after some interviews, a clear difference between HR and non-HR participants was visible and confirmed that having a sampling pool including both was an appropriate choice.

3.5 Coding

In the coding process, all interviews are read several times and studied to find the common themes. Then a structure of codes and subcodes is developed to which statements in the transcripts are assigned. Here, firstly the subcodes were identified in four interviews, then compared and adapted to a common base in a second and third round (M. M. Hennink et al., 2017, p. 595; Johnson & Harris, 2002, p. 111). Later the remaining ten interviews were assigned to those codes while needed additional ones were created. Once all statements from all 14 transcripts were attributed, all existing codes were grouped according to their overall subjects which built the main codes (Hackley, 2019, p. 20). All in all, the code book exhibits 583 statements that were identified and structured accordingly. Most codes are of a deductive nature while only a few were induced by responses of the interviewees (Hackley, 2019, p. 107).

In the data collection at hand, three main codes were identified that also reflect the design of the interview guideline: Telework in general in the pandemic context; connectivity and collaboration subclassifying into time management, work-life balance, social interaction and communication and the connectivity paradox; and future work design. The coding tree (Figure 8) shows the three main codes, four mid-level codes, and all 24 subcodes and their linkage to one another. All codes, their type and a description, can be found in annex 2. The ones relevant for answering the research questions in this thesis are marked with a red border and will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapters. The blue codes belong to overall telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting on the changes of work for employees as well as their equipment and perception of organisation. They were omitted from the analysis part since they are not significant in connectivity regards. The yellow codes describe different areas affecting and influenced by connectivity and the new mode of collaboration. Suitable subcodes were selected from all mid-level categories to get a full picture of connectivity in the work environment. Green codes refer to future work design and are considered eligible to highlight the prospects for the future.

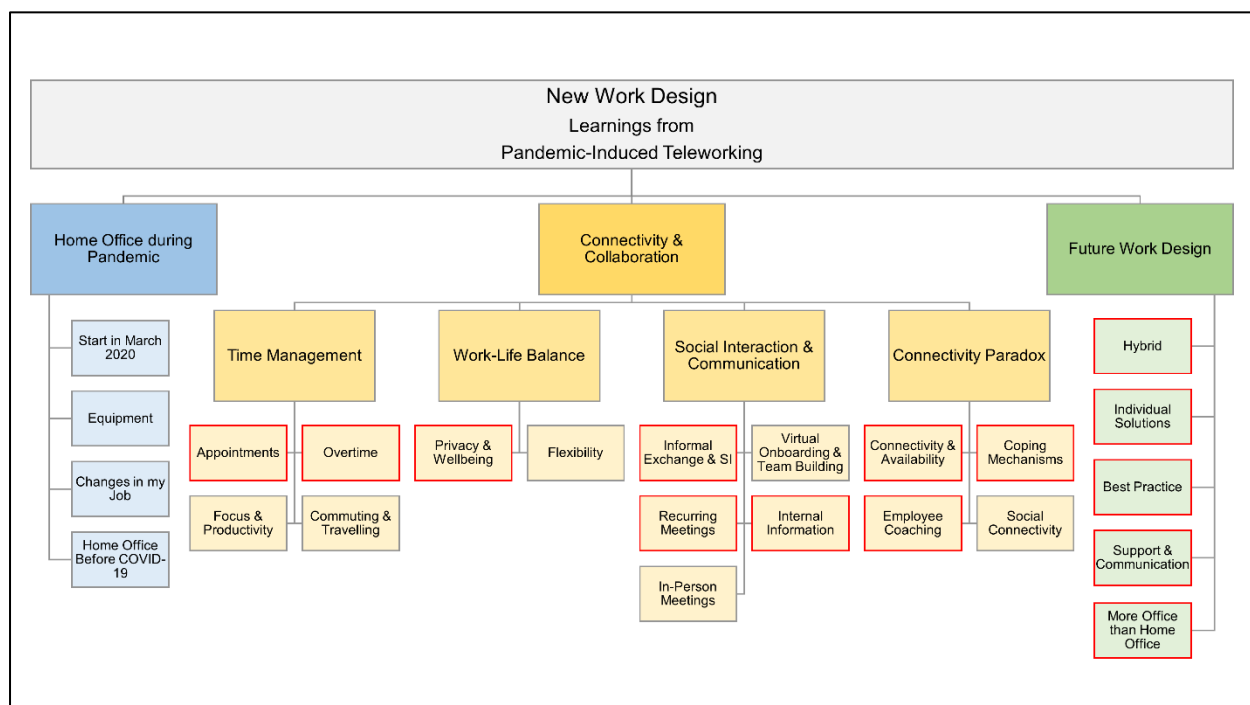


Figure 8 "Coding tree"
Source: Author's chart

4 Analysis and Findings

In the next step, the codes applicable to answer the research questions are scrutinised. The codes also provide the structure leading towards the aim of analysis in this thesis – the connectivity paradox in pandemic context and concomitant new work design implications (Rowley, 2012, p. 268). The paradox is based on elements that make employees feel connected and permanently available even though they are working from home, or elements that are influenced by or outcomes of the new work setting (Figure 9). In the empirical part, those elements were pre-defined in the structure of the interview questions. The analysis mirrors deductive codes that test the participants' experiences with home office in the respective single aspects and later the connectivity paradox as an already researched phenomenon in a new context. Moreover, suitable inductive codes are also included that were raised by several of the interviewees and are considered an indispensable part when discussing their perception. Together, they give a full picture and enable a profound examination of what connectivity means for the sample of personnel.

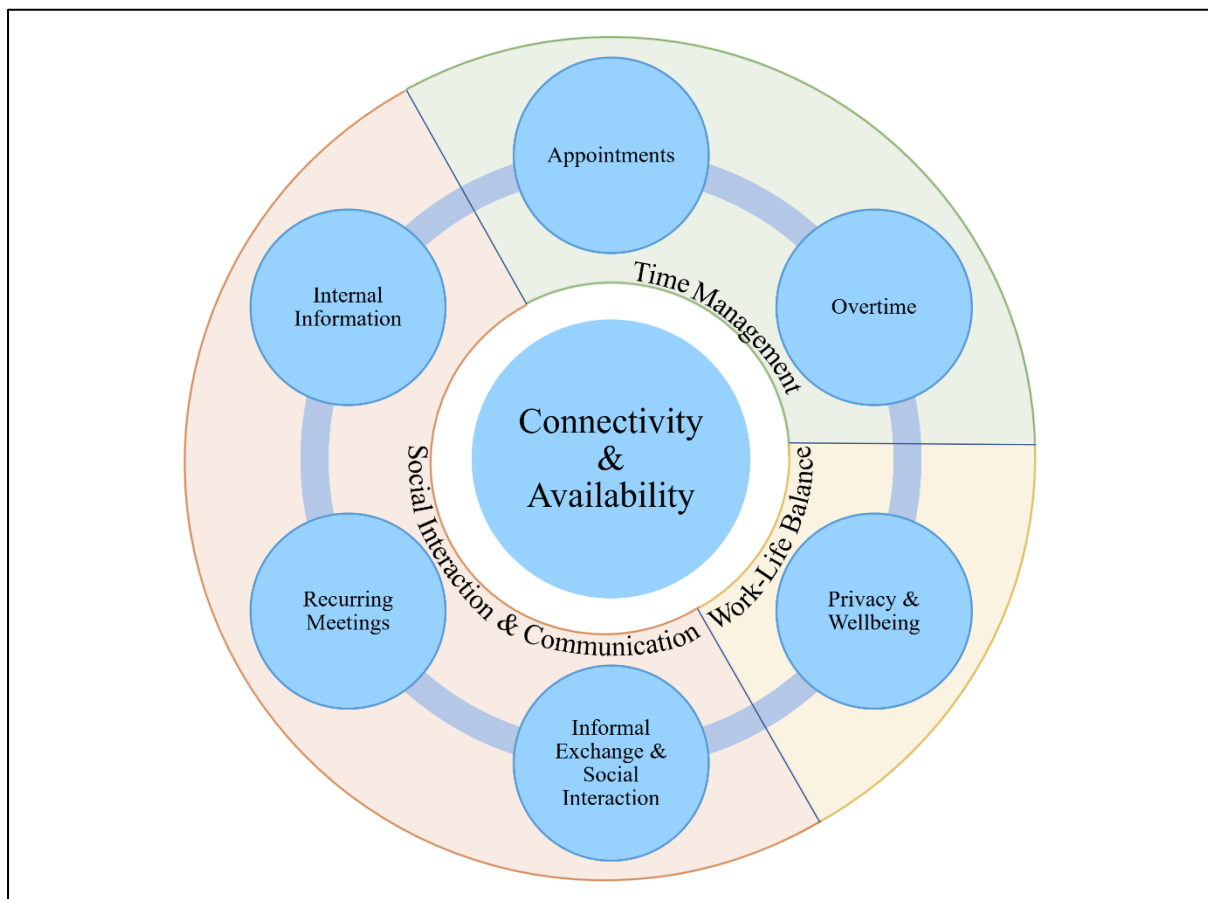


Figure 9 "Elements of Connectivity"
Source: Author's chart

First, all participants are compared regardless of their HR or non-HR affiliation to get a full picture for general perception, and then divided at a later stage for the specific research questions. Even though the sample at hand has been well-selected and is quite diverse, one has to keep in mind that the data at hand cannot be generalised, but speak for the observed sample, and that a certain level of bias is naturally included (Johnson & Harris, 2002, p. 113).

4.1 Connectivity and Collaboration

4.1.1 Time Management

4.1.1.1 Appointments

The general notion regarding booked time, virtual meetings and calls, is that they changed radically since March 2020 (all Participants). Every alignment with a colleague, boss or customer has to be conducted via a virtual appointment. The fact that it is simply not possible to walk over to a colleague in the office and ask them a short question, or meet them in the hallway or at the coffee machine, forces people to make an appointment whenever they feel they have something to share or discuss. Additionally, informal communication cannot take place and is transferred to the virtual environment, hence becoming more formalised and causing a further increase in the number of appointments (Participants 1, 2, 6 and 7). “This is leading to a behavioural change in the structure of the meeting culture and a lot of time spent in calls” (Participant 12). Almost all interviewees mention that the number of meetings increased significantly in their jobs. Even those who work in the office again frequently, say they have more meetings simply because so many of their colleagues or customers continue working from home (Participants 3 and 4). For participant 4 this results in more time-consuming work, calling everyone involved individually or arranging a meeting where everyone would be available, than it did when everyone was in the office on a daily basis and could be addressed directly. Getting to the same results as when working in the usual office environment, takes a lot more time and meetings (Participant 7 and 13). However, Participant 2 adds that “certain tasks can also be done more efficiently when working from home”.

Participants have the impression that the time gained by increased flexibility of home office through the absence of daily commuting time, is taken up by even more appointments than assumed free time (Participants 6, 7 and 10). Participant 7 correctly adds that all meetings one attends, require a certain preparation and post-processing time, increasing the workload further.

Throughout the pandemic-induced trial period, the structure in home office has changed significantly. Calmness, focus, and flexibility, were in the centre before as there was no real connection to the office apart from phoning. The teleworkers missed the opportunity to join many meetings, as there was no alternative to holding them physically in the office (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Golden, 2009). Now participants state their everyday norm consists of appointments. When everyone is at home and interaction in the office is not possible, meetings and quick oral alignments had to be replaced, in order to coordinate with colleagues and continue business as usual. Luckily, technology today makes it possible to have all this transferred to the online world. This entirely changes the meeting culture for teleworkers and for those interacting with teleworking people. Almost every interaction is scheduled and defined in a booked timeslot in a calendar.

The gained benefits of fewer distractions and less stress seem to be almost eliminated due to appointments. People are more or less bound to their desks and laptops, restricting the previously explained concept of more flexibility in home office. In pandemic-induced home office the time spent commuting does not mean more free time as Bentley et al. (2016, p. 213) found, but often the exact opposite being more available for working.

Participants 1, 2, 10, 12, 13 and 14 bring up another issue namely the number of appointments resulting in a full timetable, leaving no space for breaks but even longer workdays. Many people are naturally late to meetings since it is impossible to work throughout the whole day like this (Participants 1 and 2). Even when there is visibly only a 30 minute slot in a colleague's calendar available, it is booked robbing the last prospected break for that workday (Participants 1 and 11). This phenomenon continues for those back in the office now, where in the past breaks were always respected and granted due to a physical location change in-between meetings, and are causing additional pressure now (Participant 1). Sometimes, the intensity of meetings even leads to employees not taking a lunch break purposely. Instead, they use this time to perform usual tasks and to not have any missed calls etc. with already low availability (Participants 2 and 7) as it is difficult to get actual work done with a full calendar (Participant 5, 7 and 11). Participant 13 strictly sticks to normal lunch breaks to keep a healthy routine. No breaks result in more stress and lack of wellness (Participants 1 and 13), while sitting in front of a screen for such a long time is exhausting in general (Participant 2). Participant 5 has the feeling of being invited to more meetings than their expertise would be needed for. This is because "it became more comfortable to attend meetings as it is not even necessary to leave one's chair" and an invitation is sent quickly (Participant 6).

The number of appointments gets higher, and it becomes more difficult to book one, as there is only limited time in a workday. People become less available but are more connected. As the participants noticed already, it is not healthy but overwhelming and stressful. They do not get their usual workload done, receive a lot of information to process and some do not find the time for breaks. Everyone being able to have a virtual meeting instantly and be invited to such meetings with just a few clicks, is a curse and blessing at the same time. Nonetheless, Karl et al. (2021, p. 13) observed that the constraints caused by virtual appointments are in fact the same as the ones by physical meetings, for example running late, not finishing in time etc. The annoyances only found in virtual meetings are linked to the usage of technology of co-workers or disturbances by the background at home (ibid., p. 14). The participants at hand did not mention these factors as people seem to be handling them well, but rather the high density of meetings they have to attend. It takes a lot of self-discipline and awareness to reduce the tension caused by constantly having incoming calls and appointments. Both these abilities have been described in Human capital 4.0 but are very difficult to acquire in practice (Flores et al., 2020, pp. 692–697).

Since companies use different software to engage employees with one another it is also overwhelming to have people reaching out on more than one communication channel (Participants 1 and 5). For Participant 5 attending many meetings online results in low energy and motivation to reply to written mails on top. It is still appreciated that video calls are taking place to have actual faces to look at instead of just bare text. Meanwhile Microsoft Outlook, the calendar software all participant's companies use, even provides the option to allow only bookings with a specific duration to grant employee's breaks in-between meetings. This function is known by many, however not yet implemented in any of the companies and resonates with mixed feelings (Participants 1, 2, 6, 11 and 13).

It is noticeable, that appointments when working from home are a paradox in themselves and nearly all interviewees reacted sensitively to the topic. Appointments are necessary to stay in touch with co-workers, bosses, and customers but are a big stress factor as they keep employees connected for hours and take a lot of time away from other work. When managers and employees have a lot of appointments there is no time left in each meeting to socialise (Krehl & Büttgen, 2022, p. 18). Even software providers implement solutions to keep employees from having too long or too many meetings. Despite online meetings being exhausting, they are appreciated as a better option to emails etc. since the possibility to have the cameras switched on acts as a replacement for social interaction (ibid.).

4.1.1.2 *Overtime*

As mentioned, having a busy schedule is tough to handle while staying on top of managing tasks and responsibilities. When working from home, connectivity can become exhaustive and it can be difficult to disconnect and stop for the day. Some employees have to be reminded they do not have to be available 24/7 as observed by Participant 2 and 4, while others do not find it difficult to comply with normal working hours. In addition, Participants 7 and 12 have a hard time sticking to the usual routine in home office and stopping work at an appropriate time. It took them a while to become confident enough to switch off and trust colleagues, and their boss, not to assume they are lazy. For some, boundaries are blurring as the laptop remains next to them in the evening and they struggle to disconnect on time. This of course has an influence on their family and private life (Participants 2, 9 and 11). Participant 3 does not experience this personally, but notices it amongst their colleagues.

For Participant 10, the situation is a bit different since home office allows them to work very late, which they in fact prefer. That means a lot of overtime work and they need to be careful not to overdo it. This happens to Participant 12 rather unintentionally, as they do not have this final way back home after a day spent in the office, and therefore work more overall.

Employees do not have the impression that their employer expects them to work longer or be available all the time when teleworking (Participants 1, 2, 9 and 10). Participants 2, 6, 8, 12 and 13 believe communication is key here between employees and leaders, to manage expectations as well as mutual respect to choose work times individually.

Studies indicate that personnel, who are not as experienced in working from home, are less likely to work overtime and separate work and leisure more strictly. Employees choosing to voluntarily telework independent from the pandemic, are more likely to appreciate gained flexibility in working time, while those who are obliged to work from home, such as the mandatory teleworkers during the pandemic, are rather seeing the constraints like working longer hours (Thulin et al., 2019, p. 13). Research found that this is linked to a general higher workload during the pandemic-induced home office (Xiao et al., 2021, p. 189).

Overtime seems to be something occurring almost naturally for many interviewees in this empirical analysis. Most of them did not at all or only rarely work from home before the pandemic. The numerous appointments, together with no natural ending of the workday like a walk or drive back home, lead to them working longer in the evenings. This differs according to their personality and eventually their responsibility as well. Some do not stand up for their own

wellbeing as much as others. Those that feel more obliged to finalise their work, or who cannot stop reacting to incoming messages in the evening, need to be reminded to take care of themselves. Tips on how to disconnect after work could be useful to share among co-workers.

Therefore, it is utterly important to set clear guidelines on a management level. An atmosphere of trust has to be established, so that employees do not worry their employer could think they are not working when at home. Literature also proposed a performance and outcome guided leadership approach putting quality over the amount of late hours spent (Kaczmarczyk, 2008; Offstein et al., 2010).

4.1.2 Privacy and Wellbeing

The previous two factors, appointments and overtime, directly affect overall job satisfaction and the perception of privacy, as well as the private life. Very often, the line between job and leisure is not clearly visible due to permanent connectivity, which can have negative effects on both. On the one hand, people are not able to enjoy their free time as they are often interrupted and on the other hand, working nonstop will have effects on their performance.

Clearly, a tight schedule with hardly any breaks causes a lot of stress (Participant 1) and therefore negatively influences wellbeing. However, Participant 1 also states that their overall stress did not increase due to working from home, or professional and private life coming closer together. They also reply to mails early, late, or even during vacation to minimise trouble when coming back (Participant 1). In addition, Participant 4 has a flexible approach while still being able to draw the line between professional and private life. They sometimes work late in the evenings or on weekends to have more time available during the week to enjoy good weather etc. in their free time. Participants 9 and 10 adapt flexibly according to their personality and private life. However, they admit they sometimes have trouble mentally switching off at night or on weekends, as the boundaries merge with one another. Accordingly, general wellbeing and relaxation are negatively influenced for them. The same applies to Participant 13, but they take the gained flexibility in return. They also find it utterly important to continuously pay attention to one's own health and needs.

Participants 5 and 6 set clear boundaries in regards to wellbeing. Participant 5 allows an earlier end of the working day if necessary and filters mails rigorously. Participant 6 strictly ignores incoming messages during the day, avoiding the stress. Only once they see how many requests

there are in their mailbox upon checking later, they feel stressed. Participants 6, 8 and 13 believe it is necessary to set clear limits in order to maintain wellbeing and a functioning private life. They believe it is important for companies to regularly make it clear and reflect it in their business culture that “employees do not have to respond immediately for 24 hours a day and seven days a week”.

For Participant 11, there is less stress in home office since children and work are better combinable. This is also valid for Participant 2 but mixing work with childcare is not always ideal for them. Participants 3 and 5 observed similar situations with colleagues. Equally, Participants 8 and 12 see a disadvantage, since they are tired after work and not motivated to text or call family and friends with yet another online tool.

For Participants 7 and 14, having the same four walls for leisure and work makes teleworking difficult at times. A lot of self-discipline is needed when working at home while for some, a dedicated way to the office desk helps to give a spatial distance, where one can mentally shift between private and professional life (Participants 3, 5, 10, 12 and 14).

Participants 3 and 13 are convinced the experience is strongly linked to personality, and that there is no one-size-fits-all in designing one’s own home office routine. An individual approach is encouraged so that every colleague can perform at their best by staying well (Participants 2 and 13).

The participants’ perception is very ambiguous in the matter at hand. For all of them their job in telework has moved closer to their home and this has a certain influence on their work-life balance. It has been researched that the sudden change to home office due to the pandemic made it even harder for people to maintain equilibrium (Xiao et al., 2021, p. 189). For some it can be overwhelming to have their office and home at the same place, others are not bothered or think it is even a convenience. The opinions regarding privacy and wellbeing are different depending on the participants’ situation in life, their family, but also housing. How they cope with the changed circumstances depends a lot on their personality and eventually their exact job. Some find it harder to draw a line between private and professional life. Others can align their job better with their role as a parent for example. People living alone or in a smaller home perceive home office differently than people with a separate office room available. The company’s layout can be equally relevant. If someone works in an open space office, which many of the participants in fact do, where there can be a lot of noise and distractions at times, they perceive home office differently than someone with children at home (ibid., pp. 182–189).

The workload coming together with many online meetings and permanent interaction with colleagues and others in mails and chats, leads to some employees not being able to switch off. Connected via their mobile phone, they continue replying even at times where it would be healthier not to.

Earlier on it was investigated in a study that 74% of all respondents wanted to continue working as flexibly as they did in home office during the pandemic (Price, 2021, Flexibility is a top priority section). The impacts on privacy and wellbeing are mostly not as worrisome to people that they would want to come back fully to the office. That is equally in line with older observations suggesting a better work-life balance (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, p. 353). This feeling was also perceived with this sample during most interviews. Even though participants see different stress factors in home office depending on their personality, most of them seemed happy with the possibility to work from home. For example, it appears that the unclear working hours are accepted for the sake of more flexibility overall. This means the benefits resulting from telework are greater than the disadvantages. Korunka et al. (2020, p. 18) discovered this equally for most surveyed employees in their paper. The observed higher quality of life for teleworkers therefore has also been found in practice within the sample at hand (Kaczmarczyk, 2008, p. 67).

Nevertheless, the named struggles must be taken into account. It would be in the interest of companies to support their employees in minimising the perceived difficulties, or learning to deal with them in the best way possible. A better work-life balance consequently also influences their performance (Dolce et al., 2020, pp. 16–17). It is important to be careful that this permanent connectedness and its effects on the sense of wellbeing do not lead to media fatigue (Bennett et al., 2021; Karl et al., 2021). The first signs are already visible in some interviewees.

4.1.3 Social Interaction & Communication

4.1.3.1 Informal Exchange and Social Interaction

Most interviewees are certain that the social contact between co-workers is very limited when working from home and declined a lot since the heavy teleworking period has started (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14). Participant 11, the only one not agreeing, sees only face-to-face communication as restricted, while general communication is maintained in their eyes. Upon the question, whether they think this is bad in the long-term for their individual

performance or their companies' performance, or job satisfaction in general; about half of the interviewees agreed without second thoughts (Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 12).

While connectivity from anywhere allows constant availability, some people feel better when they have more privacy and can work from home. Others have a harder time establishing a border or prefer to be physically at work in the office, since they need the contact with colleagues (Participant 4). Participant 1 has the impression that "physical meetings are now shown more appreciation".

Participant 7 notices that after longer teleworking periods, the time spent with colleagues in the office is very exhausting, simply because one is not used to it anymore. Participant 5 finds "meetings in front of the screen while already working online all day tiring and energy draining".

Throughout the interviews, it becomes clear that whether a person prefers working from home or the office, is almost purely linked to their social needs and eventually linked to whether they live alone or not, as was also stated by Participants 13 and 14. While to some it is very comfortable, for others telework is uneasy. Participants 3 and 4 therefore see the advantages of working from home but coming to the office as often as possible, as they otherwise miss real social interaction. They are happier, more productive, motivated, and the benefits of home office definitely do not overrule this perception. For Participants 7 and 14, social interactions also gained in significance throughout the long home office period. Celebrating successes together and being permanently in close exchange is vital for them. Spending a lot of time alone in home office is frustrating as human contact is necessary for them to enjoy their job (Participant 14). Participant 13 is an example for the complete opposite side. They say they do not feel lonely when teleworking and do not suffer from lack of real human interaction.

A main source where employees get to talk to one another in an informal format are coffee or lunch breaks or talks between doors in the hallways etc. Participants 1 and 14 say their company quickly saw that getting together in such a setting was heavily missed by employees rushing from one meeting to the next, and they replaced it with virtual coffee breaks. They think that this format is not a full substitution, as social interaction is still very limited, but already helps to stay in touch with co-workers in a casual ambience. Additionally, bigger gatherings that usually take place on a quarterly base are conducted in a virtual setting on a monthly basis instead (Participant 14). Participant 5 implemented coffee get-togethers with a small circle of close colleagues and work friends. For Participant 12, the important talks in a smaller group or

one-on-one, usually happen after bigger meetings and are a mix of debriefing and informal chitchat. Participant 6 actively makes time for informal exchange at the beginning or end of meetings for five to ten minutes.

Both, Participants 6 and 12 find in particular the communication with people from other teams and departments, that are not directly co-workers but with whom conversations can be useful as well, is completely missing. They do not think real conversations are possible in big virtual get-togethers, and that they cannot make up for the lack of communication between departments. Until now, they did not find a way to restore this as no regular virtual meetings have been put in place (Participant 6). When not engaging with someone for a long time, they can be forgotten and the company team spirit suffers (Participant 3 and 9). Participants 3 and 7 share their point of view, as they would both not specifically call colleagues to have an informal chitchat or a coffee break.

Participant 10 is of a different opinion regarding team spirit as they clearly see the disadvantages of teleworking but find their team manages very well to communicate intensively. Also, Participant 11 believes the only thing missing is actual face-to-face interaction, as coffee talks do not add a benefit to work or their happiness. In their eyes, it is important to have regular informal meetings between team leader and individual team members to talk and see whether the colleague is doing well on a personal level. It is also part of the team leaders' responsibility to ensure wellbeing among their subordinates and that everyone in the team has their say on how they have been, and no one is left out (Participants 8 and 11).

Participant 9 is certain that for them virtual meetings are not comparable to real-life encounters. This is partly due to the fact that in their team any implementation of a virtual coffee break room etc. was discontinued after some time. As analysed before, not having the possibility to have such talks spontaneously results in a formalisation in the form of booked appointments or written chats or emails (Participants 1 and 6). This causes frustration since a long time passes before a common date is found or until the other person reads, acts, and replies, even concerning very small inquiries (Participant 1).

When interaction is solely taking place online, misunderstandings occur more easily. Virtual meetings become more like a face-to-face conversation and on an interpersonal level much more valuable when cameras are switched on (Participant 2 and 5). Still, when not being used to it, this can be uncomfortable and a challenge for employees at first (Participants 2 and 7).

Social interaction and informal exchange in home office seem to be a paradox in themselves, like online appointments. Co-workers have never before been as intensively connected as it appears now, with the possibility to instantly talk to them via a call or send them a text message via mail or chat. At the latest, pandemic-induced teleworking improved the virtual availability and skills in the everyday use of ICT of a large part of the workforce (Piroșcă et al., 2021, p. 2848). Even though connectivity is at its highest peak right now, employees feel a lack in connection with their co-workers.

Only upon analysing social interaction in the pandemic context, it becomes clear how far-reaching it is. The whole working structure is different due to no or very little physical encounters in the office and little real communication (Karl et al., 2021, p. 2). Almost all participants clearly gave the impression upon addressing social interaction, that they are unhappy with the current situation regarding communication. Contact outside of their own departments and teams, as well as conversations in a non-work related context, are difficult to replace. These downfalls are perceived very negatively among most participants. In practice, it can be quite laborious and frustrating to reach a co-worker, or find a suitable meeting slot in their busy schedule. When there are many appointments in a single workday also the social quality of each one is diminishing (Krehl & Büttgen, 2022, p. 18). At the same time a lot of written conversations have a higher potential for misunderstandings (Zummo, 2018, p. 56).

This is affecting employees' perception of their jobs, co-workers, teams and departments and the overall meeting and engagement culture as mentioned earlier. For most participants, even happiness within their job is a concern and they clearly prefer having physical interactions in the office. The absence of social interactions and connections can have severe impacts on their team cohesion, performance and job engagement in the long-run (Maciel & Camargo, 2016; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020). The study by Price (2021, Optimize your onboarding process for remote workers section), has already shown impacts of teleworking on the experience of team cohesion. Over the duration of one year the observed personnel suffered a reduction of this factor by 7% (ibid.).

For these reasons, originally home office was rarely done on a full-time basis opposed to how it has been done during the lockdowns (Xiao et al., 2021, p. 189). Observation showed that hybrid teleworkers feel less socially distant in comparison to those working from home permanently (Bentley et al., 2016, p. 210). Another issue adding to the problem is little communication overall during the pandemic, as for example affecting parents when they have their young

children at home, as they are not compensating the lack in communication since they are not able to speak. This way communication in general suffers immensely leading to reduced well-being (Xiao et al., 2021, p. 189).

One gets the impression that most companies are aware of this being troublesome for their employees. It is the managers' task to establish a good atmosphere within a team (Maciel, 2020, p. 420). Very often they can already tell their subordinates' mood by a video call and understand whether they are doing well (Krehl & Büttgen, 2022, p. 16). Many try to find solutions for the missing interaction on either department or team level. Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy (2021, p. 164) are also recommending for managers to regularly reach out to their teams. Some individuals among the participants are also proactively contacting and engaging with their colleagues to compensate. In the analysis, one notices that not all the efforts are really a true replacement. Literature confirms that engaging employees is much easier in the office than when teleworking (Pattnaik & Jena, 2020, p. 6). As the only mode to work together means being in front of the computer screen, people get tired of the constant use of ICT and are not used to normal physical interactions in the office anymore (Bennett et al., 2021, pp. 330–341). New ways to engage people online have to be found, while it seems the best solution to this problem is going back to the office and reducing telework to a part-time level. For future generations of employees, it was found that less real-life interaction with co-workers is not satisfying either, as their need is rather increasing (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021, p. 165).

4.1.3.2 *Recurring Meetings*

Interestingly, through the non-existence of casual meetings in home office, the number of regular recurring (team) meetings in employees' calendars increased drastically (Participants 1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14). Participants 1 and 2 believe the scheduled meetings allow a more structured talk as topics are gathered steadily until the next time, and give less often an unfinished impression like conversations between doors. They state that they have such arrangements now in the current work contexts with about ten of their most important colleagues. They are also of the opinion that one has to be careful not have too many fixed sessions in different groups and contexts that block the calendar. Participant 6 believes the virtual recurring meetings take place more frequently than they do in the normal office environment. Sometimes even more often than just once a week. For Participants 8, 11 and 14 it is standard for the team to talk and update each other every morning and for Participant 2 and 8 such virtual get-togethers happen on three days a week or whenever it is needed. Participant 11 even has a briefing with

the whole department twice a week and Participant 13 with the greater team once a week. Participant 8's team uses many online tools to support their meetings visually and additionally has a scheduled reflection every two weeks.

For others, some of those meetings cover explicitly informal topics where people are the focus and less the job and the tasks (Participants 6, 8, 13 and 14). Participant 14 is of the opinion that in order to avoid losing each other in the busy teleworking workdays, to have at least one person in a team sending out invitations to catch-up sessions on a regular basis, is incredibly helpful. They observed that people are very appreciative of such meetings but would not initiate it themselves.

The lack of physical encounters during the extensive home office periods have established an entirely new culture of recurring meetings among all participants' teams and departments. While the previously analysed lack in social interaction is bad for performance and other factors, the meeting culture appears to be very healthy in the regard of having more dedicated and frequent time for coordination. "Companies have learned that online meetings can replace in-person transactions" (Ono, 2022, p. 16). The participants generally seem upset by recurring appointments filling their calendars, as it sometimes slows down work until the next meeting etc. making it more time-consuming to clarify small questions. The notion towards appointments has been discussed above. Managers and employees have to regularly ask themselves whether a meeting is really the right mode of contact to take away their rare and valuable time or whether a chat or mail would do just fine (Karl et al., 2021, p. 15). However, with regards to recurring meetings the interviewees give the impression they are glad they found a way to regularly consult their co-workers and boss in fixed timeslots. For some, these solutions even include informal exchange, which is highly appreciated. In this setting, managers also have the possibility to regularly ask their employees how they are doing, also in regards of the online tools (Krehl & Büttgen, 2022, pp. 21–22). It is found true also for projects during the pandemic that such regular virtual meetings are necessary to ensure continuous trust and periodic information transfer, and make adequate cooperation within a team possible in the first place (Lemoine et al., 2021, p. 8). In the end all managers, their teams and departments should find their own appropriate mode to have the best outcome, like the interviewees described their different approaches (Karl et al., 2021, p. 15).

4.1.3.3 *Internal Information*

Very often in companies, employees get to know certain internal information on decisions or news, within informal conversations that happen in the office. Therefore, it becomes obvious that this source of information would have to be replaced in the teleworking setting as well.

Participant 1 says that their company successfully moved all such information to the new intranet right on time. They are happy with this solution as it provides one place, where employees reliably get all needed information.

Participant 4 does not mention an implemented solution but finds it unfortunate that the lack of informal conversation makes it much harder to share and receive internal information. In addition, Participant 5 agrees that communication is suffering, since they are confronted with a lot of news, which they have to filter strongly not being aware of the background of such changes beyond their own department. They say dry written information does not get emotions and feelings across, which is making the company more mechanical. This might also have impacts in the long-term on employees' identification and satisfaction. Participants 8 and 9 share this point of view that "there is definitely a lack when working from home". Participant 8 therefore considers a balance of home office and office hours crucial, as they get a lot out of the time spent in the office. Participant 10 on the other hand is certain they are not at a disadvantage regarding information, when working from home. For Participant 2 it took some adaptation time to switch their communication mode into a written rather than oral format. However, they are happy with how information provision got more professional through the new situation. Participant 3 adds that some teams within their organisation now hold such internal information sessions in a hybrid setup, with on-site employees in a conference room and teleworking colleagues connected virtually.

It is evident that internal information is suffering in home office in companies where a lot of it is usually done in an oral and informal format. Some are able to shift this kind of communication completely to the online world. Sometimes, emotions are lost when information is given only in a written format. As indicated earlier, personnel working from home is easily forgotten to be informed about changes and updates in some companies due to them not being visibly in the office (Grant et al., 2013, pp. 543–544). When they are actually informed, the main question on what information is relevant for teleworking employees has to be clarified. On the one hand, overloading them with information will lead to increased stress and decreased wellbeing (Sparrow, 2000, p. 217). This will negatively impact connectivity since information overload via

quick and easy online tools, creates a certain fatigue as input becomes too much to process, enhancing the perception of being too connected (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, 2012; Suh & Lee, 2017). Also, when receiving too much information, organisational identification can suffer. Specifically within the connectivity paradox identification with the employer has been recognised as a threat due to the increased stress (Fonner & Roloff, 2012, p. 228). Teleworkers will then according to the connectivity paradox disconnect in order to stay more focused (Leonardi et al., 2010, p. 98–99). A study investigating intense telework during COVID-19 times has shown that a general communication overload is caused through ICT. Relating this to internal information, great care has to be taken to not severely influence mental health and quality of life associated with the company itself (Mendonça et al., 2022, p. 18). On the other hand, providing home office personnel too little information will influence their organisational identification and connection to the company (Golden, 2009, p. 244). This depends a lot on the individual and their personality, as well as on the sample in the study. In the pandemic context, it could be assumed that people are tied to their company as it represents stability in uncertain times. Among the employees interviewed for this thesis, both situations have already been indicated by some participants. Some stated they are not aware of certain happenings within the business anymore, while others opined that they have to filter the news drastically.

4.1.4 Connectivity Paradox

4.1.4.1 Connectivity and Availability

All participants feel they are more in demand and that a higher level of availability is expected when working from home. However, what is different is how people perceive this and what their reactions are. Some find it easier to maintain concentration and separation from the created stress, while others are more overbalanced and less structured in their workday. Their diverse associations and views are debated below.

Participant 13 says they definitely experience the connectivity paradox in itself. Getting information as well as exchanging with colleagues is very time consuming and makes it difficult to focus on one task. Therefore, “time has to be divided wisely in order to get everything done” (Participant 13).

Every meeting and even small conversations with colleagues etc. are now a visible bar in the daily schedule, in the format of an online calendar. This means that tasks that do not require a second person or more, are invisible to others. Other things taking time and not being taken

into account are natural breaks and post-processing of meetings etc. When every day is fully booked within an employee's calendar there is no time available for those things. The intensity of connectivity forces people to take themselves back and disconnect, in order to get their actual work done (Participant 1).

Also, Participant 2 sees an increase in the number of messages, due to the fact that more than just one tool is used by companies. They believe this, in addition to all the signals and stimuli, result in feeling overwhelmed at times. They are used to having people coming into their office to ask for something, which is why they do not have the urge to disconnect. For them this means "either equal level of distraction or maybe even less" (Participant 2).

The number of initial calls, then messages and mails for the same question, filling up the mailboxes and taking up a lot of time in replying later is noted by Participant 5 as well. In addition, many of those contain information that is not relevant for them specifically. All this leads to them confirming they experience the connectivity paradox too (Participant 5).

Participant 3 has a completely different standpoint. They see working from home more as a relief from daily stress, as they perceive people physically walking into their office as much more stressful than receiving messages. "The number of mails etc. is also kept at bay when a team colleague is in the office taking over current to dos" (Participant 3).

When working from home it can become difficult to manage both professional and private life at the same time. Sometimes Participant 4 has the need to disconnect, to stop the overflow of incoming information, and be unavailable for once even in the middle of a workday. For them the intensity of connectivity and availability when teleworking is a contradiction, as they perceive it stronger and more demanding but also weaker due to the actual distance. They believe the urge to cut connectivity is quite high on some days (Participant 4).

The shifting boundaries in home office are also challenging for Participant 11. When they are in the office, there is a specific moment where they are done working, while at home, connectivity continues and they work much longer. Overall, this makes for very intense workdays when teleworking frequently. They are allowing themselves room for breaks to compensate permanent availability (Participant 11).

The same applies to Participant 12, as they also see no clear end to the home office day even though they enjoy the possibilities that come with it. They say they somehow want to be available longer for the co-workers but there is a slight feeling that their employer also expects them to be connected. Accordingly, they understand it can become frustrating (Participant 12).

For Participant 14 all this connectivity and availability is perceived “differently depending on the individual day”. In stressful times, they find balancing incoming messages, calls, meetings, getting work done and breaks very demanding. They do not have the urge to disconnect or feel less satisfied with their job. They simply structure a home office day differently than in the office, even though they are doing the exact same job in home office. That way they manage successfully to healthily distance themselves (Participant 14).

Via many different channels, information as well as requests are being brought to teleworkers. Many times, Participant 6 gets integrated too much and this can easily lead to an information overload with some not even relevant for the fulfilment of their part. Luckily, they are able to distance themselves and decide whether they want to reply right away, or read the message later. As discussed earlier, they manage to stay focused in what they are currently doing and not let themselves be distracted. Only later, once they see what they have missed in the meantime, they become stressed (Participant 6).

Likewise, Participant 9 is overstrained from time to time with the many internal communication channels and oversees messages or reads them, but forgets to reply as something else is already holding their attention. They perceive this as much more pleasant when in the office. In the evenings, they struggle to fully switch off and stop replying to new mails (Participant 9).

Participant 10 is very reactive and replies to incoming messages instantly. They do not find it easy to close their laptop for a break, focus on one task, and are very consumed by their mails etc. as time passes. They are well aware of the dangers that come with this constant availability simply being too much. Still, they do not feel pressured yet and do not suffer because of it (Participant 10).

Another interesting point is added by Participant 7 who sees this extreme connectivity and availability not only when teleworking themselves, but also when co-workers are working from home. Therefore, sticking to their timetable and for example not answering calls during their lunch break is very difficult. Since everyone is very busy and hard to contact, it is challenging to deny incoming calls to fit one’s own schedule and eventually having to call back anyway.

They have this issue more frequently when teleworking themselves, where they skip a break or eat in front of their screen (Participant 7).

Finding the balance between getting actual work done and responding to messages etc. is very difficult for Participant 8. They find it tough to remain focused and not open and read mails right away, as they want to be polite. Then they feel like their plan for the day is frequently overruled by just having to react to new incoming mails and therefore become discontented. When being physically in the office, they say this usually does not happen since they can quickly tell their colleague to wait a couple of minutes (Participant 8).

On the one side there are the interviewees stating they do not feel that connectivity is too much for them and causing them stress in home office: Participants 3, 6, 10 and 14. On the other side, there are those saying they experience the connectivity paradox as such and the effects of constant availability in their teleworking everyday life: Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13. That makes about two thirds of them agreeing to connectivity overwhelming them and worsening their satisfaction with their daily work, by increasing the felt pressure.

Participants' experience confirms that during pandemic-induced teleworking, the working style but also the workload, working hours and communication, changed significantly (Xiao et al., 2021, p. 189). The elements leading to too much connectivity for the participants have been analysed in the previous chapters. They all originate in the above topics of many appointments and calls, changed information input, low social interactions and informal exchange, working overtime and blurred boundaries between work and life. Intensified connectivity and availability arise via a chain reaction of these aspects. This seems to be due to the different setup of work. Having everyone frequently working from home, implies that communication has to take place in a digital way. Every small conversation is transferred into the virtual environment, taking a lot more of employees' time than usual exchange in the office and driving up the number of sent and received messages. Meetings take place via (video) calls as well and due to the simplicity of holding these online, the inhibition threshold is lower. When someone cannot be reached via call due to time constraints, as a different mode of contact many different medias are used such as instant messages, mails etc. Sometimes a company even uses more than one channel for such communication. Additionally, the low social interaction and informal exchange in the office is missed heavily by most employees. In order to not lose contact, regular catch-up talks become necessary. This adds up to the usual business meetings meaning a huge

portion of their workday are just appointments and calls. Meanwhile the incoming written messages pile up and going through them and replying consumes a lot of time as well. A lot of information teleworkers receive may not even be relevant for them. Still, they have to look into the subject and filter what is interesting to them and where their time and expertise is needed. All this creates a lot of energy draining and distracting stimuli, partly a waste of timely resources and a full schedule. Without regular breaks between virtual appointments such working style is even more exhausting, while there is little time for tasks requiring no meetings with others making it difficult to get the same amount of work done as before. One should also not forget that meetings themselves require a specific preparation and post-processing time that is invisible in schedules as well (Krehl & Büttgen, 2022, p. 16). The workload but also the perceived need to stay available for colleagues, makes it extremely difficult to finish working on time. This leads to people working longer hours and blurring boundaries between professional and private life. The fact that work takes place within the private space at home is intensifying this effect.

Soon it becomes clear that this has to have a certain impact on wellbeing, job satisfaction, performance, organisational identification, and team cohesion (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Price, 2021). The connectivity paradox where teleworkers feel too connected and distance themselves again, seems like a much smaller issue than the one unfolding with all these aspects at hand. In the pandemic context, dealing with connectivity by simply disconnecting is not an option, as teleworkers and those collaborating with teleworkers, are dependent on communicating with colleagues to successfully complete their tasks.

The participants, who did not specifically say they confirm the connectivity paradox is valid for them, face these issues as well but to a lesser degree. The difference lies in how their company, team, or themselves, address and handle these issues, their position and what they are used to and their personality. When employees are accustomed to regularly being distracted in the office, working from home for sure offers a calm quiet atmosphere to focus and reduces perceived stress via the created distance. Others have it easier to find a suitable structure to their workdays at home when in low season and still experience excessive demand in busier times.

General connectivity and availability of almost all interviewed employees is rather high in home office. The mode of work in home office seems like an unavoidable vicious circle. The concept of human capital 4.0 points out abilities such as emotional intelligence that enable

employees to better handle such stress (Flores et al., 2020; Rezvani et al., 2016). Other research confirms that the turn work has taken during the pandemic is in fact a positive one for the future development of new work arrangements, but the implementation is rather problematic. All described problems make work too dominant in employees' lives and suitable methods have to be found to regain control and steer into the right direction (Manokha, 2020, pp. 284–285).

4.1.4.2 *Coping Mechanisms*

Since employees have been teleworking on a regular basis for more than two years, they already had to learn how to cope with the challenges connectivity and availability are causing them. Some of their strategies might not be entirely new but definitely are more necessary since the intensity of home office increased since March 2020.

For Participants 1, 8, 11 and 13 it is necessary to block periods in their schedule already early in advance to ensure they have time left to focus on getting their actual work done or take breaks. Participant 8's team even blocks their time for two hours once a week together to complete important work. Participant 13 noticed that the higher ranked an employee is within a company the more blocked time they usually have – not because they are always unavailable but to create a hurdle since otherwise, they would drown in messages and calls. Moreover, when booking appointments themselves with their boss, Participant 1 started asking them “whether it is fine for them to book the last slot they have left in a day”. This way they ensure they are not disturbing them by filling up their calendar (Participant 1). Also, Participant 8 thinks respect when sending invites is crucial. In bigger meetings, where not everything is relevant for them, Participant 11 asks to present early on. Like this, the topics interesting to them are discussed and later they can then leave the call to focus on other to dos (Participant 11).

Participant 14 consciously takes time for themselves by stepping outside on their balcony, relaxing while drinking a cup of coffee or going for a run. Sometimes those activities help to gather themselves once more and gain new energy for the next meeting (Participant 14). Another interviewee noticed feeling better when they go for an after work walk in the evenings and have their home office desk in a separate area (Participant 12). Also, Participants 7, 8 and 9 mention putting their laptop and work material into a bag or drawer, or closing the door to their home office in the evening helps them to mentally disconnect. Participant 12 further explains their department does not send out invites to appointments after 4pm or 5pm, to avoid having people work late. When they have to focus or prepare something important, they also block their time in the calendar (Participant 12).

In other teams, working overtime and breaks are monitored via a time recording system. Furthermore, employees are reminded on a monthly basis in specific conventions that they are obliged to do their jobs but do not need to be available or even work on weekends, and that their personal wellbeing is more important (Participant 4). Participant 13's group also has a strong focus on not overdoing it but keeping a healthy approach in mind. Regular exchange regarding how they manage their work and time ensures everyone is heard and coping well (Participant 13). This is also the case in the work team of Participant 6, where co-workers put an emphasis on it not mattering when they do their job, even on weekends. However, they should then compensate another time and take their break another day during the week. Regarding meetings, they encourage an individual approach where every employee can decide on their own how they want to handle them. Some colleagues follow the strategy of scheduling them for unusual times or only 50 minutes instead of 1 full hour to gain breaks in-between. However, Participant 6 personally is "not a big fan of this method" as they believe "in reality meetings will always last longer than originally scheduled and this would not make a difference" (Participant 6). Participant 11 is of a similar opinion that those planned meeting endings are never kept in reality.

Participant 7 does not really have a strategy to deal with too much connectivity, as they are obliged to be available for customers. Participant 10 does not know how to take better care of themselves in these regards in the long-term. In their company, it is not a rarity to have people working on weekends. They often struggle to stop working in the evenings and to fall asleep at night as they want to instantly take care of the matters being brought to them (Participant 10). In addition, Participant 3 says there are no measures in place to prevent too much connectivity. They believe there is quite some learning necessary to deal with this appropriately in the long run (Participant 3). Participant 13 adds that it is about recognising one's own boundaries and stand one's ground to keep a healthy everyday routine in their job.

In the department of Participant 2, employees can freely decide when they want to start working. However, in the evenings after 6pm and weekends they are not contacted or expected to be connected. They sometimes block themselves for calls and messages when they want to focus on a specific task. However, they always need to remind themselves not to forget to do it (Participant 2). Participant 5 has no issues at all to cope with connectivity as they strictly stick to their schedule and finish work in time. They remind themselves "it is just a job and not their full life". That way they can consciously switch off and enjoy their free time (Participant 5). Participant 8 has a similar approach as they fully disconnect in the evenings and take their

time to reply in the next morning at the earliest. During the day, they switch off their notifications to be able to concentrate. They admit a lot of self-discipline is necessary to stick to those measures (Participant 8).

Participant 9 has a hard time to stop working since they receive messages on their phone. Their company does not yet implement a global solution to this well-known issue. Therefore, they make use of the possibility to have their status on “busy” for concentration in home office. Colleagues mostly respect this, and they are usually not disturbed. When the status is on “green”, they often have the feeling “co-workers believe they are bored or waiting to be called” (Participant 9).

Every participant copes differently with the constant connectivity and availability. Some require more measures from a technical perspective, others have to remain self-disciplined, and again others have not found a suitable solution for themselves yet.

The most forward approach many interviewees successfully use is making themselves unavailable by blocking time in their schedule to work with concentration. This is a standard feature in the prevalent calendar software and can be done instantly anytime or alongside planned times. This shows co-workers who want to get in touch a red light with a status saying “busy” and therefore makes them aware that they are about to disturb their colleague. Most participants confirmed that this is respected in their companies and people will not call in such situations unless it is urgent. In general, communicating in order to relate to co-workers’ issues is important when working from distance (Sahlstein & Stafford, 2010, p. 1).

Another possibility is to switch off notifications on the computer and phone. Distancing oneself as indicated in the connectivity paradox, keeping one’s boundaries, and taking a break, improves general wellbeing. Participants enjoy a cup of coffee, chitchat with colleagues online, get out in the fresh air or go for walks. Such methods also help to finish the workday and disconnect. A different procedure a few participants mentioned is putting the laptop away according to the saying out of sight out of mind. Pyöriä (2011, p. 394) also reinforces that just because telework is naturally related to ICT, does not mean they have to be used permanently.

About 35% of surveyed company leaders see a major disadvantage of home office in people not being able to mentally switch off and suffer severe illness like burnouts (Karmasin et al., 2020, p. 11). Some companies check on their employees to make sure they are not working too late by time recording systems integrated in their laptops. Others again try to remind their personnel on a regular basis to clarify expectations and make sure they do take time off and have

breaks even though they are very busy. Being self-disciplined and self-caring enough to implement this is a quality that not all interviewees have but they are all very aware of the importance and try their best. A few participants explained that their teams and managers want to establish a common awareness of the need to have time off and regularly inquire about employees' well-being. Mutual respect is important to make individual coping mechanisms work. Full schedules should not be inflicted to colleagues without them having a say on priorities. Some teams have their own rules where calls and appointments are only set for certain times during the day and not earlier or later. Strategies of booking meetings a specific way to create natural breaks between appointments were discussed as well but are overall not favoured by the participants. They assume such plans will not be kept anyways.

Surprisingly, most interviewees said there is no specific team or companywide rule or recommendation on how to ensure the wellbeing of the workforce regarding connectivity. Without adequate solutions to cope with the high level of connectivity and blurring boundaries, such as a general framework, the new work arrangement could become precarious (Korunka et al., 2020, p. 17). An official guide can ensure uniformity and good cooperation and support employees as well as employers (Bartz & Schwand, 2021, pp. 18–19). A few participants said their company already implements or is working on implementing a set of rules but they are not specifically addressed to connectivity. Bartz (2021, pp. 12–20) recommends in his guideline that a dedicated team to build general rules together with the executive board is most fruitful. The regulations should then be assessed on a regular basis to make sure they are the right ones to support employer and employees in the long-term. Topics that should be included that are relevant for connectivity management are: how to handle electronic schedules, what to enter and how detailed, set clear workday boundaries by informing co-workers, keep regular breaks, establish a communication guideline to maintain courtesy and reduce stress (Bartz, 2021; Bartz & Schwand, 2021). Companies can then implement these guidelines to prevent connectivity from becoming too exhaustive.

4.1.4.3 Employee Coaching

Another possibility to support employees in their home office is to offer coaching sessions in different settings. Participant 10 mentions their company supported them specifically in the beginning of the pandemic when online tools were rather new to most co-workers in the format of tutorials. Participant 2 wishes for more sensitisation and solutions with regards to availability

and focus when teleworking. Participants 4 and 14 talk about their company offering psychological or coaching support with professionals for free when their employees feel they cannot handle stress by themselves anymore and request external help.

They say information campaigns are taking place on a regular basis and that many accept the offer, especially since the pandemic-induced teleworking period began. They also frequently educate themselves in resilience, mental strength, and self-care when teleworking. Their company gives their co-workers the possibility to profit from each other's knowledge in dedicated workshops (Participant 4).

The company includes specific trainings, and also yoga, and other exercises in their development platform. They find it utterly important for employees to have this opportunity since home office puts people in front of challenges that are very new to them. Showing support in this situation also helps the company to keep motivated and loyal employees (Participant 14).

Participants 5 and 7 believe that such coaching would be really beneficial in their company as well. Time management and efficiency in meetings when colleagues are rushing from one appointment to the next, would be a topic of interest to them (Participant 7). Another idea is regular coaching in the teams with their leader, as well as individually, to discuss current issues they are facing in a monitored informal setting. Those topics have no room right now and would need to be addressed to maintain high performance and wellbeing (Participant 5).

One clearly gets the impression that employees really see the need to react to the problems arising with permanent connectivity. Some employers are already addressing this demand and offer their support by providing help via experts, or by giving their employees space to share their experiences. Already existing literature agrees with the participants that training on self-management to distance oneself personally and draw a clear line between private and professional life is crucial (Dolce et al., 2020, p. 17). Employers' interest in coaching their personnel is two-sided, since employees' private relationships directly influence their work relationships within the team and vice versa. That is the reason why managers' establishing good connections within a team is of such high importance (Maciel, 2020, p. 420). When managing a virtual team this is a difficult but essential task requiring modern leadership skills (Offstein et al., 2010, p. 35).

All supporting efforts would be useless in the long run without adapting the company culture and norms on how and when employees are digitally connected (Dolce et al., 2020, p. 17). Psychological support and coaching can be of help whenever "leaders and followers encounter

difficulties in managing the consequences of the toxic components of their relationship” (ibid.). This indicates that both parties have to learn and coach each other on how to deal with the problems, in order to make telework concepts sustainable in the long-term. Successful telework implementation is more than just providing a laptop and internet connection (Medina-Rodriguez et al., 2020, p. 311).

4.2 Future Work Design

Participants were asked what working mode and approach they would prefer and wish for in the future, in view of the precarious situation with connectivity in pandemic-induced telework. All subcodes regarding this topic are analysed altogether below.

Participants 1 and 2 observed within their teams that for them a fair balance of home office and office days works best. On days where “it is simply not necessary to be in the office because I can have a video call with international colleagues from the office or at home and it does not make a difference” (Participant 1). For Participant 2, only staying at home is out of question but going back to the office full time is also not an option. Participant 7 finds a hybrid mode most appealing too since they perceive pure office work after a long teleworking period as energy-draining in a different way than working from home. They believe it would be good for the team and department to have a regular day where everyone is coming to the office. Some meetings could then be held in person and ensure that people stay in touch with one another (Participant 7). Participant 10 prefers the mix of both modes as well since they perceive the opportunity to combine alone time and teamwork time within the office as a positive outcome. Participants 8, 11 and 14 see advantages and disadvantages in both work locations and therefore prefer a mixed approach too. For them it is nice to see colleagues again and to be able to stay in contact. Promoting the attractive flexibility at home and enabling personnel to keep the connection to the company when at the office, is a perfect mix in their eyes (Participant 14). Having a balance between focused time at home, engaging with others at the office, and being kept up to date, is considered best (Participant 8). Participant 5 agrees to this and believes that leaders have now learnt that it is not necessary to have everyone in the office permanently and see an opportunity to save costs, as well as valuable time of employees. Therefore, they do not think everything will go back to how it used to be before the pandemic (Participant 5). In addition, Participant 12 wants a hybrid format but believes that the perception of availability and connectivity when working from home can still be improved from the employer’s perspective.

They feel observed and judged sometimes when taking a break and wish for more autonomy on how to structure their days (Participant 12).

Participant 10 observed that some people cannot work from home since they lack motivation at home. Having to step outside their home and going to the office provides them with a solid routine to start and end the day. They themselves however do not have any issue with teleworking at home and only see advantages (Participant 10). Likewise, Participant 12 says they can easily work every day from home, but it is not their favourite working mode.

Participant 4 is certain that individual approaches where every employee can work to the extent they prefer at home and in the office, would be best. They are convinced that in order to make such a generous concept viable, communication about all parties' expectations and clear guidelines that have to be followed, are important. When everyone can flexibly structure their workdays, they believe benefits are highest for all (Participant 4). Equally, Participant 6 says they "do not believe in any fixed rules because they work for a certain part and then they don't work again for another" regarding location and timing. Participant 5 joins this notion as they feel more commitment from the company is necessary, to accept people working at times where it suits their wellbeing best. That way, work and private life can be kept in a better balance, reduces stress, and boosts motivation, efficiency, and quality (Participant 5). Participant 9 is happy with the flexibility offered by their managers, regarding when and where they can work. Everyone will have to find their own way that works out for them (Participant 9).

Participant 3 does not agree with this and wants everyone to be back to the office more frequently again. They miss their colleagues and do not like it when someone from the team is always missing from the office. They clearly prefer home office only to be on the fringes, but they notice how new entrants are regularly asking about their home office policy, as this seems to be of great relevance in regard to whether an employer is attractive (Participant 3).

Participant 6 believes that after two years of trial period there must be a certain number of best practices that can be promoted within the organisations by individuals. They do not believe in solutions that are established company-wide, since they are convinced "they work out for some people and for some they will not". Therefore, they find it attractive to have solutions offered and every employee can decide for themselves what works for them (Participant 6).

Others agree it is worth investing in good communication, since it is key to maintain the connection to personnel working from home, especially when the social interaction is low. Offering support is crucial to keep motivation levels high and make people feel like they are still a

part of the company. Otherwise, loyalty and connection sinks and can have severe impact on the performance of the business. Leaders should take time to ask themselves what else employees need to work from home apart from technical equipment (Participant 14). Participant 12 mentions besides open communication between co-workers and leaders, employees need to be given a certain level of autonomy to have breaks and take care of themselves. Participant 8 adds that expectations need to be clarified and communicated too. For Participant 9 a clear guideline on availability, including what to expect and respect would be good. This should also set rules on what tool is used for what purpose, to reduce the stress created by multiple channels (Participant 9). The responsibility to maintain a well-established team spirit and wellbeing among subordinates, Participant 5 sees with the management. They believe that the trouble a company is facing when people get seriously sick, is more costly than curating a proper wellbeing policy (Participant 5). In combination, Participant 2 is convinced establishing a good meeting culture regarding connectivity and availability is very important. People need to be aware of the sensitivity of the topic and adequate rules have to be put in place (Participant 2). Participant 7 would prefer having more support in working less hours when at home. They suggest an automatic message popping up, or the laptop disconnecting after a number of hours being permanently connected, to encourage personnel to take regular breaks and to ensure they have the much needed time off (Participant 7). Participant 13 is already working on making meetings shorter, to make room for breaks and other practices, that can be recommended to have a better balance between work and private life. They are sure that support and freedom from the company to have an individual routine, and inclusion of people working from home at the office, is necessary (Participant 13).

Researchers found that those employees who already worked from home before the pandemic have been more satisfied with pandemic-induced telework than those who have not had the experience before and have been compelled to do so (Ono, 2022; Ono & Mori, 2021). The great majority of interviewees were not familiar with working from distance before the pandemic has started. Overall, all participants except one, seemed to be fairly satisfied with the pandemic-induced possibilities and the newly gained flexibility in work arrangements.

All participants favour individual or hybrid approaches. Those that are for hybrid work mode for the future, find two to three days of teleworking per week the appropriate proportion (Participants 2, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 14). This is also confirmed by another study, where the outcome shows that two days per week at home makes most sense to surveyed employers and employees (Ernst & Young, 2020, pp. 10–11). Some others do not state a specific number of days but are

rather for individual solutions, which allow every employee to decide for themselves. This result was also observed for future generations of workers (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021, p. 165). Of course, these preferences are linked to individual personalities and the exact position.

Throughout the interviews' analysis, one gets a clear picture of the relations between connectivity, social interaction, flexibility, and the number of home office days. Figure 10 shows the relation of these factors for all identified work arrangements.

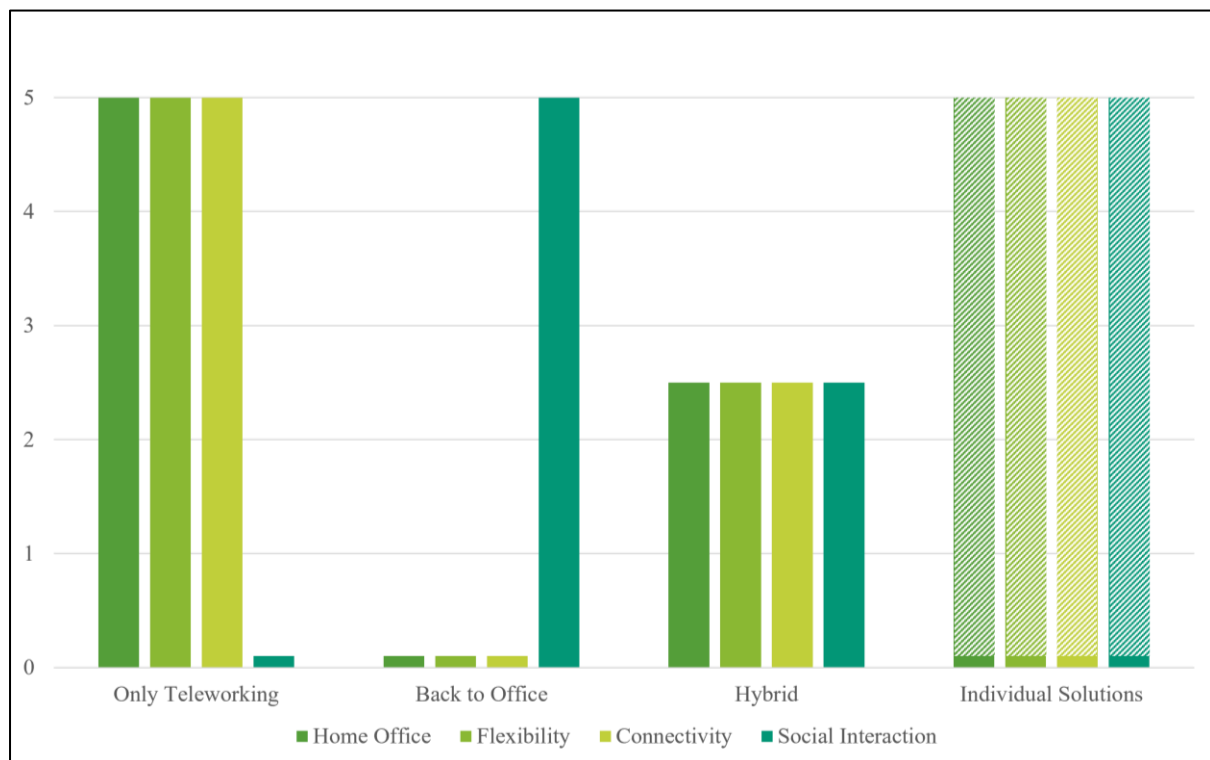


Figure 10 "Future Work Solutions and their Level of Connectivity in Workdays"
Source: Author's graph

The chart takes the number of workdays spent in the respective location as scale. On days where employees are working from home, connectivity and flexibility are mostly higher, while social interaction is low. This is the mode that has been prevailing throughout the lockdowns. Employees have full flexibility but no real-life contact to co-workers, meaning consequently stronger felt virtual connectivity and availability. When working from the office, virtual connectivity and flexibility are lower and social interaction higher. Personnel are socially engaging five days a week but do not have any freedom over their days' structure. This also means a clearer boundary between professional and private life, as interviewees indicated that a clear cut makes switching off mentally, easier for them. In hybrid solutions, the two to three days at

home preferred by participants have been taken as standard. Here all factors are balanced equally since employees get the best of both arrangements. When a company allows personnel to decide individually, the factors can take on any level during each week. Naturally, all perception is individual and the figure just offers a general reference for illustration purposes, which can vary from person to person depending on their employer and position.

What becomes clear is that everyone has been adapting well during this special period but many have suggestions for improvement and quite specific wishes for the future. Social interaction is definitely lacking in telework and therefore none of the participants can imagine only working from home in the future. Also, company leaders see the positive side of home office, regarding employee retention and performance but do not see it as a full-time alternative (Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012, p. 612). Others find it “could be a relevant strategy for the improvement of companies and for the professional growth of people” (Madero Gómez et al., 2020, p. 415). Only one out of fourteen interviewees wants to go back to the office fulltime. The desire and need for a change in connectivity management is gradually crystallising within the statements, while only one interviewee mentions the company is working on improvements specifically in this area already.

5 Results

5.1 Perception of Connectivity

Research questions 1 and 2 address the perception of connectivity for the two different parties of non-HR and HR. It is important to differentiate between the groups as HR employees have a different point of view due to their role within the company intervention (Veloso et al., 2015, p. 14). The special role in the topic at hand becomes also clear in other publications regarding future work, such as in Bartz et al. (2021, pp. 20–60) where HR is substantially involved in establishing new work within a company. Also the concept of human capital 4.0 shows how interconnected HR is in shaping industry 4.0 in a people regard but also how strongly industry 4.0 is developing HRM (Flores et al., 2020, pp. 687–699). The sample at hand also showed clear differences between HR and non-HR participants.

For almost all interviewees teleworking so frequently was new in March 2020, which posed a challenge for all their companies and employees. All participants adapted quite well to the new situation and work in “the new normal” (Pattnaik & Jena, 2020, p. 1) on a daily basis. While

they got used to working from home, the benefits and drawbacks of home office started to show. On the one hand, the high level of flexibility is very much appreciated as it allows them to align their job better with their private life. Social interaction on the other hand is strongly missed when working from home. This, and the distance between co-workers, boost connectivity in the form of availability via ICT. As all interaction, be it formal or informal, shifts to the virtual world, schedules rapidly fill with (recurring) meetings and mailboxes overflow with incoming messages making it hard for employees to focus on their actual work. As a result, every small interaction and alignment takes a lot longer than before. Consequently, work-life balance suffers since it becomes hard for many to draw boundaries and stop working in the evenings and during their time off. They have the feeling they have to be constantly available, while connectivity causes a lot of stress. Ten out of fourteen interviewees agreed they perceive the connectivity paradox in pandemic-induced telework. They feel so overwhelmed by the proximity to the office created via ICT, that they want to disconnect and recreate the distance they actually have from the office and their co-workers (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Leonardi et al., 2010). Six out of ten are HR employees while four are from the non-HR group (Figure 11). This could be attributed to their department being a hub for many processes also linked to telework itself, their role and responsibility from a people perspective, but also different factors like personality can be relevant. They might be more aware of such developments and therefore perceive them stronger. Their service role to others may also stop them from distancing as well as personnel without this duty can.

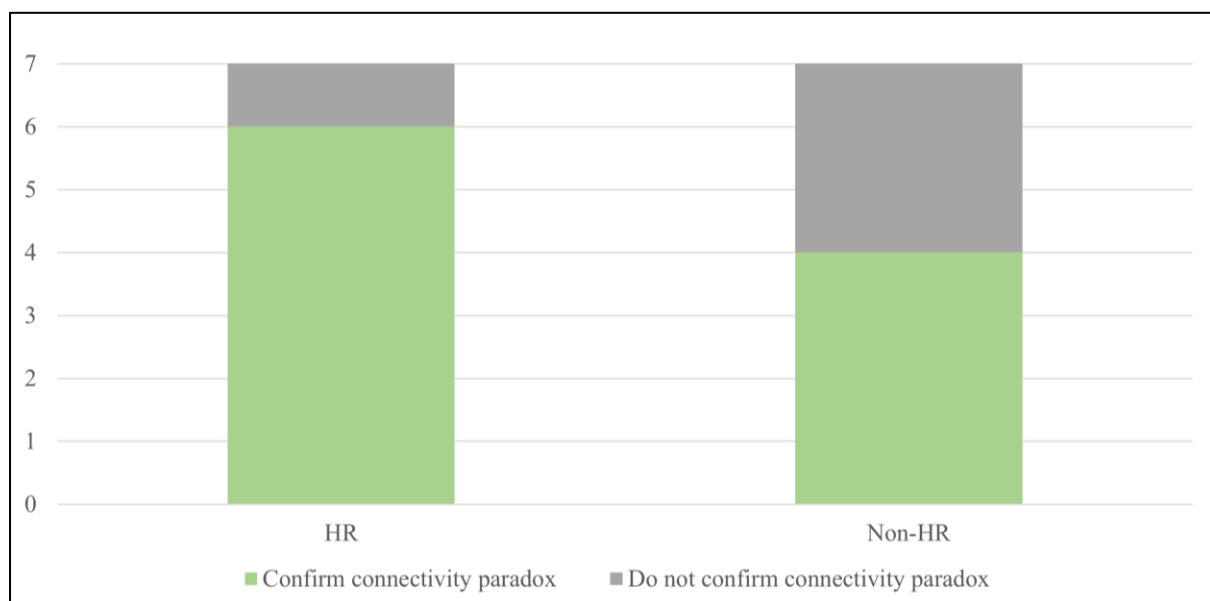


Figure 11 "Perception of the Connectivity Paradox"
Source: Author's graph

While the exact reason for the HR sample to feel that connectivity is too high and want to disconnect more than others is unclear. More than 60% of the non-HR representatives can identify with the connectivity paradox as well. Two of the non-HR people who do perceive themselves as being overwhelmed with connectivity, have in common that they are able to distance themselves mentally quite well and know what helps them to keep their focus and wellbeing. Another one strongly prefers working from the office and therefore tries to do so as often as possible. Consequently, they do not perceive connectivity in home office that severely. The fourth person does not feel bothered at all by working from home a lot as they do not really feel a lack of interaction etc. which increases their overall telework experience positively. Throughout the analysis of the interviews, it becomes clear that the majority of HR employees sees the responsibility of establishing a framework that helps people in home office with connectivity with the organisation on a more global level. Non-HR participants rather search for solutions to implement for themselves individually and their respective team. This could explain why overall they seem to find solutions that work for them faster. Still, all of them notice the need for change especially in regard to appointments, social interaction, the blurring boundaries, and overtime.

5.2 Influence of Connectivity on New Work Design

Many companies recognise the benefits gained with introducing new work arrangements to their workforce since the beginning of the pandemic (Bartz et al., 2021; Carillo et al., 2021; Clancy, 2020). Overall, the research at hand confirms that the connectivity paradox is perceived very strongly by the majority of employees in the pandemic-induced telework situation since March 2020. The companies' international context was not identified to be of great importance for the observed matters at hand, since there was no difference between co-workers within the same country or abroad. However, it might be interesting for future work arrangements after the pandemic.

In the concept of human capital 4.0, which is designing the personnel of industry 4.0, a core element is wellbeing. However, when designing such new home office rules, employers seem to be mostly interested in how many days of home office can be granted to their workforce in order to not lose sight of them. They are ensuring good collaboration by the provision of the necessary tools and software, as suggested by Kaushik and Guleria (2020, p. 11). Foremost, reasons must be higher productivity and more loyalty and job satisfaction to the company, because of gained flexibility in home office and the need for the necessary real-life interaction

within teams and departments in the actual office (Golden, 2009; Kaczmarczyk, 2008; Kaushik & Guleria, 2020; Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2008; Suh & Lee, 2017). The need to create framework conditions for the time when people are in home office is hardly ever an agenda item. Wellbeing in regard to too high connectivity and consequently more stress when working from home is almost never tackled. All interviewed persons except one, confirmed that there is no concept on organisation, department, or team level to improve home office at a global scale in terms of connectivity and stress so far. The change in connectivity is clearly visible in the analysis of the interviews and especially among HR personnel, the effects call for action. So far, the responsibility is with each individual or team leaders who found their own coping mechanisms and are motivated to share them.

Since the advantages of having personnel work from home a couple of days per week still seem to be prevailing for both employees and employers, home office will be for sure part of future work design (Bartz, 2021; Eildér, 2020). For this reason, it is important to find suitable solutions to enhance the experience in regard to connectivity and support employees in restoring control over their availability and a healthier work-life balance at home in the long-run. Then also improving connectivity with colleagues across borders will be of relevance since post-pandemic travel behaviour could change due to the advancements in ICT (Eliasson, 2022, pp. 8–9).

6 Conclusion

Industry 4.0 brings many changes to the way work is designed (Anshari, 2020, pp. 2–7). Flexible work arrangements such as telework allow employees to connect remotely via ICT to the office and work from home. Such a possibility is primarily perceived positively since it among others grants employees more flexibility in structuring their workday and often results in more productivity which is beneficial for the employer (Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012, p. 612). They eventually also come with disadvantages like reduced social interaction with the co-workers and managers at the office (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Grant et al., 2013). Another negative consequence, which builds the centre of this thesis, is the connectivity paradox. It describes teleworkers being so demanded that they feel the physical distance from the office is no longer advantageous for them, distracts them from their actual work and causes additional stress. Followingly, they want to increase the virtual distance again and disconnect at times to be able to focus and get their tasks done (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Leonardi et al., 2010).

During the COVID-19 pandemic companies had to shift to telework wherever possible in order to protect their workforce from an infection through physical distancing. Many who did not have the chance to do so before the outbreak of the virus, started working from home on a regular basis. Teleworking has been discovered as very convenient for various reasons by many companies and will therefore persist even after the pandemic according to forecast statistics (Bartz, 2021; Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

Therefore, drawbacks of home office such as the connectivity paradox have to be analysed in the new context to learn for future work design. In order to find answers to the three research questions evolving around perception of connectivity during the pandemic and learnings for new work design, in-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen participants from Austrian MNEs who are working from home frequently since March 2020. From each company two persons were interviewed, one from the HR department and another one from a non-HR area. The differentiation was made since HR personnel is more involved in the development of the overall organisation from a people perspective and followingly is known to have a different awareness than the ones not working in this field (Veloso et al., 2015, p. 14).

It has been observed that during pandemic-induced home office, social interaction and informal exchange regress even more, as all communication has to take place online. This leads to a higher workload due to many virtual meetings and written mails and messages, as well as longer workdays. Consequently, the work-life balance is suffering as people find it extremely hard to distance themselves. Results show that ten out of the sample confirm they can relate to the connectivity paradox, while six of them are HR and only four are non-HR employees. This might be due to HRM developing the workforce for industry 4.0 and therefore having HR personnel more conscious about changes in the work environment as researched by Flores et al. (2020). Another reason might be their service role and the need to be available for others in their job. Non-HR employees are eventually more focused on themselves and try to solve such problems quicker and more independently. However, even those that say they do not confirm the connectivity paradox for themselves as such, struggle with their new work structure at home. Most people find coping mechanisms, such as distancing themselves mentally, blocking their online calendars for focus time and regular breaks. Even though connectivity negatively influences the home office experience, the gained flexibility is reason enough to make them want to continue working remotely. Most interviewees wish for hybrid or individual arrangements in the future, where neither office nor home office is the only work location but a mixture of the best of both. This was also found by other studies as for example by Price (2021). The

participants' employers all seem eager to push long-term home office implementations for the future. A majority of companies are now introducing concepts with a clear guideline as to what extent their workforce is allowed to work from home. That way, social interaction in the office is possible again but connectivity and availability issues will remain. The drawbacks of home office like the intense connectivity should be improved in the long run. This would be important to establish a better work-life balance resulting in a higher level of wellbeing. Nonetheless, only one company out of the seven in the sample is planning to include a part on wellbeing in home office, in terms of connectivity as has been explained by the respective HR interviewee. Research shows already first guidelines that are steadily improved that could be applied on company level and also work as prevention method for too much connectivity (Bartz, 2021; Bartz & Schwand, 2021). It seems in practice it is not easy to filter suitable solutions, align them with the individual business and accordingly adapt the home office culture. This is for sure also linked to the ad-hoc implementation on such a large scale in March 2020 but no excuse for the long-run. A clear need for solutions in the current home office setting is visible. To ensure the workforce is more motivated and less overworked, it would be good to have more employers tackle these issues on an organisational level. A home office framework should evolve around people and their work experience. More support will eventually also result in increased loyalty and a positive mindset towards the company.

This study is a first exploration of the connectivity paradox in pandemic teleworking. The method used is of qualitative nature since the elements relevant for the paradox had to be identified in the pandemic context and for this purpose employees' own input was crucial. This implied that the sample was smaller than when conducting a survey, due to the scope of this thesis and is therefore not representative of the whole population but an indication. The interviews were conducted after two years of pandemic, which positively gave participants a long trial period in the new work context but might also cause them to feel fatigued in terms of missing social interaction. Also, there is a certain possibility that parts of the interpretation are inevitably subject to bias by the author (Coombes et al., 2009, p. 202). In the setting of interviews, all participants are asked the same questions but their answer can vary according to their actual individual perception. Therefore, no actual statistical information can be drawn from the sample at hand as not all responses can be benchmarked against one another (Hackley, 2019; Johnson & Harris, 2002).

In future research, a larger sample of HR and non-HR participants could be surveyed to verify HR is more affected by connectivity on the base of the relevant elements established in this

thesis. Subsequently, the motives for HR employees to perceive the matter stronger would need to be observed, in order to draw conclusions that can be of use to tackle in practice. A comparison with other countries with different pandemic regulations at that time, such as Sweden could also show learnings that help in developing new work solutions regarding connectivity. Furthermore, a similar survey would be interesting to conduct within a single company leading to practical implications and actions for management to take on solving the connectivity issue. Another option could be to build a cross-departmental focus group, to create a guide for coping with connectivity in that specific company. Later, conducting a follow-up study after a certain period of implementing measures would help in observing changing perception and a possible increase in wellbeing in the long-term (Korunka et al., 2020, p. 23).

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Annex

Annex 1	[Interview Guideline in German]	78
Annex 2	[Code List]	79

Interview Guideline

- 1) Wie empfinden Sie momentan Ihre Arbeit im Pandemiekontext?
- 2) Wie haben Sie im März 2020 den erstmaligen Wechsel auf Homeoffice erlebt?
- 3) Was hat sich seither verändert am von Zuhause aus arbeiten? An Ihrem Arbeiten und für Sie persönlich?
- 4) Inwieweit kann Homeoffice Ihrer Meinung nach den Arbeitsalltag nach der Pandemie erleichtern?
- 5) Wie hat sich der Kontakt bzw. Austausch zwischen Ihren Kolleg*innen und Ihnen seit März 2020 verändert?

Es wurde ein Paradox zu Verbundenheit im Homeoffice aufgestellt. Sie besagt, dass man ab einem gewissen Punkt so viel online/ virtuell ‚verbunden‘ ist, dass es zu viel ist und man seiner tatsächlichen Arbeit kaum mehr nachkommen kann. Und man sich dann zu distanzieren/ offline sein, beginnt, um sich Freiräume zu schaffen. Das heißt man ist nicht physisch in der Arbeit und kann sich dank Technologie verbinden und von Zuhause aus arbeiten. Dann wird genau diese Verbundenheit aber zu viel und man beginnt sich abermals auszuklinken.

- 6) Erleben Sie dieses Paradoxon im Homeoffice im Corona-Kontext? Wie?
- 7) Wie wirkt sich diese permanente Verbundenheit im Homeoffice auf Ihr Wohlbefinden bzw. Privatleben aus?
- 8) Gehen Sie und Ihre Kolleg*innen gegen diese intensive Verbundenheit vor? Wie?
- 9) Wie wünschen Sie sich zukünftige Homeoffice-Implementierungen vor dem Hintergrund des Paradoxons?

Annex 2 **[Code List]**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Home Office during Pandemic	deductive	Perception of telework from home in pandemic
Start in March 2020	deductive	Beginnings of working from home in March 2020
Equipment	inductive	Equipment provided by companies for teleworking
Changes in my Job	deductive	Perceived changes in home office
Home Office Before COVID-19	deductive	Possibility of home office before pandemic
Connectivity & Collaboration	deductive	Connectivity and collaboration in telework
Time Management	deductive	Time management within telework
Appointments	inductive	Experience of appointments in telework
Overtime	inductive	Work hours and times in telework
Focus & Productivity	deductive	Perception of focus and productivity in telework
Commuting & Travelling	inductive	Commuting and travelling times and schedules
Work-Life Balance	deductive	Experiences regarding work-life balance
Privacy & Wellbeing	deductive	Privacy and wellbeing in connectivity regards
Flexibility	deductive	Flexibility when teleworking
Social Interaction & Collaboration	deductive	Social interaction and collaboration in telework
Informal Exchange & Social Interaction	deductive	Changes and experience of social interaction and informal exchange in telework
Virtual Onboarding & Team Building	inductive	Virtual onboarding and team building in telework

Recurring Meetings	inductive	Regular meetings in telework
In-Person Meetings	deductive	Perception of what is better in-person still
Internal Information	deductive	Internal information provision
Connectivity Paradox	deductive	Teleworking connectivity paradox
Connectivity & Availability	deductive	Perception of connectivity and experience of availability
Coping Mechanisms	deductive	Coping mechanisms in connectivity paradox regards
Employee Coaching	inductive	Companies support for coping with connectivity in telework
Social Connectivity	deductive	Social connectivity paradox during COVID-19
Future Work Design	deductive	New work design for the future
Hybrid	deductive	Hybrid working styles favoured
Individual Solutions	deductive	Individual work design solutions preferred
Best Practice	deductive	Link to best practice in research and practice
Support & Communication	inductive	Recommendations for companies to support and inform their employees
More Office than Home Office	deductive	Office stays the preferred work place