

HANNE VESALA

Grounded Transformations

Body, space and creativity
in an increasingly virtual world of work

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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PREFACE

It seems appropriate that my dissertation is coming to an end at the time of the year when winter is coming, and the liminal and festive times of the year's change are approaching – yet another opportunity for transformation. This dissertation process, too, has been transformative for me. There have been ups and downs, and (thoughtful) risks have been taken both scientifically and practically. At times they have paid off, and at others, well, they have led to some extra work. Still, looking back, I would not change anything. As one of the study participants expressed, this has been a mental adventure for me. I am humbled that so many people have stepped up along the journey, offering me their valuable support and encouragement. Without these people I would not be writing these words now. To the following individuals I express my sincere gratitude and respect.

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I have also had the opportunity to act as a member secretary for the Finnish Association of Work Life Research during my doctoral project. The board of the association has been a great multi-professional group to work with and a place to learn about this research field in Finland. I have enjoyed the scholarly as well as the more informal events that we have organised together – so thank you for the opportunity. At the beginning of this research project, I had the opportunity to participate in LabourNet doctoral school. I remember warmly the versatile research projects of the other students and the encouraging atmosphere of the seminars.

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And last but definitely not least, I want to thank my family and friends – you know who you are – for bearing with me through this journey, being my rock in the storm in the difficult times and rejoicing with me when my work took steps forward. You have facilitated my load in so many ways. My thoughts also go to my late father Antti whose tacit knowledge and wisdom about nature were an example for me.

Helsinki, 31.10.2021

Hanne Vesala

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how workplace flexibility is experienced in the daily reality of knowledge work and how it affects work practices, creativity and well-being. The ability to choose where and when to work has become an increasingly prevalent characteristic of knowledge work. It is believed to increase autonomy, productivity and creativity at work. However, flexible working patterns have also been suggested to lead to the blurring of boundaries between work and private life, fragmentation of work and, consequently, intensification of work. This dissertation analyses its topic empirically by studying knowledge workers' short-term collective telework periods in a novel environment: that of rural archipelago. The methodological approach uses both qualitative analysis of interview data and quantitative analysis of longitudinal questionnaire data.

Telework periods were arranged as an experiment during a prior research project. What originally stood out from the experiment was how the study participants oriented themselves to the extraordinary working and living space with affectively rich and experimental ways. This observation solicited this dissertation's phenomenological approach as it focuses on how spatial movement and change are bodily experienced. To elaborate upon these themes, the dissertation utilises Merleau-Ponty's bodily phenomenology and Lefebvre's theory of spatial trialectic, among other theories, in its effort to grasp how lived space affects perception, and how while we use space for our practical ends, the space reflects back on us on an affective level. For the purposes of this dissertation, particularly interesting are spaces that are not definite, clearly designated and rule-bound, as are most office spaces, but spaces that are instead malleable and open to experimentation, as the rural archipelago environment was for the participating knowledge workers. Experiences of such spaces are relevant today as fluid and mobile knowledge work increasingly places workers in contingent and even contradictory spaces.

Changing spaces of work are a challenge for workplace infrastructure, but this dissertation suggests that they are also an existential condition. The archipelago participants oriented to the new and extraordinary work environment with a playful and probing attitude while also engaging in more serious reflection about their existing working patterns and directions of their careers. This dissertation suggests

that creativity at work is connected to a rhythmical movement between spatial expansion and withdrawal. Our perception of the world is grounded in our spatial situatedness and works according to the principle of familiarity. One develops a habitually reciprocal relationship with a familiar environment, but by movement we are able to fight the inertia of habits that narrow down what we are able to perceive and consequently think of.

To delve deeper into an experience of space that does not fall clearly within any socially demarcated categories, the dissertation applies the concept of liminal space. The concept of liminality, originally developed within the field of anthropology, enables to grasp a type of “not” experience: a situation wherein existing social structures are dissolved and cultural frameworks are reopened. This is what happened when knowledge workers moved to conduct their work in an unfamiliar rural environment. Such a situation may be existentially challenging, but the absence of clear social norms and rules also enables the individual to reconnect with their affective, embodied experience and life rhythms as well as the concrete surrounding community. Thus, liminal situation can be highly creative, but it is simultaneously grounded in the experiences of the lived body. This manifested in the archipelago participants’ enhanced ability to calmly concentrate on what they were doing at a given moment and distance themselves from the less urgent external demands that dictated their work and life rhythms in the daily environment to a significant degree. The archipelago experiment reduced the experiences of fragmentation of work and enabled participants to own their time. Instead of living sequences of the fragmented present, the participants were directed towards a more authentic experience of time where the present moment was connected with past life experiences and future dreams. Some participants were even able to affectively relive some memorable key periods of their personal pasts which produced a happy sensation of continuity of life and career. As a sense of fragmentation and a personal loss of control over the whole of any work process seem to increasingly dominate knowledge work, opportunities to affectively own time in a way that illuminates the direction of one’s life course and career can be highly therapeutic and also transformative. In at least one case, the experiences during the short archipelago period facilitated a decision on a significant career change.

The liminality of the archipelago experiment affectively overlapped with the atmospheres of the structurally embedded everyday spaces that served as a background against which the liminal archipelago space was compared by the participants. The strength of affective sensations during the archipelago experiment was due to this extensive contrast of spaces. This dissertation suggests that mobile

knowledge work may produce experiences of collisions between life-worlds that are key to a transformative liminal experience. Thus, to reach such a liminal experience, the external qualities of any given space taken in isolation (i.e., their style or beauty) may not be of primary importance. Rather, the contrast between different spaces as an experience of a liminal overlap between atmospheres is. A rural and natural space is the ultimate contrast to urban environments wherein communication networks are condensed but physical space is often scarce and competed over. An experience of the contrast between different spaces enables one to reach a perspective above the routinized mental frameworks, a perspective which has potential to initiate creative transformation.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee, kuinka työn paikan joustot koetaan tietotyön konkreettisesti arjessa ja kuinka ne vaikuttavat työn käytäntöihin, luovuuteen ja hyvinvointiin. Mahdollisuus vaikuttaa työnteon aikaan ja paikkaan on osa yhä useamman tietotyöläisen arkea. Paikan ja ajan joustojen uskotaan lisäävän autonomiaa, tuottavuutta ja luovuutta työssä. Kuitenkin joustavien työn käytäntöjen on nähty myös olevan yhteydessä työn rajojen hämärtymiseen, työn sirpaloitumiseen ja intensivoitumiseen.

Väitöskirjan tutkimustehtävään paneudutaan empiirisesti monimenetelmäisesti. Väitöstyössä tarkastellaan tietotyöläisten kollegiaalisia, lyhytaikaisia etätöyjaksoja heille uudessa saariston maaseutumaisessa ympäristössä, ja työntekijöiden kokemuksia analysoidaan laadullisesti haastatteluaineiston sekä määrällisesti pitkäaikaiskyselyaineiston avulla. Väitöskirja sisältää neljä osajulkaisua ja tiivistelmäosion.

Etätöyjaksot järjestettiin kokeiluna aiemman tutkimusprojektin aikana. Jo tässä vaiheessa oli merkillepantavaa, kuinka tutkittavat ottivat epätyypillisen työ- ja elinympäristön omakseen affektiivisten kokemusten johdattamana ja luovasti kokeillen. Tämä havainto lopulta sai minut valitsemaan fenomenologisen lähestymistavan tutkimuskohteeseeni ja keskittymään erityisesti siihen, kuinka liike tilojen ja paikkojen välillä koetaan kehollisesti. Hyödynnän erityisesti Merleau-Pontyn kehollista fenomenologiaa sekä Lefebvren tilan teoriaa, muiden muassa, kehittäessäni teoriaa siitä, miten tiloja käyttäessämme ne heijastavat elettyä kokemustamme affektiivisella tasolla meille takaisin. Tilan ja toimijan suhde on siis vastavuoroinen. Väitöstutkimukseni kannalta erityisen kiinnostavia ovat tilat, jotka eivät ole selvärajaisia, ohjeistettuja ja vakiintuneita, kuten toimistotilat usein ovat, vaan muotoiltavat ja avoimet tilat. Kokemukset tällaisista tiloista ovat relevantteja siksi, että tietotyössä liikutaan yhä enemmän erilaisten tilojen välillä, jolloin tilakokemusta luonnehtiikin usein hahmottomuus, epävarmuus ja kehkeytyminen.

Työn muuttuvat tilat ovat haaste työpaikkojen infrastruktuurille, mutta väitän tässä tutkimuksessa, että ne ovat myös eksistentiaalinen olosuhde. Saariston etätöykokeilijat suhtautuivat uuteen ja erikoislaatuiseen työympäristöönsä leikkimielisesti ja kokeillen, mutta työskentelyjakso sai heidät myös mietiskelemään

vakavammin omia työnteon tapojaan, suhtautumistaan työhön ja uransa kulkua. Tässä väitöstyössä ehdotankin, että luovuus työssä kytkeytyy tilallisen liikkumisen ja vetäytymisen rytmiseen vaihteluun. Havaintomme perustuvat konkreettiseen asemoitumiseemme tilassa ja toimivat tuttuuden pohjalta. Kehitämme habituaalisia toimintatapoja ja käytäntöjä tutussa ympäristössä, mutta liikkeen tuoma muutos auttaa rikkomaan jäykistyneitä rutiineja. Tämä on tärkeää, sillä tapojen pysähtyneisyys rajoittaa kykyämme havainnoida maailmaa.

Tarkastellakseni syvemmin kokemusta sellaisesta tilasta, joka ei selkeästi sijoitu tavanomaisiin sosiaalisiin kategorioihin, hyödynnän väitöstyössä liminaalin tilan käsitettä. Liminaalin käsite kehitettiin alun perin antropologian piirissä, ja se jäsentää “olemattomuuden” kokemusta: tilannetta, jossa vallitsevat sosiaaliset rakenteet menettävät merkitystään, ja tila uusien merkitysten luomiselle aukeaa. Tällainen tila avautui saariston etätyöläisille tavanomaisesta poikkeavassa työympäristössä. Totutun sosiaalisen viitekehysten hämärtyminen voi olla henkisesti haastavaa, mutta liminaalissa tilassa yhteys omaan affektiiviseen kokemukseen, kehon rytmeihin ja konkreettiseen ympärillä olevaan yhteisöön korostuu. Liminaali tila on tyypillisesti luova, koska yhteiset käytännöt joudutaan kehittämään alusta uudestaan, mutta tämä voidaan tehdä kehollisten ja yhteisön elettyjen rytmien pohjalta. Tällainen rytmien kehollinen uudelleen jäsentyminen näkyi tässä tutkimuksessa etätyöläisten kokemuksena parantuneesta keskittymiskyvystä saaristossa sekä kyynä irrottautua vähemmän tarpeellisista ulkoisista sidoksista, jotka määrittivät arjessa työn ja muun elämän rytmejä merkittävällä tavalla. Saaristokokeilu vähensi kokemuksia työn pirstaloitumisesta. Sen sijaan, että eletty aika olisi kaventunut erillisten, toisiaan seuraavien nykymomenttien virraksi, mikä on kiireen kokemukselle ominaista, saaristossa sekä menneisyyden merkittävät kokemukset että tulevaisuuden haaveet olivat läsnä, lomittuivat ja peiloutuivat elettyyn kokemukseen. Tämä kokemus lähestyi Heideggerin autenttisen ajan kuvausta. Jotkut kokeilijat jopa ikään kuin elivät uudelleen jotakin heille tärkeää varhaisemman (työ)elämän kokemusta. Tietoistuvassa työssä, jossa monisidoksisuus ja prosessien pirstoutuminen aiheuttavat hallinnan tunteen menetystä työn kokonaisuudesta, voi autenttisilla ajan kokemuksilla olla uraa selkeyttävää ja transformatiivista potentiaalia. Ainakin yhden kokeilijan tapauksessa tällaiset kokemukset saaristossa johtivat päätökseen merkittävästä uramuutoksesta.

Saaristokokeilussa affektiivisesti intensiivinen liminaali kokemus lomittui rakenteista riippuvaisemman arkikokemuksen kanssa, jota vasten saariston erikoislaatuista liminaalia tilaa verrattiin. Affektiivisten kokemusten voimakkuus ja hätkähdyttävyyden pohjautui näiden rinnakkaisten viitekehysten suureen kontrastiin.

Tässä väitöskirjassa ehdotankin, että liikkuva tietotyö voi tuottaa eri elämismaailmojen törmäyksiä, mitkä toimivat sytykkeinä luoville liminaaleille kokemuksille. Liminaalin prosessin synnyttämisessä tilan ulkoiset piirteet, kuten tyyli tai esteettisyys eivät olekaan avainasemassa, vaan oleellista on erilaisten tilojen välille syntyvä kontrasti: ilmapiirien lomittumisesta syntyvä päällekkäisyyden kokemus. Maaseutumainen ja vihreä tila on ilmeinen kontrasti urbaaneille ympäristöille, joissa vuorovaikutuksen verkostot tiivistyvät mutta fyysinen tila on usein rajattua ja kilpailtua. Kokemus rinnakkaisten ja lomittuvien tilojen kontrastista auttaa ylittämään rutiininomaiset ajattelutavat. Tämä tuottaa liminaalin näkökulman, jolla on luovaa ja kriittistä potentiaalia.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	17
2	Autonomy, telework, and the intensification of work	26
3	Research methodology	33
3.1	The research process	33
3.2	Telework locations in the rural Baltic Sea archipelago	36
3.3	Empirical material and methods of each article	36
3.4	Ethical considerations	41
4	The onto-epistemological background	42
4.1	Non-representational perspectives on a working life of blurred boundaries	42
4.2	The philosophical underpinnings of this thesis	46
5	Practicing body and meaningfulness of work.....	51
5.1	Locating the body in work practices.....	51
5.2	On affects and atmospheres	57
5.3	Affective technologies/artifacts and permanent liminality.....	64
6	Work unbounded by space	72
6.1	Finding shelter on an open ground.....	72
6.2	The possibility of a lived and layered workspace	80
6.3	Liminal space	89
7	Competing rhythms of work	95
7.1	The interplay of linear and cyclical time	95
7.2	The anxiety of losing rhythm	106
7.3	The active-passive rhythm of engagement	113
8	Three lenses on creativity at work.....	119
8.1	Psychological perspective	119
8.2	Practice-based view on creativity	123
8.3	Liminal creativity.....	125

9	Contributions	132
9.1	Findings in a nutshell.....	132
9.2	Theoretical contributions.....	133
9.2.1	Body as a condition for practice	133
9.2.2	Workspace for the lived body	134
9.2.3	Affective-rhythmical body at the centre of creative process.....	137
9.2.4	Liminal experience as a reset to habitualised strain	138
9.3	Practical contributions.....	140
9.4	Limits of the study and further research	142
10	Epilogue: Corona pandemic as a liminal phenomenon	143
	References	145
	Appendix A.....	162

List of Tables

Table 1.	Summary of the results of the four articles of this dissertation.....	23
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- Publication I Vesala, H., & Tuomivaara, S. (2015). Slowing work down by teleworking periodically in rural settings? *Personnel Review*, 44(4), 511–528. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-07-2013-0116>
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- Publication III Vesala, H., & Tuomivaara, S. (2019). A temporary liminal space counteracting the permanent ‘in between’ in working life. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 9(1), 19–38. <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v9i1.113084>
- Publication IV Vesala, H., & Tuomivaara, S. (2019). Mobile work, space and processes of transition. In O. B. Jensen, C. Lassen & I. S. Gøtzsche Lange (Eds.), *Material mobilities* (pp. 223–239). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429198496>

1 INTRODUCTION

The world of work is changing. Technological advancements have enabled new ways of arranging working life that grant workers new levels of autonomy as to where and when they conduct their work. Flexible work arrangements have developed in parallel with an increasing reliance on individual and team autonomy. Growing numbers of people no longer have their own “fixed” physical places in the office but can spread out within and outside their employers’ facilities according to their own convenience.

As requirements for physical presence have decreased, the number of virtual “places” where participation is expected or strongly encouraged has increased. These are places that do not empty out towards 5 p.m. but instead seem to constantly await our return. Emails that expect our response hold our consciences captive until we have produced the required answer. And as if emails – freighted as they are with normative expectations of rapid responses – were not effective enough, various forms of even easier and more fluid communication have been developed, using platforms that construct anything other than an instant response as counterintuitive and clumsy. When we are unable to be available on these different channels for reasons related to the limits of physical existence, the avatars and social media accounts we have created convey the solidity of our virtual existence, reassuring onlookers that we are people who give thought and care to these fabricated proxies of ourselves and will be back shortly.

As regards workspace, it has been suggested that we can no longer comprehend work taking place in one single space at a single time. Where we are physically present, we may be mentally or emotionally absent (Koslowski et al., 2019). The diverse platforms and profiles that require our input to stay “alive” remain in the back of our minds even when we are oriented towards other things (e.g., Gregg, 2011). Although virtual and physical life may seem like two different forms of existence, virtual worlds have also become part of our embodied selves as we check and switch between them, become affected, and type our contributions to various channels in an automatic manner. Mobile devices have become like extensions of our bodies, as well as personally tailored identity markers. Navigating between the

timeless and spaceless reality of the virtual world and that of the “real” one, where our existence is bound by the body and the concrete environment, we can be said to live in a constant “in-between” state.

The limitlessness and fluidity of the virtual world seem to have also found their way into the structures of working life. Extremely intensive expert work may produce a sensation of being on a “fast moving train” from which the supposedly separate areas of “work” and “life” have become blurred to vision (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). Researchers have identified an increasing number of employee groups that operate in obscure roles at the margins of formal organisation, such as those involved in post-bureaucratic innovation communities (Swan et al., 2016) and inter-organisational networks (Ellis & Ybema, 2010), as well as temporary employees (Tempest & Starkey, 2004), consultants (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003), independent workers (Petriglieri et al., 2019), and those on limbo career tracks (Bamber et al., 2017). These people may have difficulty identifying their place and direction in working life. It has been claimed that “in-between” experiences in working life are becoming increasingly the norm rather than an exception (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016); if this is the case, it reflects the more general process of the modern world becoming one of permanent liminality (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015; Szakolczai, 2000; Thomassen, 2014).

Liminality – a state of being cast outside of the social structures of society while in a process of transformation to ready oneself for a new social role – was first identified within the discipline of anthropology, in studies of premodern rites of transition (van Gennep, 1909/1960). The premodern societies studied generally had stable places and roles within their societal structure for different groups and events (Stenner, 2018, pp. 179–181; van Gennep, 1909/1960). Periods of instability were treated as aberrations from normality. Communities would seek to culturally deal with them by means of rituals which Turner (1980) has characterised as dramatic social events that integrated the exciting situation into familiar cultural mythology. Although liminal rites were sequenced into distinct preliminal, liminal, and postliminal phases, they always involved an element of unpredictability; they were the realm of “wish, desire, possibility, or hypothesis” (Turner, 1980, p. 163).

Although liminality was seen to a large degree as being about processing cultural meanings, liminal situations were also bodily and affectively charged. Many rites, particularly those of initiation, involved a reversal of norms, a heeding of emotions, and even dangerous activities (Thomassen, 2014; Turner, 1974a, 1974b). These rites were meant to deconstruct and reconstruct an identity. Liminal initiands were supposed to reach a deep personal understanding of the cosmological beliefs of their

community through their own lived experience (Turner, 1974b) – not within the boundaries of structural order, but rather in the sense of “infinite ‘antistructural’ depth” (Turner, 1980, p. 163). To increase the effectiveness of such rites, their liminal components were typically carried out outside the everyday, dominant spaces of the communities (Thomassen, 2014).

Premodern liminal rites were thus about transformation, and the rites were completed by the re-incorporation of the individual into the normative structure of society. By contrast, in our modern societies intensive affects and experiences are sought for their own sake because they offer an escape from everyday dullness (Hjorth & Pelzer, 2007). These experiences may be devoid of any communal structuring and may not have a clear beginning or end. Today, it is increasingly the psychological state of heeded emotions and affects that one is after as regards liminality (Thomassen, 2014), and consumer culture offers ever more ways to reach these affective heights. Workplaces are not immune to this development. Organisational spaces and artifacts are increasingly aestheticised (Borch, 2010; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Daskalaki et al., 2008; Pallasmaa, 2005). At the same time, employees are expected to project an uplifting, social spirit in any interactions with colleagues or clients, and to increase their awareness of their appearance. The value of products is being increasingly dissociated from their material, tangible properties to instead be attached to the circulating images and cultural meanings of the consumer communities that surround them. Employees have become mediators of this holistic consumer experience, and thus need to embody it in their outlook and behaviour, putting in the proper emotional and aesthetic labour (Fleming, 2014; Land & Taylor, 2010). Work is no longer merely a rational, utilitarian activity of striving towards predefined goals (Schütz, 1945), but is instead approaching the liminal drama as an affectively heeding experience in which some kind of transgression of boundaries – or as innovation literature puts it, properly disruptive influence – is expected to take place for the experience to be complete.

Stenner (2018) claims that liminality may be a definitive aspect of human nature: we constantly seek to outdo ourselves for reasons of development and self-betterment (p. 7). In pre-modern societies, turning points in societal or natural cycles were dealt with by means of rites that used this affective, “introverted creation” (p. 185) and reflection inherent to liminality to come to terms with the unnerving change. In premodern society, the purpose of liminality was to manage chaos in the external world with an order originating from inside the individual and the community (Thomassen, 2014, p. 118). Today, this very human process of embodied and creative balance-seeking appears to be shattered. Affective heeding and escape

from normative order do not necessarily lead to personal growth, and may also be related to addictive habits, with intensive work being one way to arrive at such a transgression (Elidrissi & Courpasson, 2020; Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015; Michel, 2011). Some commentators have noted that, in working life, this intensity sometimes seems to be fabricated by an insistence on substitute activities, such as redundant bureaucracy and reporting (Spicer, 2018) or endless data-gathering (Schwarzkopf, 2020). All in all, modern liminality looks increasingly like an affective potlatch that has become an end in itself instead of a means of supporting a community by providing a release channel for its pressures. It is within this contradiction of liminality that this thesis is situated.

The work environment can also become a site of transgression. Transparent and open glass palaces and “creative workplaces” (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; De Paoli et al., 2019) aim to look unconventional, produce a wow effect, and convey an impression of a community that has no limits or hierarchies, so that employees can also release themselves from unnecessary reservations and express themselves in a more unbounded manner. However, even in such an environment, the prevailing corporate culture and brand are themselves limits that employees are “free” to follow.

Whether such trendy premises are indeed as transgressive and creative as they are promoted to be is open to question. In contrast, D’Adderio (2011) has discussed how the artifacts of the workplace, whether physical or cognitive (such as software, codes of conduct, or rules of thumb), solicit a behaviour that is the most feasible and of least resistance in this context. This materiality of space thus tends to settle the reproduction of one’s subject position (Hultin & Introna, 2019). These views are concordant with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s bodily phenomenology (1945/2012), which observes how one’s perception is dependent on how one is, or has been, situated in the physical world. We relate to the surrounding material world by means of the principle of familiarity: we seek to reconstruct the world in our perception in a way that makes sense to us so that we can act in and on the world (see also Heidegger, 1927/1962). Our uses of space thus tend to become patterned and, in this sense, conservative. Our constructed facilities, no matter how innovative they may be, are nonetheless also places of shelter in one way or another. This is visible in how users of hot desks in an open office setting seek to create a form of shelter by occupying and domesticating particular desks (e.g., with their personal items) (Elsbach, 2003; Hirst, 2011). Another example can be seen in the case of workers in hairdressing salons, who created their own informal shelters in the less occupied, leftover spaces of their employer to escape the emotionally consuming space of the

salon where their main work took place (Shortt, 2015). While these informal, “vagabond” spaces were at first experienced as liminal and transgressive, workers became accustomed to them as part of the social map of the workplace, thus causing them to lose their “radical” character. In short, we produce spatial habits of action that gradually become so self-evident that we lose awareness of them, with materiality conditioning and thus participating in this habit creation (Brown & Reavey, 2018; D'Adderio, 2011; Elsbach, 2003; Hirst, 2011; Hultin & Introna, 2019).

A central focus of this thesis is those occasions when spatial habits become disrupted. The case study contained in this thesis looks at how knowledge workers who underwent a change of environment when they travelled to work in a rural archipelago for a short period of time experienced such a spatial disruption and how they, as a consequence, reconstructed their working and living patterns. This thesis is phenomenologically inspired, but is not only interested in subjective experience, which is a common misunderstanding concerning phenomenological projects – according to Zahavi (2020), phenomenology is just as interested in the world implied in this subjective experience. This thesis focuses on the living dynamic between the lived, habitual body and its world. The aim is to examine how movement in space is experienced, and in what ways this experience can become transformative to a person in a working life context.

This thesis seeks to illuminate how the lived experience in habitual social spaces is tied to spatial norms and practices (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), but, equally, how these habitual spatial relations can be broken in a novel foreign space and how creative such an experience can be. In the archipelago, new constellations of situated practices needed to be rebuilt from square one. This took place by means of listening to bodily and affective experiences, curiosity, experimenting with spaces, and engaging in communal routine creation. In this process, embodied and affective sensibilities were awakened. However, this “place-making” was not merely a practical exercise. In this study I also found an existential dimension: the way one uses space is rooted in how one comprehends one’s place in working life. The changes initiated by the archipelago period were contrasted with the more wide-reaching rhythmic cycles of everyday working and domestic life patterns of the individuals (see Lefebvre, 1992/2004). Disruption of normal spatial habits led to the participants questioning their normal work patterns, career, and lifestyle. A major existential concern was not prompted in all cases, but there were several cases in which the archipelago period exposed a need for a change in either career direction or lifestyle. Thus, the everyday conditions of the individuals are important to this thesis in addition to the period in the archipelago. Just as a short-term period managed to jolt

these background structures, this thesis uses this outcome as a prompt to discuss more generally what kind of insights (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2021) the archipelago case can provide concerning body, space, and creativity in our increasingly virtual landscapes of work.

The argumentation of this thesis moves along the lines of phenomenological and practice theoretical vocabulary, particularly when examining the embodied spatial experience, but it also views the archipelago work experience as a concretion of liminality, which connects an extraordinary and embodied experience to cultural meaning (Stenner, 2018). In a world where everyday lives are becoming increasingly infiltrated by liminality, but predominantly in the partial sense described earlier, this liminal period resembled more the liminal rites of pre-modern societies: the period was temporally determined, involving a clear beginning and end, and it was a communal experience. While, in the liminal space of the archipelago, social order was created from within the situated community, the ways the experimenters described their normal everyday working patterns in comparison to the situated one depicted a reality that was paradoxically more chaotic and unbounded. As the liminal period of the archipelago became a social experience in an embodied sense, with a collective forming their own situated rhythm, by comparison some of the everyday lives participants described started to resemble a state of limitless, relatively lonely, and constant floating in between (see also Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019; Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). Two forms of liminality thus emerged from the analysis.

Establishing the extent to which the liminal period of the archipelago produced permanent changes in the participants' working lives is beyond the scope of this thesis. As working lives are increasingly characterised by change instead of stability anyway, asking this question may not be particularly valuable. Instead, by focusing on the dynamic between the lived body and its world, this thesis seeks to illuminate the role of affective excitement and restlessness in everyday work performance, how this may become a source of strain, and how workers may be relieved from this agitation by temporary, "old-fashioned" liminal experiences. Such experiences can produce a rhythmical reset and a communal experience that may paradoxically assist in recreating the meaning and rhythmical stability missing in what is supposed to be the more "structured" life. Many of the more disruptive elements of our intensive working lives are felt at the level of the lived body, such as in the form of sleep disorders and negative feelings. This thesis seeks to understand how these contradictions might be better understood and resolved by taking (the limits of) the body and its spatial situatedness into account.

The more precise research questions of this thesis are as follows:

1. Did there emerge changes in the well-being at work of participants during the archipelago period, and were the changes sustained after the period? (Article 1)
2. How was the novel environment experienced by the participants? How did it affect work practices and results? (Article 2)
3. How did individual career situations and backgrounds shape the archipelago experience? Did working and living in this new environment affect how the participants viewed their everyday environments and lives? (Article 3)
4. Did the transition to a calm rural environment affect the participants' sense of time? What kind of temporal experiences did the period evoke? (Article 4, also 2 and 3)

This dissertation consists of four articles and a summary. The main findings of the articles are presented in the table below. The articles will later be referred in the text by their number, such as “Article 1”.

Table 1. Summary of the results of the four articles of this dissertation	
Article name and number	Main findings
Slowing work down by teleworking periodically in rural settings?	Repeated measures variance analysis showed a decrease in the following measures of psychosocial experience: time pressure, interruptions, negative feelings at work, stress, and how mentally exhausting work was perceived to be. There was also an increase in work satisfaction by the end of the archipelago period. Some of these effects were sustained after the period, but tentative findings suggested that this may have depended on work role and status.
Experimenting with work practices in liminal space: A working period in a rural archipelago	The stay in the archipelago led to the creation of situated practices that emerged as an interplay of aesthetic and affective experiences, reflective experimentation, and sensitive rhythmic variations of activity. The liminal situation also solicited community building, ideation, and critical reflection on work and careers.

<p>A temporary liminal space counteracting the permanent “in between” in working life</p>	<p>The period illuminated the everyday lives of the examined individuals as liminal, but in the sense of liminality’s modern variant: a permanent, non-communal in-between. This article identifies independent multi-role work that relies on ICT as a possible precursor for such a state. The temporary liminal space brought a relief to fragmented work experiences by bringing clarity to work rhythms and increasing awareness of needs and dreams concerning work and career.</p>
<p>Mobile work, space and processes of transition</p>	<p>This article focuses on the experience of time, which changed in the archipelago from a state of scatteredness and perceived pressure to one of calmness, concentration, and reflective awareness of one’s life in its continuity. The article interprets this experience of time through a Heideggerian lens as a transformation from inauthentic, fragmented temporality towards authentic temporality which finally owns lived time in its full potentiality.</p>

This summary proceeds as follows. First, I examine the developments in contemporary working life that form the background to the topic of this thesis: the rise of work autonomy and telework, and their contradictory consequences. Next, the case, empirical material, and methods of the thesis are presented. This is followed by an onto-epistemological contextualisation of this thesis that shows how it is situated among non-representational perspectives to work and organisation, and how it draws on the phenomenological philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. The next four chapters, each of which contains three sub-chapters, elaborate on the findings of the four articles from different theoretical perspectives concerning the interaction between the lived body and the world. The first of these chapters examines the interplay between practising body, embodied affects, and our increasingly virtual communication landscapes. The second chapter draws on Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) spatial terminology and particularly his idea of lived space. This chapter examines modern office space and explores ways to make workspaces more lived, finally using the liminal archipelago space as a case example. The third chapter examines the rhythmical bases of work and lives. It compares linear, clock-based time with bodily and cyclical rhythm, and how the two are applied in working life though not necessarily in a consensual manner; this is followed by a discussion of the distressing experience of a rhythmical “free fall” as this occurs within the liminal modern experience. This chapter ends by examining the rhythmical and embodied active-passive dynamics of engaged work activity. The fourth and last of

these chapters examines and compares three distinct perspectives on creativity: psychological, practice-based, and liminal. I end this summary by presenting the theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis, reflecting on the limits of this study and further research, and providing a quick glance on the coronavirus from the perspective of this thesis.

2 AUTONOMY, TELEWORK, AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF WORK

The arrival of the era of knowledge work was accompanied by plenty of optimistic predictions regarding how working life would develop. The main locus of production was supposed to shift away from the monotonous labour of the production line into the minds of workers. This would require more refined skills, motivation, creativity, and teamwork from employees. In addition, it was assumed that the status of employees would rise, and that organisations would flatten their hierarchies and begin to treat their employees in more equal terms (Adler & Heckscher, 2006). The development of technology would also break existing boundaries of time and space, allowing employees to find comfortable work environments practically anywhere (Huws, 1991). The very human desire for autonomy would increasingly be catered for under the new status quo of flexible, interconnected but independent working practices.

We have indeed witnessed all these changes in the last couple of decades, but they have arrived with contradictory consequences. There have been accounts of intensified work effort in the whole Western world (Green, 2006; Green et al., 2013). Green (2006) found that this experience of intensification is not necessarily explained by the amount working hours, because these have simultaneously declined or remained roughly the same. Rather, one should look at the radical change to the nature of work itself. Work autonomy and personal discretion may have increased, but so has technological monitoring of work (Green, 2006). Alongside the increase in the importance of skills, the individual qualities of employees are now assessed in increasingly fine detail, and competition has become more intense and personally demanding (Julkunen, 2008). A sense of insecurity has arisen, one that is augmented by the accelerated pace of organisational change that has taken place particularly in the Nordic context (Eurofound, 2015). There is a sense of whole professions and their associated identities continuously changing, emerging, and disappearing.

In the Nordic context, it has been assumed that the characteristics of the labour regime and the relatively high level of employee protection buffer the general sense of increasing insecurity (Oinas et al., 2012). However, there are disturbing signs of work intensification in Finland. Mental disorders were the main reason for sickness

allowance for employees under the age of 45 in 2019 (Kela, 2020). In her thesis about home-based telework in Finland, Ojala (2014) found that such work most typically took place informally and after actual working hours, being in effect “invisible” extra work. Similarly, Niemistö et al. (2017) found that the work of the knowledge workers they studied spilled almost imperceptibly over into private time. Furthermore, the study respondents did not count deliberating work matters or working with their phones during their spare time as actual work. What actually counts as work has become a grey area. It has become apparent that in knowledge-intensive work one is almost constantly involved with work matters, although this does not always happen in a concrete and visible manner. In an international context it has been demonstrated in an even more straightforward manner that “extreme work” is becoming the new normal (Ekman, 2015; Granter et al., 2015; Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015; Pérez-Zapata et al., 2016; Wynn & Rao, 2020).

I concur that the paradox at the core of this process is how autonomy, which is supposed to support and enrich work effort, may have begun to work against its beneficent goals. Pérez-Zapata et al. (2016) have warned that in boundaryless work, the demands and resources of work blur which may decrease the validity of existing psychosocial risk models used, such as the job demands-resources model and the Karasek model, to assess well-being at work.

Pérez-Zapata et al. (2016) and Wynn and Rao (2020), among many others, have asked why employees who have flexibility and choice about their working arrangements often choose to prioritise work effort over private life interests. It seems that in an organisational culture that advocates learning, self-development, innovation, and assuming responsibility, workers interpret these signals as calls for personal devotion to work. The norm of an ideal employee who can cope with all these demands in addition to creatively juggling to fit in private life responsibilities is so strong that employees may to a certain extent ignore the toll that this “soap bubble world” (Ekman, 2015) takes in real, practical terms. Peter Bloom (2016) has provided a psychoanalytical interpretation according to which work-life balance has de facto escaped our reach, but we have grown accustomed to finding satisfaction, or “jouissance”, in the mere striving towards it. As our expectations have dropped, the mere and ever-failing effort to reach the ideal is sufficient for one to maintain a positive self-image.

Professionals also tend to have a strong belief in their individual capabilities to handle any work-life issue, preferring to reject general programs of flexible work provided by their employers (Moen et al., 2013; Niemistö et al., 2017; Wynn & Rao, 2020). The general precarity of and insecurity about holding onto one’s

organisational position may lead to individuals preferring to cope with their problems alone. Wynn and Rao (2020) and Pérez-Zapata et al. (2016) have pointedly characterised contemporary knowledge workers as insecure overachievers. Autonomous elite workers may also justify limitations and sacrifices regarding their private life by reframing them as personal choices – having a sense of control, however limited this control may in fact be, provides satisfaction, even while the actual balancing act might be failing (Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017, p. 186; Wynn & Rao, 2020). When work-life balance becomes practically impossible, individuals may then settle for a significantly lower goal of work-life “fit” instead (Wynn & Rao, 2020).

Research on telework is placed in an interesting light when viewed with an understanding of the “autonomy paradox” discussed above. From early on, research results about the benefits of telework have been contradictory, as I discuss in Article 1. Telework has indeed provided an increasing sense of autonomy (e.g., Kelliher & Anderson, 2008). Some research suggests that it has alleviated workers’ experience of stress (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004), while, however, other studies have found the exact opposite result (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003). And while some studies found that telework supported efforts to balance work and family needs, others have found that it might also create new challenges to finding a work-life balance (Tietze & Musson, 2005).

Kelliher and Anderson (2010) have discussed a potential mechanism that might be involved in these contradictions of telework – one that is very much related to the autonomy paradox. They found that employees considered homework and other flexibility options to be such a privilege and favour from their employers that they felt they owed them extra effort and, as a consequence, self-intensified their work.

It could be that, as work ever-more-deeply invades the personal spheres of life, this also sensitises employees to new dimensions of their personal selves that could be included in the work effort. This may result in the already well-recognised act of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) but also the more recently pinpointed acts of aesthetic labour (Witz et al., 2003), extending moral responsibility (Pérez-Zapata et al., 2016), and existential labour (Bailey et al., 2017). While such increasing personal and existential stakes at work may, at least occasionally, provide a satisfactory sense of control, they may also work as a “psychological palliative” (Wynn & Rao, 2020, p. 85), hiding and confusing the actual toll these additional demands take. This contradiction may result in enormous pressure driving the intensification of work. Johnsen and Sørensen (2015) have compared the experience of an inability to control the boundaries of one’s work and life to being on a “fast moving train”, a phrase

borrowed from an informant working in the field of consulting, a field that epitomises many of the current trends in working life (see also Wynn & Rao, 2020).

In my analysis of the archipelago experimenters, the intensity of everyday working conditions came to the fore, but so did the need to make sense of this situation, review one's work methods, and understand the development of one's career in the long run. The archipelago period emerged as an opportunity to stop the fast-moving everyday train for a while, take time for oneself, and become sensitised to personal emotions and more silent embodied cues. This environment, being outside the ordinary normative spaces, provided an alternative, liminal world that was primarily a comforting space, a space in which there was less pressure from the outside world to move faster than natural, embodied rhythms would suggest.

The increasing subjectification of work discussed above paints a paradoxical picture in which increasingly autonomous and individualised employees also have less and less voice in and control over their situation. Various researchers have asked why it seems to be so difficult for employees and employers alike to confront these issues and find ways to solve them (Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017; Wynn & Rao, 2020).

I suggest that one should seek the answer to this question by looking at the immaterialisation of the labour process. In his recent book, Žižek (2019) discussed how capitalism's commodity fetishism has reached its ultimate high point. He argues that fewer commodities require labour for their production, which, in accordance with Marx's theories, results in surplus value. Instead, profit is increasingly generated through speculative financial investments – financialisation – and rent-seeking. This has also affected the labour process, which seems to have moved ahead of itself. Žižek (2019) underlines that financial speculations take place before the fact of valorisation by the labour process (p. 12). For Žižek, this means that solid objects are no longer needed to mediate value. What is bought and sold is potential. For example, updating one's "employability" has become a task of its own. It is also worth considering various "service experiences", as well as corporate cultures with their imagery of ideal employees. They live on brand promises that are less concerned with fulfilling a function than with helping someone to directly access a desired symbolic meaning and become either an enhanced self or a member of a valued community. Occupational competence is not only assessed by means of objective qualifications, but also by more opaque factors such as aesthetic and affective fit with the workplace culture and customer expectations. Immediate aspects of social relations themselves – feelings, affective experiences, encounters – have become the direct objects of exchange. As commodity objects are increasingly dissolved into fluid experiences, one can witness the spectralisation of the fetish (Žižek, 2019).

The crux of the matter is that when concrete objects still anchored commodity fetishism, the dependency of employees could be meaningfully defined in contractual terms (Žižek, 2019). The spectralisation of fetish has led, in a dialectical fashion, to the return of more personalised forms of domination, as seen in the cases of sweatshops and immigrant labour in non-Western contexts, as Žižek (2019) points out. However, I would argue that, if we direct our gaze closer to home, we can observe the personalisation of the labour process right at the core of our Western working life, visible in the way we “freely” choose to increase our effort and offer more of our personal selves to work in the forms of emotional, aesthetic, and existential labour. The contract between employee and employer was more accurate and “just” when employees simply sold their labour power as such. It is logical that the abstraction and spectralisation of the labour process is felt at the level of the body and well-being.

In order to try to influence such structures, employees would have to be able to make sense of their situation, and this capability is precisely the one that suffers when pressured employees are living and working on a “fast moving train”, focusing merely on survival (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). I suggest turning to an often-neglected dimension of our human lives, that of the embodied existence, as it is undeniably the material basis that never “melts into air” (although some science fiction proponents might question even this premise).

Based on her nine-year follow up study on investment bankers, Alexandra Michel (2011) claims that the shift to knowledge work has moved the body to the background in our understanding of the work process. She argues that there are ideologies in workplaces that aim to socialise the mind in order to control the body considered as numb and passive. According to her analysis, the espoused and visible values of the banks included autonomy and work-life balance, but the less visible organisational culture promoted habitual overwork and neglect of the body. Michel (2011) claims that totalising organisational cultures that encapsulate individuals physically, socially and ideologically, as in her case, leave individuals particularly vulnerable. Much in the same vein, Elidrissi and Courpasson (2020) discuss a “cult of exhaustion” in their ethnographic study of a young activist organisation, wherein working long hours and abusing one’s body became part of the collective experience, mythologised in the form of “war stories” that served to bind members together. Intensity was also experienced as addictive, because being constantly on edge can be thrilling (Elidrissi & Courpasson, 2020). In fact, intensity came to define the collective state of the group, meaning that escaping the strained conditions would have threatened participants’ social identities and the relationships they had formed

through work. As a counterpart to work intensity, Elidrissi and Courpasson (2020) also found signs of “corporate athlete” thinking, wherein activists saw bodily capacity as something to be worked upon and optimised in order to enable themselves to take on an extensive amount of stress. Although Elidrissi and Courpasson studied activism which differs from typical salary-based employment, the idealisation of fitness and upgrading bodily capacity to answer to the increasing demands of working life are societal trends that affect individuals regardless of organisational context. Indeed, knowledge work has become very “physical”, but in a manner that is characterised by objectifying and training the body instead of being sensitive to embodied rhythms and needs.

That said, Michel (2011) and Elidrissi and Courpasson (2020) found that body and, ultimately, its breakdown, provided the final limit that enabled employees to transcend the socialisation of their organisation’s culture. Before the breakdown, immersion in this culture inhibited the individuals from conceiving of their lives otherwise (Elidrissi & Courpasson, 2020, p. 53). Change in the body’s state in the form of a breakdown initiated a sense-making process and provided some distance from the organisation. After their breakdowns, bankers in Michel’s (2011) study stopped fighting their bodies and became more sensitive and reflexive to their bodily cues. Instead of treating the body as an object that should be disciplined, they became aware of their bodies as being emotional entities with the ability to remember good and bad treatment (p. 350). As one of the bankers expressed, “relating to the body was ‘like learning a new language’” (p. 349). This change in orientation also increased the bankers’ ethical sensitivity and encouraged them to voice their opinions about issues in their employers’ working cultures (pp. 350–351). Furthermore, becoming more sensitive to their own needs, the needs of others, and situational cues actually affected the bankers’ performance positively (pp. 350–351). Michel (2011, p. 353) suggests that the bankers became more creative because they relaxed their strict mental control and allowed a greater diversity of embodied cues to guide their actions (see also Gomart & Hennion, 1999).

Thus, engaging with their bodies enabled the actors to distance themselves from their organisation’s culture and reflect on their subjective position and life projects more generally. The body may be an unexpectedly important engine for resistance and politics, as it is the ultimate mirror of the contradictions in the contemporary labour process. I argue, following Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 1945/2012), that our perception is generally bound by the body-environment nexus we are in and our habitual ways of moving in this world. Shattering this habitually conditioned perception by means of environmental change may be a way to open up a reflective

space in which hidden problems can find their way into consciousness and be approached from unusual angles. This can be a change-initiating disruption that is much less extreme than a bodily breakdown in its consequences – one that enables individuals “to step back and re-interpret the meaningfulness of their work and lives” (Elidrissi & Courpasson, 2020, p. 55).

In the case study presented in this thesis, bodily change in the form of a change of environment altered the way the participants perceived their work-environment fit, their work practices, and their well-being. The archipelago period opened up a new “world” in which participants experienced a similar kind of relief to that described in Michel’s (2011) narratives of bankers who changed their orientation after bodily breakdown. In the archipelago, joyous experimentation ensued. In many cases, the participant’s sense of the meaning of their work, personal aspirations, and future were experienced as having become clarified. However, it would be too extreme to claim that it takes only a change of environment to alter the course of one’s career. As is discussed in Article 3, despite the generally similar affective responses to the environment (Article 2), how participants experienced this space also differed according to their unique work and life histories, including the amount of habitualised strain in their work. Therefore, I can conclude that jolting the ordinary, habitual, embodied relations to environment can be transformative, but the direction this process takes depends on personal life trajectories and the subject’s experience of their need for change.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The research process

This study found its origin in a period when I was working and collecting data for another project, carried out by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, that looked at the well-being effects of temporary telework arrangements in the rural Baltic Sea archipelago region. The empirical material of this thesis, consisting of interviews and longitudinal questionnaire data, was collected within this earlier project, during 2010 and 2011. The original project found the archipelago experiment generally successful as regarding its goals, but for me it seemed that the empirical material also had other stories to tell. During this time, I became intrigued by the atmosphere of the empirical material, particularly interviews – which conveyed the presence of a contingency and fragility in the act of settling in and setting up one’s work environment on this temporary basis in a foreign space – and how even chance encounters in this new environment could be meaningful, and how, in some cases, these experiences could have repercussions on the more general life course of the individuals. While the original research project stayed within the established contours of work research, looking primarily at previously recognised factors related to work conditions and psychosocial well-being measures, something else began to intrude into my awareness that was beyond this already established template. While delving into the empirical material, I noticed little movements and mental reverberations, as well as affective and aesthetic experiences of the environment, that occasionally peeked out from the background, as if they formed the rhythmical basis for the work acts that the participants carried out in this particular environment. It was as if work, ordinary activity, was reflected on this different, extraordinary canvas.

Thus, the guiding insight at the early stages of this thesis was that there seems to be something at play between a person and their embodied involvement with their environment – something that existing telework research had not covered in detail (Koslowski et al., 2019). Perhaps one reason to this sidestepping has been that many telework studies have explicitly or implicitly equated telework with home-based work (Hislop & Axtell, 2007), which has perhaps not seemed very extraordinary or

noteworthy context for close spatial examination. However, Walsh and Bartunek (2016) point out that in some cases, and maybe especially in those that are atypical or extreme (Chen, 2016), there may emerge novel and surprising phenomena which force scholars to step back from their existing paradigms to a more general question of “what is the experience that is happening here” (p. 78). This is what occurred to me when examining the archipelago case, and it was this sense of surprise and mystery about the archipelago experience that I decided to follow in my analysis. The research process was inductive and phenomenon-driven at first, but as the research process moved forward, I increasingly used theoretical perspectives as “sparring partners” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2021) in order to develop insights about what was noteworthy, previously uncovered, and hopefully interesting about the archipelago experiences regarding knowledge work practices in general. As the case was about workers travelling to work and live in a special location, concepts that illuminated dimensions of our material existence, including practice, lived body, lived space, rhythm, and affect, seemed promising in unravelling the mystery. The ongoing dialogue between the empirical material and literature gradually steered the approach of the research process to abduction, and, at its latest stages, to that of theoretical deduction (Article 4) (see Alvesson & Sandberg, 2021).

There could have been other theoretical perspectives or paradigms to approach the empirical material with and conduct, for example, a gender- or age-based analysis. My perspective emerged in iteration and triangulation between the empirical material and theories. The first article relies quite firmly on the existing research and conceptual framework concerning telework and well-being at work and provides overall statistics about the archipelago experience. The second article took an intentionally less structured approach with the interview data, beginning with open coding, followed by theoretical iteration and re-coding. While dividing the interview material to smaller particles, I aimed to keep in mind what seemed to be particularly meaningful to the interviewees, as the atmospheres and affective tones of the interviews were something that raised my attention already at the beginning of the process, as described earlier. This is why I have also applied my affective and aesthetic sensitivity as a researcher along the process (Strati, 2009t), paying attention not only to what was said but also to how it was said. The interviewees occasionally resorted to evocative metaphorical and poetic expressions which to me appeared as clues about a hidden meaning to be expressed (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2021). While writing the second article, I realized that although some general patterns about the archipelago experience could be found (and were described in this article), they would not suffice themselves to explain the meaning of the experience for the

participants. I found that the interview material also called for situating the archipelago experiences within individual working life stories, which was done in the third article. Finally, in the fourth and last article, the ways in which the lived, special, and liminal period animated the connections between personal backgrounds and future projections were analysed according to Heidegger's understanding of authentic temporality.

A few words about the stance of this thesis to the authenticity of the interview material are appropriate here. During the corona pandemic, the news media has shown how telework arrangements have multiplied, and it has become increasingly ordinary to conduct work at a holiday cottage or, say, in a skiing centre. However, in its time, the archipelago experiment was something of a pioneering activity. The study participants had to be motivated and able to arrange their work and private lives in order to travel to a distant archipelago location, in addition to participating in a multimethod study (the original research project included also physiological measurements which have not been used in this thesis). These people had curiosity about the experiment and their own reasons to participate. Perhaps this has affected to the rich reflection found in the interview material.

However, Alvesson and Sandberg (2021) pointedly remind that interviewees can also be concerned about their status and the social appropriateness of their responses, so it is worthy to reflect about how much the interview accounts describe some actual "reality". I found signs as to why the interviews may not have been particularly characterised by status maintenance. Firstly, the participants were serious about the experiment, had an open attitude, and were looking forward to learning and benefitting from the experiment themselves. Secondly, the participants were aware that they experimented an unusual working mode that could even seem odd to more conservative minds. Thirdly, the interview discussions were relatively relaxed and occasionally even humorous and creative. These remarks, among others, led me to frame this experiment as a liminal experience. Liminal moments are characterised by a sense of communality, equality and transformation, and these characteristics were also found in the interviews.

Use of the empirical material for this thesis has been granted to me by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Design of data collection methods took place within the earlier FIOH research project. The data was collected partly by me as a project researcher, partly by specialist researcher Seppo Tuomivaara. Apart from some minor writing contributions, the rest of the research process of this thesis has been planned and carried out by me.

3.2 Telework locations in the rural Baltic Sea archipelago

The experimental work periods that were of one week's duration were arranged in eight different municipalities of the Finnish South-Western and Estonian archipelago, as well as Åland. The archipelago is a naturally and culturally unique area and is a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Local municipalities and entrepreneurs participated in the experiment by providing facilities and services. The participants were offered the use of free lodging and office facilities in exchange for participating in the study. Outside this general framework, the concrete settings bore distinctly local characteristics that depended on what kinds of spaces the municipalities had to offer. Workspaces ranged from modern office hotels to traditional archipelago homesteads and villas. There was even a traditional municipal hall that had been turned into a workspace. There was thus "local creativity" in the arrangement of spaces, as well as the flexibility of an easy-going rural community with regards to the rules of how this space was to be used. For example, the opening hours of workspaces could occasionally be adjusted by the request of participants. Participants also actively experimented with different spaces for working by themselves, as is discussed in Article 2. It could be said that the participants entered a spatial world that was significantly less rule- and norm-bound than ordinary office environments.

3.3 Empirical material and methods of each article

The data of this thesis is of two kinds. Firstly, there is longitudinal questionnaire data collected electronically at three points in time from the participants: 1–3 weeks prior to the experiment, at the end of the experiment, and 2–8 weeks after the experiment. The questionnaire covers background factors about each participant's work, including their occupation, the size of their organisation, and their position in the organisational hierarchy. The questionnaire also contained questions about psychosocial work environment and well-being and included space for open comments. A total of 46 out of the 49 archipelago experimenters participated in the survey study by answering the first questionnaire, with 39 persons answering all three questionnaires. Secondly, there is interview data that was collected from the participating groups, and, in the case of lone participants, individually. The interview data includes 12 group interviews and 2 single interviews, with 32 interviewees in total. The interviews were carried out at the end of the experimental periods. These

thematic interviews began by covering the professional backgrounds of the participants in order to form a general picture of their daily work activities, then proceeded to enquire into how they had concretely conducted their work while in the archipelago, how they had spent their time after work, and how they viewed their work results and the archipelago as an overall experience. Some exemplary questions were, as stated in Article 2, “What tasks have you carried out during the period?” “Have your work practices differed somehow to how you normally conduct your work?” and “What has been most significant to you about this period?” The interviews were conducted partly face-to-face and partly by phone due to the geographical distances involved. The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 93 minutes. The relevance of particular interview themes varied somewhat for different interviewees, so the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner to allow for themes that were more important for specific individuals or groups to be discussed in greater depth. The interviewees could also bring up additional matters of importance to the discussion. The interviews were conducted by either myself, my colleague, or both of us together.

The participants applied for the experiment based on an advertisement. There were no limitations on the criteria according to which the participants were admitted to the study, other than that they be able to conduct their work in the remote settings of the archipelago for a period of one week. The experiment drew the interest of professionals from different occupational backgrounds, though the majority of them were creative knowledge professionals in the broad sense of the term – that is, professionals for whom the creation of new ideas and products was central to their work, and who were interested in the development of their own work methods to better achieve these goals. By occupation participants included consultants of various kinds, life coaches, journalists, designers, architects, engineers, creative writers, project managers, and researchers. The ratio of males to females was roughly equal, and all age groups below retirement age were represented in the data. Participants came to the archipelago from various parts of mainland Finland, while two participants came from Estonia. Most of the participants worked in small or micro-sized companies (less than 50 employees), and a third of the participants were private entrepreneurs (Article 1). ICT tools were essential for all participants in the accomplishment of their tasks. As the participants’ backgrounds differed, so did their careers, and the constellation of spaces in which they ordinarily performed their work. However, most were familiar with home-based or mobile work (Article 1). The participants spent the week in groups of 2–5 colleagues, apart from three exceptions who participated alone. The structure of the groups varied, with some

consisting of individuals working normally on the same physical premises or even hailing from the same family firm, while others consisted of more distantly connected colleagues or networks of professionals.

In Article 1, I examine the changes in psychosocial work environment measures and well-being measures between the three time points described earlier by using repeated measures ANOVA analysis performed with SPSS. Dependent variables were modelled separately. Variables concerning psychosocial work environment included how mentally exhausting work was perceived to be, time pressure, interruptions, levels of job influence, clarity of work goals, and experiences of negative feelings at work, while well-being measures included stress, work engagement, and work satisfaction. Of the measures concerning psychosocial work environment, how mentally exhausting work was perceived to be, time pressure, interruptions, and negative feelings at work all changed for the better during the period, and some of the positive effects on these measures were even sustained after the period. Of the well-being measures, experienced stress and work satisfaction also improved, albeit to a lesser extent. For those measures that showed statistically significant within-subjects effects, ($p < .05$), an additional analysis was carried out by dividing the respondents into three occupational sub-groups: private entrepreneurs, subordinates, and supervisors. Mauchly's test of sphericity was conducted, and, if it was above .05, a within-subjects test of assumed sphericity was used; if not, the Greenhouse-Geisser test was used. The open comments of the questionnaires have been used in the article to support the statistical analysis.

Although the results of the additional analysis that compared sub-groups should be treated tentatively at best due to the small number of participants, they do suggest that occupational position had some effect on the experience of such a change of work environment. Private entrepreneurs and supervisors experienced more significant changes during the period than subordinates, but for the supervisors the changes were less sustained after the experiment. These results point towards the need to take professional backgrounds and situations into account in studying mobile telework arrangements. Within this study I have done so in Article 3, which qualitatively examines the situations of three selected participants in depth, relating their professional backgrounds to their archipelago experience. However, before I delve into that I would like to lay out the methods used for Article 2.

Article 2 takes a qualitative and abductive approach to its analysis of the interview material generated by 12 group or pair interviews and two individual interviews. Here I decided to concentrate on creative professionals working in small or micro-sized companies (0 to 49 employees). This decision was made because there were two

group interviews in which another type of work seemed to affect the interviewees' experience of the archipelago in a way that differed in some regards by comparison to the experience of the majority of those interviewed. The interviews of these two groups, one of which consisted of public sector officials and the other of which consisted of employees from a firm occupied with routine monitoring tasks, were dropped from the interview data corpus. By this decision I aimed to increase the explanatory power of my qualitative analysis, as I considered the interview data to be suitable for the examination of creative professionals' experiences, while there was too little data to address the experiences of these other kinds of professionals or to assess whether the differences in experience could be interpreted as relating to their different types of work. In the article I state that more research is needed regarding the different kinds of professionals experimenting with alternative spaces. This finding again also underlines the need to examine the experiences of space through the lens of the individual background.

The article takes an open, phenomenological approach to the participants' overall experience of the archipelago period. By utilising a relatively heterogeneous theoretical background, the article follows the guidance of Alvesson (2003) in comparing different theoretical lenses to construct an interpretation model that is as valid as possible. This "theoretical triangulation" enabled me to critically reflect on and compare the different emphases of interpretations in order to get closer to the essence of the experience, as is the focus of phenomenology. Furthermore, as research on teleworking in the countryside is scarce and this arranged experiment was rather unique, I considered this to call for the careful combination of a relatively diverse background literature in order to grasp the various dimensions of the event (see also Chen, 2016 on extreme case studies).

In addition, the distinctive emotional and affective undertone of the interviews made them both revelatory and personal: the discussions went far beyond the topic of work understood as a purely utilitarian and pragmatic effort (Schütz, 1945; Stenner, 2018). This further indicated to me that the analysis could not proceed from a strictly conventional understanding of concepts such as "work" or "leisure". The analysis was inspired particularly by Merleau-Ponty's (1962) understanding of how perception is situatedly open, in that it is formed in the reciprocal interactions between a person and the environment, and by Heidegger's (1927/1962) idea that these practical endeavours form the ground for our existential understanding of ourselves. The theory of liminality (Turner, 1974b; van Gennep, 1909/1960) was important in that it provided tools for understanding the shock and the sense of the upturning of normal work modes in this alternative workspace.

The data was first approached by careful open coding, with marking of any remarks, attitudes and expressions that stood out as potentially significant. After iterating through the data with the different theoretical lenses, I created three sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954) – aesthetic and emotional experiences; practices; and rhythm – through which the data was then deductively analysed. The interpretation was later assessed against the original data in order to ensure the coherence and balance of the analysis.

Article 3 delves more deeply into the questions that were found to be pertinent in the writing of the preceding articles, but which were impossible to elaborate further under their confines – questions relating to how personal backgrounds affected the archipelago experience and how liminality seemed to be peculiarly present also in the everyday (working) lives of many participants. As Article 2 focuses horizontally on the situation in the archipelago, Article 3 takes a vertical approach by examining how the archipelago experience was situated within individual work and life histories. To do this, three individual cases are examined in depth. The article also elaborates on the theory of liminality by juxtaposing two types of liminality found in the existing literature: (1) traditional liminality (i.e., temporary, ritual upheaval) and (2) its modern variant, the permanent liminality that is able to pervade every level of modern society. Theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) was used to select the three participants as case examples whose stories illustrated both types of liminality particularly well while still providing enough variation to show the nuances of the phenomenon. To examine how the different types of liminality – ritual liminality, which is typically viewed as transformative, and permanent liminality, which is often seen as more reductive and fragmented (e.g., Thomassen, 2014) – were produced in space, the article once again relies theoretically on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

Article 4 uses the same interview data as Article 2 in its discussion on mobility, space, and experiences of time. Different dimensions of temporal experience, including a decrease in interruptions and time pressure as well as embodied life histories, had already been shown to be at the core of the archipelago experience in the previous articles. This article uses Heidegger's concepts of authentic and inauthentic temporality to delve deeper into the varying experiences of time in participants' descriptions and to analyse how, in the archipelago, the fragmented time of everyday life contrasted with another kind of temporality, one that was relieved from concentration on present survival and instead involved an existential opening to both personal past and future. The article discusses whether time in the archipelago could be understood as an instance of Heidegger's authentic temporality,

how spatial experience can enable such an “awakening”, and what the societal significance of such experiences in our temporally fragmented working lives might be.

3.4 Ethical considerations

The study participants were informed beforehand about the purpose of the study, and data collection procedures were also described to them in advance. The participants applied for the project themselves. The participants could choose whether to participate in small groups or alone. Participants were informed that their participation in the research was voluntary, and participation could be terminated anytime if willed. The participants were also informed that the empirical material they provided was treated confidentially and was accessed by the project researchers only. The participants were offered information beforehand about the living and working facilities which were provided for them cost-free. Apart from these facilities, the participants could arrange their working and living patterns independently in the location. They had contact persons in the project should any problems arise. The participants have been anonymised or their names have been replaced with pseudonyms throughout this study in order to protect their identities. In case of rare job titles that could be revealing concerning the person’s identity, these titles have been reformed to a more general form.

4 THE ONTO-EPISTEMOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Non-representational perspectives on a working life of blurred boundaries

During the last century, many work and organisation scholars have built their theories upon the premise that work organisation requires a rational, stable, and predictable structure (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Ellström, 2010) with work processes and routines designed from above (Leonardi & Barley, 2008; Pentland & Feldman, 2008). Such a machine-like system involved jobs with clear designs that were, in turn, expected to translate straightforwardly to corresponding motivational states among employees (George, 2009). This system was believed to be held together through spatial planning that conveyed order and enabled surveillance (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004) and by means of artifacts that included concrete physical objects as well as formal rules and codes of conduct (D'Adderio, 2011; Pentland & Feldman, 2008). However, the increasing pace of technological advances and their sociocultural effects on organisational life have caused an increasing number of scholars to call for a more dynamic approach to organisational activity. Various organisation research fields, such as those focusing on processes and change (Chia, 1995; Linstead & Thanem, 2007; Weick, 2006), practices (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Gherardi, 2012; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011), routines (Aroles & McLean, 2016; D'Adderio, 2011; Feldman & Pentland, 2003) and space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013; Shortt, 2015) have taken as their focus individual and social adaptation to, as well as enactment and situated problem-solving within, environments that are increasingly viewed as contingent, complex, and fluid.

These approaches build on an understanding that an abstract representation of work activities is limited by not being able to tackle the potential for situated improvisation and learning that exists during mundane day-to-day operations, which today are increasingly spread across numerous virtual as well as physical spaces. Scholarly attention is thus increasingly shifting from *organisation* to *organising*. The situated drama of daily struggles, experimentations, failures, and surprises is largely bypassed by the more representational approaches to organisation. What they also

leave aside is how actors emotionally, affectively, and aesthetically experience their daily work efforts and how, as a result, the meaning and purpose of work are reconstructed, sustained, or questioned (see also Bailey & Madden, 2017). As working times, spaces, and even careers have become increasingly fluid, an existential sense of being in between has come to haunt those who find themselves in the gaps of the social structure (Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019; Winkler & Mahmood, 2015). The intensities of such liminal experiences are eventually felt at the affective level of the body (Daskalaki et al., 2016).

I associate this increasing scholarly interest in the micro-processes and practices of work with the digital and ensuing societal developments that have blurred the boundaries both within and outside organisations. Work has become increasingly mobile and is no longer systematically connected to any “precise ‘here and now’ of work and organisation” (de Vaujany et al., 2019, p. 1). We are increasingly tethered to digital mobile devices (Turkle, 2011) with multiple platforms, both virtual and physical, competing simultaneously for our attention (Koslowski et al., 2019; Wajcman & Rose, 2011). As a result, we can operate in several social worlds simultaneously, but we typically have less time and perhaps even decreasing patience for in-depth face-to-face interaction (Turkle, 2011). There is ample evidence pointing to the increasing role of interruptions and discontinuities in work (Chesley, 2014; González & Mark, 2004; Jett & George, 2003; Perlow, 1999).

There are several dimensions to this blurring of boundaries in the daily reality of many workers. Due to mobile devices that enable workplace flexibility, the concepts of workplace and time have been called into question (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Felstead et al., 2005; Koslowski et al., 2019; Mazmanian et al., 2013). Telework promises many benefits, such as independence regarding work arrangements, concentration, and better alignment of work and family needs (Tremblay, 2003; Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012), but it has also been shown to generate new conflicts between work and family concerns (Tietze & Musson, 2005). Koslowski et al. (2019) have provided a nuanced analysis of how the deep-seated emotional values associated with domestic spaces may be infringed upon by work entering the home in their tellingly-named article “When is a bed not a bed?”.

At the same time, office design has been shifting towards openness, all-embracing visibility, and transparency, a “visibility from multiple perspectives” (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 75). This development in workplace design reflects the transgression of boundaries within the virtual world. However, it has been claimed that, within individual experience, it may also result in affective confusion and a surreal feeling of lacking a space of one’s own in the physical reality of the workplace (Borch, 2010;

Dale & Burrell, 2008; Pallasmaa, 2005). This distortion of perspectives is only accentuated as workplace architects increasingly make use of playful references to non-work and imaginary spheres, such as leisure, nature, sports, or sci-fi (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; De Paoli et al., 2019).

The boundaries of organisations have also become unclear. This is particularly the case for those involved in flexible employment practices, such as temporary work and consulting (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003; Garsten, 1999), freelancing, and other atypical careers (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). However, even consumers can become “workers” by providing their digital data for companies (Beverungen et al., 2015; Mumby, 2016), or, if particularly sophisticated in their consumption, acting as curators of the tastes of other consumers, as in the case of lifestyle bloggers. In an increasingly fluid organisational environment, entrepreneurial, independent, and self-reliant employee types are particularly favoured (Garsten, 1999; Julkunen, 2008); such employees may also take an increasing share of the costs and risks of employment onto themselves (Fleming, 2014; Mumby, 2016). On the other hand, sometimes roles within so-called permanent organisational structures and employee relations themselves may be highly contingent, as is the case for those working in inter-organisational networks (Ellis & Ybema, 2010), or for professionals who serve in experimental or supportive roles outside formal organisational hierarchies (Daudigeos, 2013; Howard-Grenville et al., 2011; Swan et al., 2016). These roles may be associated with post-bureaucratic efforts to mitigate the limiting effects of organisational hierarchies and foster innovation.

Finally, the boundaries between work and private life are becoming blurred, with potentially profound effects on how social relations and identities are constructed. Knowledge-intensive work increasingly underpins creativity, and practically all employees are encouraged to put their personal selves to work to an extent that has never before been required (Hasu et al., 2012). In addition to nitty gritty routine work, one is called upon to participate in innovation as well as image and brand management for the organisation, which happens increasingly through social media channels. In this context, bodies may also become living representations of the organisation’s values and goals, serving as projected embodiments of desirable lifestyles (Endrissat et al., 2017; Land & Taylor, 2010).

The above trajectories can be considered to be results of the increasing fragmentation of work and life, a development that Marx, when describing early capitalism, identified as “labour power” being abstracted from concrete, embodied work and thus rendered feasible for exchange and commodification (Stanek, 2008). Lefebvre (1974/1991) later elaborated on the spatial preconditions for this

development, arguing that establishing the idea of abstract work and successfully grounding it in living social relations would not have been possible without parallel engineering and manipulation of space (Stanek, 2008). Space became the target of rational and central planning, and an idea of space as first and foremost a planning exercise abstracted from its concrete elements began to form. Tayloristically operated factory halls and bureaucratic offices exemplified this development of spatial abstraction, which fragmented the existing unity and culture of craftsmanship-like practices and rearranged the pieces under the auspices of artificially constructed systems (Banks, 2010; Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Stanek, 2008). Rational approach to space underlining efficiency and commercialism became the dominant ideology: Lefebvre (1974/1991) has dated the explicit integration of space into the holistic planning surrounding forces of production to the emergence of Bauhaus in the 1920s. Later on, abstract space has found new grounds for its expansion by means of experimenting with new ways to trigger aesthetic and affective experiences of the citizen-customer (Dale & Burrell, 2008). In *The Production of Space* (1974/1991), originally published in 1974, Lefebvre anticipated that increasing computer power would be a game-changer for abstract space (p. 334). This is now visible in workplaces built around the fantasy of the “creative workspace”, which portray work as play and offer open offices and hot desks that are said to induce co-creation but more effectively result in cost savings. This vanishing of the concrete spaces and traces of work, the disappearance of the dimension of the “real” from the workplace, seems only a logical development in light of the increasing amount of work and communication being transferred to the virtual realm. Lefebvre’s remark that our lived practices carried out in abstract spaces are themselves becoming abstract (Stanek, 2008, p. 70; Wilson, 2013) is a deeply significant one still today. Boundaryless, always-on working life is being fitted on bodies that have their natural limits and rhythms aiming to maintain a bodily balance. Tensions of this constellation are potentially far-reaching regarding physical and mental health, and signs of more or less vague discomfort caused by this development are regularly at display in the media.

Some critical organisation scholars have suggested that the abstraction of work has resulted in the product and service market becoming ruled by the imaginary dimension, with work itself increasingly revolving around images, play, experiences, and marketing (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Fleming, 2014; Hjorth & Pelzer, 2007; Mumby, 2016; Spicer, 2018). In the 1960s, Debord (1983) and the situationists were already concerned about the prospect of reality being replaced by spectacle. Spicer (2018) has suggested that a significant amount of contemporary office bureaucracy

resembles spectacle, as there seems to be a lot of such metawork going on that has drifted relatively far from the work's substantial objectives. For example, researchers have noted an increasing emphasis on efficiency and time management at work, while simultaneously mere sorting of e-mails is an unpredictable process that can take up a significant portion of working time (Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017).

Like the recently emergent approaches discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this thesis does not rely on an assumed constancy of the traditional building blocks of working life. The abstraction and fluidity of work has reached a level where representations denoting to a supposed entity in the real world: working time, workplace, or private life, seem increasingly leaky. Instead, this thesis emphasises the lived body as the final element that resists being subsumed under the abstractions of work and spectacle, thus being a possible nexus for new creative openings in working life. In the social sciences, approaches are often still very Cartesian, focusing on mental processes and neglecting the role of the body in social life (Michel, 2011; Pitts-Taylor, 2015; Wacquant, 2015). There is yet much to be learned about the role of the spatial and lived body in work activity, sense-making, processing memories, creating personal meaningfulness – and existential continuity – at work, and facilitating critical awareness. Steps in this direction have already been taken by studies that focus on the corporeal ground of work practices (see, e.g., Valtonen et al., 2017; Weik, 2019; Yakhlef, 2010) and alternative ways to perceive and dwell in an organisational space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; Shortt, 2015). By foregrounding the lived body and its concrete being-in-the-world as the focus of research this thesis aims to add to this emerging literature.

4.2 The philosophical underpinnings of this thesis

This thesis is epistemologically grounded in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and its idea that all thinking and meaning-making, even the most abstract kind, is corporeally based and only possible on the grounds of us being bodily and sensually situated in the world. In his philosophy, Merleau-Ponty constructs an idea of an open and emergent rationality that takes form in the perception of and lived contact with other humans and the world. In his seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2012), Merleau-Ponty aims to show how perception is neither a completely biological nor a purely intellectual phenomenon but is conditioned by our practical and embodied engagements with the world. In perception, world does not appear to us as a flow of mindless sensory information

or, on the other hand, as analytically predefined, but rather as a field of practical action where we seek to fit instances of perceived novelty into previously learned and formed gestalts.

While an object is approached from a certain perspective and cannot actually be seen from all sides, our perception still acts as if it were complete. In living and moving contact, perception is not finite but always in a state of development and modification (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). As creatures being-in-the world, we are implicitly aware of the infinitude of perspectives other than our own. Consequently, our perception of our environment is not clear-cut, like a succession of images; instead, the world reshapes itself in perception. The world thus becomes, paradoxically, this self-concealing unity that allows us to intuitively understand it as something more than the sum of its separate, identifiable characteristics (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a).

According to Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), this understanding is grounded in the twofold nature of our subjectivity, consisting of intentional, reflective personal life and a pre-personal existence that is the natural life of our body. The socio-cultural and pre-personal parts of our subjectivity come together in embodied habits that are formed through our prior experiences. Habitual knowledge that is sedimented in our bodies enables us to act meaningfully in different situations by serving as a bridge between perception and movement. Habits enlarge our being in two ways: by allowing us to “inhabit” a space with a body animated by sedimented understanding, but also to appropriate new variations on this embodied, sedimented knowledge when necessary (Casey, 1984, p. 286).

What is the character of this embodied memory that Merleau-Ponty calls sedimentation? Although Merleau-Ponty did not develop a coherent theory of body memory, his whole project dealt implicitly with this theme, and later theorists have carried it forward (Casey, 1984; Fuchs, 2012; Kozyreva, 2018). Memory is conventionally understood in representational terms either as a “construction” that becomes our past as it is remembered and linked to the narratives by which we organise other events in our lives, or, in a more ephemeral way, as memory traces that may emerge from what is forgotten (Kozyreva, 2018). However, there is another way to connect with our past experiences. This memory, which structures our field of perception and enables us to find familiarity in our environment, is defined by Kozyreva (2018) as a “sedimented practical schema”, which is a proximate term to Merleau-Ponty’s (1945/2012) idea of “body schema”. This schema works like an anchor in the background that determines how we meaningfully “fill in the gaps in the uncertainty of objects’ perception” (Kozyreva, 2018, p. 207). In a sense, our past

is in what we perceive. Casey (1984) concludes that habitual bodily memory is actually more about the depth of this memory than it is about perception, although these dimensions co-exist in the same space and time (pp. 295–296). In work practices, this habitual embodied memory (see also Bourdieu, 1990) is supported by our familiarity with the socially and culturally formed artifacts of the work environment. This sociomaterial set of constellations conditions our perception by providing feasible, habitual paths for our activity and making other patterns of action more inconvenient or counterintuitive to follow (Brown & Reavey, 2018; D'Adderio, 2011; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Mumby, 2016).

We typically only become aware of this practical schema when our habitual existence gets interrupted in some way, such as due to fatigue or illness (Heinämaa, 2015, p. 131). Much as we can never completely possess objects in our perception, our bodily situated existence in the world causes a further, fundamental opacity with ourselves (Kozyreva, 2018). We cannot perceive ourselves at the moment of perception. Thus, through bodily existence, we continuously live more than we can represent to ourselves (Kozyreva, 2018, p. 206). To me it is evident that this apparent “blind spot” is also the seedbed of creativity.

Recognising the existence of a bodily memory has consequences for our conventional understanding of where our “social life” begins. According to Merleau-Ponty, subjective consciousness is not immanent and locked away from the world, but is instead entirely transcendent, taking place in “the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 306, cited in Kozyreva, 2018, p. 205). Unconscious and conscious cease to be opposites, with the former becoming as if an implicit, existential signification of the latter through embodied, sedimented memory (Kozyreva, 2018). From this perspective social life must be understood as not only a function of external group identities (Watson, 2008) or belongings that can be reflected on with a detached perspective. We are already embedded in the “social” when we perceive the everyday world, with the materiality of our environment soliciting its unfolding (see also Latour, 2005).

While the habituality of our practical sedimented schema conditions our actions, in perception, where “open rationality” is born, there is also immense potential for new configurations (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1964b). Here Merleau-Ponty’s thinking comes close to the posthumanism of process philosophers such as Deleuze, but whereas Deleuze sees the subject as more ungrounded in its relations with the world, Merleau-Ponty emphasises a certain consistent style in the interactions between the subject and the world. It could be said that Merleau-Ponty constructs a continuous pendulum movement between the opposing poles of cultural and pre-personal

existences as he underlines, on one hand, the embodied historicity of our actions and our implicit search for familiarity in our worldly relations, and, on the other hand, the novelty in every perception that promises to re-vitalise our relations with the “real” through increased truthfulness and authenticity. I consider that as much as Merleau-Ponty permeates the boundary between the self and the world, he also constructs a thickness (or depth) to human experience resulting from lived history, a thickness that does not liquidate to the surrounding world. He also emphasises the innumerability of angles to perceive the world, which results to each of us literally possessing a perspective of our own. However, I think it is possible to selectively emphasise the “worldly” and situated or the “individual” dimensions of experience, and hence in this thesis I occasionally refer to horizontal and vertical perspectives on experience, respectively.

The work of Merleau-Ponty, as well as this thesis, are influenced by Heidegger’s (1927/1962) existential phenomenology and his concept of being-in-the-world: the idea that we always exist in some social setting that is familiar to us with our awareness never completely detached from such settings. This study also makes use of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) idea of authentic and inauthentic temporality. The latter pertains to our everyday experience of time that is underpinned by linearity, measurement, and a general sense of time passing. As we submit to this general temporality, our being leans heavily towards the interests of public “others” and is directed towards the “now”, being curious about every novelty but never allotting very much time for a particular subject (Heidegger, 1927/1962). This kind of temporality easily leads to an experience of scatteredness and turbulence. However, according to Heidegger, we also have a need to experience our life in terms of its continuity between past and future, and to understand the meaning of our life’s direction. This other kind of experience of time, which is relatively rare compared to the inauthentic temporality that takes up the main portion of our existence, is what Heidegger calls authentic temporality. It may come to us as an “Augenblick” that has the character of a moment of vision, being called for by one’s conscience and a sense of guilt about one’s immersion in the world of “others” (Heidegger, 1927/1962). This call of conscience needs to situate one’s projects in the framework of life’s continuity and finitude. The call of conscience reminds us that time is valuable and urges us to question whether we are using our time in a way that has real value to us. Authentic temporality does not feel time pressure because it does not measure time but takes hold of the present in a way that opens to both past and future (Heidegger, 1927/1962)

As much as we are immersed in the world of “others”, one’s life is still necessarily one’s own. Yet the authentic mode of being may be avoided because it causes anxiety (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Authenticity requires distancing oneself from the preoccupations of “others”, and is experienced as a void, a nothingness (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 329). However, as Hubert Dreyfus reminds us, the anxiety this causes us to experience may not be merely a negative experience but can in fact be an empowering one, as it increases our awareness of reality (Vadén, 2004), and thus can in turn provide us with tools to better navigate this reality.

Heidegger did not thematically develop much the role of body-in-space, leaving relatively unclear what he believed the role of embodiment in our quest for existential meaning to be. Relying on Merleau-Ponty’s ideas regarding the central role of our bodily situatedness in forming our perceptions, I examine how authentic temporality may emerge as an embodied, spatial experience that has the character of the “in-between”.

5 PRACTICING BODY AND MEANINGFULNESS OF WORK

5.1 Locating the body in work practices

Moving to work in the unique archipelagic environment was very much an embodied experience that required practical adaptation from the participants. Therefore, this thesis has drawn inspiration from practice-based studies of organisation as they examine the “real” organisation of work happening in a situated community of practitioners (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Gherardi, 2009, 2012, 2016, 2017; Gherardi & Strati, 2017; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Schatzki, 2005, 2006; Strati, 2007; Yakhlef, 2010; Yakhlef & Essén, 2013). The focus of these studies is on how organisation is re-created and goals are achieved in everyday practices that not only demonstrate order and institutionalisation but also express an indeterminate rationality that is contingent and in a state of “becoming” (Gherardi, 2012, p. 2). Practice can be defined as socially informed “situated ‘feeling, saying and doing’” that typically occurs in a “connection-in-action” to other related social practices (Gherardi, 2006, pp. xi, xvii–xix). Focusing its gaze on the more fine-grained processes of organisation, the practice-based approach aims at a detailed and nuanced description of organisational activity that accounts for any socio-material relations that are involved. It is not feasible for practice-based approaches to make a priori claims relating to Cartesian dualisms such as mind/body, rational/emotional, or human/non-human. The contingency of such dualisms is depicted by Gherardi (2006) as follows: “When learning is construed as participation in a practice, the body and the mind, the knower and the known, feelings and emotions, understanding and knowing are intermeshed” (p. 83).

As practice is understood to be a multisensory, collective process, practical knowledge is considered to be not only of the intellectual kind but also of the habitual and aesthetic kind (Gherardi, 2009; Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009; Strati, 2007). This is why practical knowledge typically cannot be completely expressed verbally. Strati (2007) and Gherardi (2009), among others, have developed the notion of aesthetic knowledge, which refers to knowledge derived by the senses, which eventually results in a communally formed understanding of how a job is well or

beautifully executed. By reason of this tacit knowledge, communities of practice tend to develop idiosyncratic manners of communication that rely on metaphors, stories, and gestures in addition to explicit utterances (Gherardi, 2009; Strati, 2007). The idea of aesthetic knowledge is a powerful counterexample when arguing against the prevailing rationalist view of working organisation as a predominantly mentally guided activity. According to Gherardi et al. (2007), in order to form a passionate and enthusiastic relationship to work and the related community, one needs to be able to work with all perceptive faculties while sharing the resulting tacit knowledge within a community of practitioners. This is also the case in knowledge-intensive professions, as Gherardi (2009) has discussed with reference to mathematicians.

Nonetheless, it has been observed that even though practice-based approaches have been inclusive of the bodily dimension, thematisation of the role of the body in practice has remained insufficient (Valtonen et al., 2017; Yakhlef, 2010). Yakhlef (2010) has noted that practice-based organisation studies implicitly privilege discourse: while the body participates in knowing, meanings are still ultimately created in discursive communities (see, e.g., Gherardi, 2006, 2009). This is particularly apparent in some rather mental characterisations of practice as an activity of over-subjective “objective mind” (Schatzki, 2006), or as a logical system with noncontingent defining features (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). Even the approaches that have emphasised the embodied dimension of practice also eventually view body as a medium channelling knowledge that is of communal origin.

However, if one does not assume a priori such an all-encompassing role of communal knowledge in the conduct of practice, one finds practice constantly in flux, with bodies trying to reproduce equilibrium in changing body-environment constellations (Yakhlef, 2010). Drawing from Merleau-Ponty, Yakhlef (2010) has argued that, as humans constantly recreate their environment in perception that is solicited by affordances from the environment, they are transformed by this two-way system of exchanges in ways that are fundamentally open-ended and contingent. Our practicing bodies, gathering sedimentary layers of experience, are continuously changing. Thus, practical knowledge cannot be only of a communal variety, because this knowledge also participates in the generalised, natural character of our bodily existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Embodied knowledge that lies beneath conscious awareness is not neatly compartmentalised for different practices. Such knowledge is essentially incomplete or, perhaps more accurately, “potential” until it finds environmental affordance to which it can respond and thus find expression.

My assertion is that what constitutes the bodily, tacit knowledge that actors draw from in practice situations is not only remembrance by the “mind” of the practice,

but involves, at least in a latent manner, a more wide-ranging implicit memory represented in the sum of our “bodily dispositions, familiarities, habits, unintentional avoidances and omissions” – in short, what constitutes the ground for our wider self-familiarity (Kozyreva, 2018, p. 209). Furthermore, through bodily memory understood by means of a subjective and affective relation to world, we bring to each practice situation a subjective “existential signification” (Kozyreva, 2018, p. 209).

This open-endedness of embodied practices is demonstrated in cases where experience gained completely outside of and in a situation distant from the context of a given practice is precisely what helps one achieve a higher proficiency in that practice. Jan Andersson, a renowned Finnish journalist who has hosted Finnish electoral campaign debates, is known for his stern but attentive style when leading debates. To silence politicians who get carried away in the heat of the debate, he could take them by the hand in passing. When asked what has influenced his distinctive style, Andersson referred to his time spent as a schoolteacher as having provided formative experiences he could lean on years later in a completely different kind of work, even with (adult) politicians (Syrjälä, 2011).

A second way that bodies influence practice “from outside” is through their fluctuating alertness and ability to concentrate. Valtonen et al. (2017) discussed a previously neglected area, the different states of being awake in organisational life and the need to overcome the dualism of being either awake or asleep at work. In their auto-ethnographic study Valtonen and her colleagues examined how the two realms are not distinct but may interpenetrate one another. Work-related stress may disrupt night-time sleep, causing subsequent daydreaming or even napping at work. The drowsy, surreal reality of night-time thus intervenes in day-time work. Typically, a sleepy body struggles to be completely present in work situations, and employees in such a state try to hide traces of their tiredness from others. However, creative professionals may also experiment with the different sensibilities of our night-time way of being, using the drowsy state as a psychological transcendent when working (Helin, 2019; see also Gomart & Hennion, 1999). However, being sleepy during daytime practical activities is typically stressful, as the normative although not necessarily realistic state of the working body is that of being strictly and completely alert (Schütz, 1945). Struggling against a conflictual bodily state may further increase this felt stress.

A third way that a body may carry outside influence to work practices relates to increased expectations on the part of employers and customers alike as regards the emotional and aesthetic persona of the employee. The experience economy is not only looking for end products but also the experience of the work-in-process, which

may involve the participation of the employee as an embodied being and often takes the form of some kind of spectacle (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017; Hjorth & Pelzer, 2007; Spicer, 2018). It has been claimed that service as a process has become more interesting than the end product (Vargo & Lusch, 2007). The lifestyle of the worker, as represented by the body, may become part of the labour process, which leads to a blurring of production and consumption (Land & Taylor, 2010; Mumby, 2016). As critical organisation theorists (Fleming, 2014; Mumby, 2016) have suggested, our lifestyles are subtly communicated by the body and through the body by means of physical appearance, style, behaviour, and personal communication (both lived and mediated). From the point of view of brand management, these embodied characteristics and how they cohere with the organisational brand and aesthetics have become a matter of importance on their own. Practice is not indifferent to this personal “extra” of our embodied presence, either. Private entrepreneurs and freelancers may experience this particularly harshly, as they do not have the label of the organisation as a buffer between their embodied persona and their work (Petriglieri et al., 2019). Speaking of a “mind” of a practice is far from accurate when the ups and downs of a practice are directly reflected back upon one’s self-image and personal value as an individual.

So far, I have extended our theoretical perspective on the practicing body from seeing the role of the body as a provider of the aesthetic and sensible part of practical knowledge to include the way the body expands on practice by bringing layers of additional significance to it. Bodily existence thus overflows a given practice situation. But how exactly does the body take such a central role in our work practices? Elke Weik’s (2019) recent “aesthetic” theory of institutions provides a promising line of thought. Weik approaches the study of institutions not by looking at their explicit objectives but instead by examining their sensible and ritualistic dimension. Her starting point is the basic human need to inhabit familiar surroundings in a meaningful way (see also Heidegger, 1927/1962). This is achieved by means of bodily “dwelling” in institutions (Weik, 2019). According to Weik, we are able to immediately and affectively recognise institutions through the rhythm and aesthetics of their practices. The familiar repetition of such aesthetics provides us with existential security. Thus, it is not only the discursive content of (institutional) practice that gives us the sense of meaning. The body is not only “helping” to conduct practices, but the embodied, aesthetic experience of the practice creates a foundational sense of familiarity and duration which is the provider of existential value. According to Weik (2019), these feelings and experiences condition our perception and ground our ability to express ourselves in the context of a given

practice. Elke Weik's theory provides an alternative way of understanding the body as a primary condition for practice. This is also the perspective that this thesis takes, but by looking at the process in reverse – by examining what happens when the familiar, everyday spatial relations of work practice are disrupted.

My analysis of the interview data showed that arriving in an unusual working and living environment produced a kind of a “shock” in the individuals, creating reactions of surprise but also aesthetic pleasure concerning the rural environment, as well as wonder and humoristic sentiments about the paradox of conducting knowledge work in such an environment. While there were some individuals who aimed to conduct their work in close to their usual manner while in the archipelago, most interviewees recounted ways of working that were more experimental and open to the affordances of the environment and the situation. The formation of liminal space that was experientially open, creative, reflective, and communal was identified from the accounts of the participants (see Article 2). A playful, affective atmosphere took hold, which stimulated an appetite to conduct work practices in an alternative manner. Different kinds of spaces were used for working. Some used their lodging space for individual creative work while taking turns with collective deliberation phases in the office space. Others worked in the yard or on a balcony. One participant felt comfortable working in her camper as it allowed easy access to nature. Some spaces and phases were also clearly designated as non-work realms. One group designated the dining area as being a space for communal meal preparation, dining, and social bonding, where work matters were (generally) prohibited. Excursions into the environment or taking a swim signified transition to a leisure phase. There were also activities that fell in between the categories of work and leisure. Such activities involved plenty of collective reflection and exchanging of ideas in which future work was planned and dreamed up, while work situations and conditions were reflected on in a more general manner. Despite the unclear character of such activity, the participants described having benefited from it to a degree they found professionally significant (Article 2). All in all, the process of settling into the archipelago “world” was guided by embodied and affective experience.

The formation of practices in the archipelago was also interwoven with bodily existence in a deeper way, as the closer look at selected participants taken in Article 3 reveals. As discussed in sub-chapter 4.2, it is possible to distinguish a horizontal and a more depth-laden vertical dimension of perception that were in operation in the archipelago. I found that the personal and professional histories, as well as the sedimented, embodied habits of participants also conditioned the way the opportunities afforded by the archipelago were perceived. Although, on a surface

level, the participants experienced the archipelago environment in a somewhat similar manner, embracing the pleasant and calm natural environment, a deeper analysis of the selected participants revealed that these experiences were individually contextualised and made sense of depending on the personal work histories and backgrounds of the participants. These findings become intelligible through Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2012) theory concerning how our perception is tied to our habitual, sedimented, bodily experiences. According to Merleau-Ponty, our perception of the environment acts back, producing a mirroring effect in us (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c). In work conditions that are highly stable, the regularity of such habitual exchange increases. At the end of such a process of development lie highly inert routines. Conversely it must follow that an environment to which we are not habituated will make us respond with other than our usual habitual action patterns. This has consequences for our ability to perceive. Many of the participants found that dwelling in the archipelago environment enabled them to access an alternative way of seeing their work and its conditions. This alternative point of view led to existential reflections which went beyond the scope of their working lives.

Here the subjectivity that Merleau-Ponty grants to individuals, for all its environmental embeddedness, comes to the fore (as opposed to other non-representational, more post-human philosophies). Although Merleau-Ponty underlines the reciprocal relationship between the body and its environment, he also states that each body moves according to its own perspective (Heinämaa, 2015). People may see the same situation, including a practice situation, in surprisingly different ways, perceiving it as anything ranging from pleasant to traumatic (Kozyreva, 2018). Building on Merleau-Ponty's perspective, Kozyreva (2018) seems to suggest that there is plenty of such embodied memory that has grown relatively distant from our usual practical activities and thus has fewer chances of entering our affective consciousness. However, it may be reawakened if something in the present situation reminds us of it. Such awakenings happened to certain individuals in the archipelago; these events are discussed in Articles 2–4. Consider this reflection provided by a male ICT consultant in Article 2:

I don't know how you actually make this atmosphere happen ... I just had missed this so much, this kind of activity and excitement, experimenting with everything without a judgmental attitude. I think this group has had a clear, positive, active attitude, and we have been building upon each other's thoughts. I almost feel I am getting younger.

Workplaces that put high value on innovation typically aim to combat a narrowed, conventional, and routine mindset and instead tease out the liveliness, that “something else” that employees are suspected to embody in their lives outside the workplace (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Fleming, 2014; Land & Taylor, 2010). We are requested to “think out of the box” and be creative. However, there are characteristics in our urban spatial and technological infrastructure that may prohibit us from doing just that. D’Adderio (2011) has discussed how workplaces are pervaded by different kinds of artifacts, both visible and cognitive (such as rules and software), that prescribe our activity unnoticed. Similarly, several spatial researchers (see, e.g., Dale & Burrell, 2008; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015) have discussed how office aesthetics are designed to produce desired behaviour. In conclusion, I consider that we need both movement and dwelling for our comfort and imagination. Spatial movement keeps our habits from becoming too inert, while dwelling creates existential security and meaning. Experimenting with workspaces may unravel hidden spatial norms and allow us to trace a path back to how our seemingly commonsense practices and habits were formed.

5.2 On affects and atmospheres

There has been an increasing interest in affects in organisational studies. While a critical turn to affects has emerged quite recently in organisation studies (Fotaki et al., 2017), a number of organisational research strands have examined affects at least implicitly for some time already. The role of affects and their latent force in organisational life has been at least touched upon in spatial organisation studies (e.g., Dale & Burrell, 2008; Taylor & Spicer, 2007), practice-based studies (e.g., Gherardi, 2006; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009), aesthetic studies of organisation (e.g., Martin, 2002; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2018; Strati, 2007) and critical management studies (e.g., Fleming, 2014; Mumby, 2016). Although interest in affects may not have been explicitly thematised in these studies, some of them do indicate the influence of affect theories (see, e.g., Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Gherardi, 2017). Affective experience was also a dimension that could hardly be ignored when trying to understand the significance of the archipelago work experiment. But what are affects really? How does one detect their emergence?

While some critical organisational affect studies have drawn from psychoanalytical approaches that focus on unconscious affective representations (see, e.g., Thompson & Willmott, 2016), there also exists a strong call to approach

affects as opportunities for liberating unsettlement and thus increased awareness of new dimensions of experience (Fotaki et al., 2017). This latter approach, which I refer to here as non-representational, searches for experiences of bodily displacement and contagion from energies that circulate independently of individual psyches (Fotaki et al., 2017; Massumi, 1995; Thrift, 2008).

Within this non-representational approach, an affect is generally seen as a pre-personal, autonomic force that exists beyond consciousness and thus escapes a stable definition, representation, or identity (Thrift, 2008). The approach builds upon Brennan's (2004) theory of transmission of affect, which states that affects change our physical constitution as they are carried within the atmosphere of a situation. According to this thinking, affects have their origins in our social situation and structures. Objects and aesthetics can also generate affects (Beyes, 2017; see also Borch, 2010). Our material bodies act like receptors and mediators within the whirlwind of these energies that, by dint of their immediacy, often leave conscious reflection behind. This line of thought is critical of the "discursive turn" of the social sciences (Stenner, 2018, p. 208, 2019), considering identities and categorical thinking to be reductive if not outright oppressive. Turning to affects has also become a political quest in the hands of those advocating for a fuller experience of the moment one is living in while calling for critical analysis of how affect can be used as a subtle tool of power (Fotaki et al., 2017).

Although the concepts of affect and emotion are sometimes used interchangeably in organisation studies, in their review of existing research Fotaki et al. (2017) underline the distinction between affect and emotion. According to them, affect is primordially an automatic bodily sensation, an intensity that is transmitted between people, while emotion is its retrospective, discursive interpretation (pp. 4–5). This perspective understands affect as holding a limitless potential, as it transcends human boundaries, with emotion being necessarily a reduction (Stenner, 2018, 2019).

However, the ontological separation of affects from emotions and even a sacralising of affect (Stenner, 2018, p. 208) have been met with criticism on both social psychological and philosophical grounds. It has been described as problematic to assume that affects can be transmitted directly, as not everyone senses things, such as an atmosphere, in an identical way (Wetherell, 2015). Some bodies are seized differently than others (Bille & Simonsen, 2021, p. 297). In addition, if one understands affect as a mere "intensity" beyond any semantic context, it is questionable as to how it could be grasped in the first place (Bille & Simonsen, 2021; Stenner, 2018, 2019). Furthermore, if affects are a completely depersonalised force, why do we who experience them care about their description and

interpretation? Wetherell (2015) suggests that, in fact, affective experience is not autonomous but “constantly flowing, merging, developing and changing” as it interacts with more conscious subjective states and changing contexts (pp. 145, 152). In addition, how this flow is registered and interpreted is dependent on social and cultural learning as well as the specificities of the situation. Following Wetherell (2015), Bille and Simonsen (2021) state that, rather than seeing affect merely as a passively circulating factor, analysing how affects interweave with our embodied and social practices would provide grounds for a more nuanced understanding of affect as both pre-conscious and subject to social rules and norms. In line with the discussion in the previous sub-chapter, I suggest that affects emerge in the reciprocal relation between the individual and the environment, but that their formation depends also on individual capacities to be affected, which in turn rest upon all the life experiences that are sedimented in embodied, habitual memory. Affects are like deflagrations that happen upon contact between the two counterparts. Therefore, it would perhaps be more accurate to speak of *affective reactions* than *affects* in an essential sense.

The interplay between so-called affective forces and the social and historical context of a situation can be examined more concretely by turning to empirical studies of affective experiences of atmospheres in organisations (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013; Martin, 2002; Michels & Steyaert, 2017). Placing her study within the aesthetic strand of organisation research (and not explicitly within affect studies), Martin (2002) has examined the “spirit of a place” in elderly care facilities. Care work is extremely corporeal, as it requires extensive closeness to and touching of other humans, including providing help with sensitive bodily matters such as the cleaning of bodily messes. Bodily experiences in such institutions – both those of caregivers and of residents – were conditioned by the dependent position of the residents, by physical and mental decline, and by death and dying (Martin, 2002). Engaging in ethnographic study of everyday life in these institutions, Martin (2002) found that the level of consideration on the part of the caregivers regarding the more sensitive aspects of their work affected the atmospheres in these institutions. Martin (2002) describes the institutions that were more successful in this regard as “homey” in their spirit, as opposed to others that felt more “institutional”. In homey facilities, residents were friendly and curious; in institutional facilities they appeared more withdrawn and indifferent (Martin, 2002). Although being similar to institutional facilities in general terms, homey facilities seemed more colourful, had residents’ personal items around, and conveyed an overall feeling of casualness and emotional closeness (Martin, 2002). The institutional facilities, by contrast, were more

controlled in terms of the freedom of residents to move and act autonomously. Thus, the researcher found that “the spirit of place” was upheld by the sensitive power relation between the caregivers and their fragile clients, a relation that could easily go out of balance. The researcher admits that her interpretations could be influenced by her outsider position, which caused her to empathise with the visiting relatives, who would feel concerned about the treatment of their family members (Martin, 2002). That said, what is relevant in Martin’s discussion for understanding the role of affect is the argument, well illustrated by this particularly sensitive case, that there is not one overarching affective atmosphere, but that an affective atmosphere is dependent on the social status of those experiencing it, including their power position, training, ethics, habituation, physical condition, and other specifics relevant to the social context.

More recent research interested in the creation of organisational atmospheres (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013; Michels & Steyaert, 2017) has, on the contrary, left the backgrounds of those who experience it aside. These studies draw from the non-representational tradition of affect studies, and thus their interest is in affect as a moving intensity, and its capability to unsettle existing structures. These studies have examined temporary artistic interventions and their capacity to penetrate to the “mystery of the monotonous everyday” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013) by “unsiting” or “reorganising a site’s constellation of material and immaterial elements” to unsettle everyday experiences of time and space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; Michels & Steyaert, 2017, p. 81). While Michels and Steyaert (2017) look at affect as it emerges within a collective, Beyes and Steyaert (2013) discuss the aesthetic experience of a solitary participant in an art installation in which historical people and places were brought to life on the streets of Berlin with the aid of technology. This created the impression of hidden, secretive, and overlooked dimensions of space – “ghosts of the past” – momentarily overcoming a familiar space. Beyes and Steyaert (2013) interpret this experience as uncanny. They discuss how the meaning of *heimlich* (homely) has, in recent times, gradually come to be conflated with its previous opposite, *unheimlich*: eerie, weird, frightening, and ghostly. Beyes and Steyaert (2013) argue that this shows how the “homely” is haunted by the “unhomely” in modern society, which is conducive to creating uncanny atmospheres. Uncanny experiences involve feelings of uncertainty and disturbance about the boundaries of inside and outside (p. 1448), as has also been observed of liminality.

Uncanniness threatens the stability of existing representational distinctions and categorisations by unlocking affective capacities (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013). Spatial researchers (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013, p. 1459; Michels & Steyaert, 2017) ask us

not to ignore these “affective flashes” that we experience in particular situations because it is precisely these flashes that provide enriching information about the hidden qualities of the particular space or situation – and that may reveal a potential avenue for new ways of organising.

As regards the case study discussed in this thesis, the sense of wonder and surprise the archipelago environment awakened was often narrated by participants in the form of momentary “flashes”. Participants related how, due to their sensing sights, sounds, or rhythms in the surrounding natural environment, their attention became captured by small natural plays. Participants described how small-scale natural scenes, such as a family of birds swimming by, waves splashing, or a sheep baaing, had intervened in their consciousnesses and were experienced affectively (Article 2). It seems that their aim was to capture and demonstrate for the interviewer something of the affective character of their experience, as well as the oddness and contrast to the more “modern” world they were otherwise connected to by much stronger ties.

Besides these atmospheric encounters that remained in their memories, the participants also noticed a change in overall mood regarding their relationships to work and life. As is typical of affective experiences, while participants wanted to verbally express these changes, they simultaneously felt the need to convey their regret at the impossibility of pinning them down in exact terms. The participants often had to search for words to express what they had experienced. Some took recourse to metaphoric expressions such as “soul is resting”, “here you can feel an echo of emptiness” and “my thoughts have been able to fly toward tomorrow”, as found in Article 2. Stenner (2018) discusses insightfully how making sense of a liminal experience requires metaphoric and even artful expression. Liminal situations involve heightened affectivity, and this means that the commonsense, explicit language of our more normative worlds fails us. There is such novelty in transformative liminal experiences that existing representations cannot hope to capture it; instead, the situation requires “presentations” by means of which something that is experienced affectively first-hand becomes a symbol (Stenner, 2018). This is also how liminal situations may become incubation-sites for ritual and art. I posit that the depictions given in the form of small atmospheric vignettes or metaphorical expressions by the participants were such artistic expressions of a liminal situation – efforts to capture and express something essential and important about their affective experience that went beyond words. In some cases, the metaphors were so effective that the participants anticipated that they could be used later to call forth and relive the archipelago experience, as in the case of “Korppoo mentality” (Article 2).

As described above, much of current organisational research on affects understands them as subconscious and pre-personal forces. Emotions, being understood mainly as discursive translations of affects, have been less interesting to this research. What is at risk of being sidestepped by this division is the way our life histories and sedimented experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012) play out in our affective relation to the world. This leads us back to the question – that also Martin (2002), as discussed earlier, posed: why people may react to “affective atmospheres” in different ways. I think that it is important to emphasise, along with Kozyreva (2018), that affective reactions may not be a direct effect of the surrounding collective spirit, but may also be stimulated by any latent meaning that a situation carries for a person. This became evident in the reflective activity that the archipelago participants carried out, as is described in Articles 2–4. The archipelago experience took the participants to varying places mentally. In some cases, the participants were reminded of ideal and happy life phases in their work or personal lives; in other cases they ruminated about life choices that seemed more unfortunate and troubling in retrospect. Yet others were more geared to the future, using the archipelago experience as a platform to imagine more desirable future scenarios for their work and life. These various existential reflections show, as Merleau-Ponty has stated, that our relation to our environment is not direct, but involves a mirror effect. An environment generally considered as “pleasant”, such as a natural and rural environment, may not be experienced simply as such since individual histories also intervene in this perception. Simply put, as discussed in sub-chapter 4.2, our past is in what we see. When a habitual relation to environment is disrupted – or “unsited”, as Beyes and Steyaert (2013) put it – the “mirror” suddenly reflects to us an altered image of ourselves, which can be experienced as liminal.

This also suggests that affects are not merely transmitted from outside; our bodies are themselves differently conditioned to be affected based on our life experiences. Beyes and Steyaert (2013) speak of a space having a haunting quality, but this haunting quality or latent affective layer may be a product of our own past experience. Think, for example, of how after returning from a vacation one may first perceive the old workplace and routines as slightly odd, and feel oneself as being somehow out of place; such periods may feel as if the past and present atmospheres are overlapping. Or consider how someone recovering from a trauma may be particularly sensitive to sudden or loud noises and other restlessness in the environment. There is evidence that therapeutic and green landscapes reduce bodily felt stress (Ulrich et al., 1991), and someone very stressed may feel this change in bodily condition even in her reflective consciousness. Such an affective register of

relief was present in those interviews where previous work strain emerged as an issue. But there were also examples of an awakening of the more distant sedimentations in embodied memory: some of the archipelago participants seemed as if they had relived some earlier phases of their lives. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail in sub-chapters 6.2 and 7.1. An affective experience may be more layered and temporally complex than it might seem at first glance.

Another instance of the “indirect”, affective environmental relation during the archipelago experiment was the reported emergence of rhythms, practices, and new ideas about work in a largely non-conscious way, as if such developments were simply taking “their natural course”, or occurring “accidentally”, in the words of the participants. Typically, these curious semi-conscious revelations involved subtle rhythmical movements within the archipelago facilities, such as strolling around in the environment, changing places of work, or alternating between company and solitude, as I have described in Article 2. With this kind of intuitive, probing activity, some of the experimenters found solutions to problems they were not completely aware of having. For example, a group accidentally invented a working method that improved their work process (Article 2). It seems that some things that had implicitly been in process in the (working) lives of the participants found a manifestation in this liminal space created by an extraordinary and non-obvious work environment. I suggest that affective, liminal experience of the change in environment stimulated incubation: automatic, unconscious processing of problems (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006; George, 2007, 2009). Some interview accounts showed that the incubation was still in process as the participants were readying themselves to leave the archipelago premises. They conveyed that the archipelago experience had been deeply meaningful to them, but could not yet describe how exactly this was the case. Instead, they assumed that the meaning would become clear to them in the time to come (Article 2).

It is also worth reflecting a bit on the duration of such an environmental displacement. In the studies by Beyes and Steyaert (2012, 2013), the urban artistic interventions lasted less than a day, and in Michels and Steyaert’s (2017) example two days, but the participants returned to their normal lives in the evenings and could interrupt their participation in the interventions whenever they wanted. Interruption of the experiment was also possible in the archipelago, but the participants were determined to stay for the whole period as they had invested in an experiment that was relatively laborious to arrange – and because the archipelago locations were isolated and could not easily be exited.

The urban artistic interventions (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013; Michels & Steyaert, 2017) aimed to create a strong, even shocking affective experience. In such cases, the affective shock reaction may have been so overwhelming as to suggest a collectively uniform affective experience. In the archipelago experience, there were surprises about the new environment too, but the initial shock soon transitioned into a state of dwelling in the environment, although this dwelling was experimental, playful, and liminal in character. I suggest that the ability to dwell in the practices (Gherardi, 2009; Weik, 2019) that the period of one week's duration allowed, which is not possible in shorter interventions, caused the initial affective experience to transform into something else. Dwelling brought forth the existential dimension of this affective experience as it had time to evolve into a new "hypothetical normal", something that "could be". It made the participants question what life and work would be like if some aspects of the archipelago "world" could be transported back to their everyday lives. I suggest that spatial "unsiting" may generate an affective intensity, but the personal, life-historical dimension of this intensity and its potential creative contribution to one's life only has time to evolve when the "unsiting" period is long enough to enable embodied dwelling and incubation within the situation.

It has been recognised that incubation is particularly useful when trying to solve complex problems or come up with new ideas (George, 2009). However, contemporary work environments that are characterised by time pressure, multitasking, and norms of rapid communication may impede such activity, which largely depends on subconscious rhythms. Changing the environment or "unsiting" can be helpful in this regard, as it jolts the habitual bodily schema and unlocks affective, embodied capacities that are conducive to incubation.

5.3 Affective technologies/artifacts and permanent liminality

We can be said to live an era of mediated reality (Turkle, 2011). Brands, virtually circulated images, and virtual social interaction have started to emerge as the nexus of production in what could be called a "persuasive economy" (see Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Digital communication tools have made the physical workspace provided by the employer less self-evident than it used to be. This has raised an obvious question, one amplified by the situation created by the coronavirus: why do we still need face-to-face meetings in a workplace if these can be replaced with mediated communication?

Social phenomenologist Alfred Schütz (1932/1972) reflected on the special character of face-to-face contact long before the emergence of social media. Schütz defined an embodied contact in a shared environment as a “we-relationship” that is foundational to all social relationships. In a we-relationship, the “I” temporarily coordinates the series of its own lived experiences with the respective series of experiences of “Thou” (Schütz, 1932/1972). What results is rhythmical synchronisation and mirroring between two “streams of consciousness” (pp. 163–165). The lived experiences of two (or more) people are temporarily merged in this interplay, which resembles dance or music as regards its shared rhythmicity. This shared rhythmicity also comes to the fore in organisational rituals where embodied participation in repetitive and familiar social activity creates a pleasurable sense of organisational continuity (Weik, 2019). Moreover, as Merleau-Ponty (1964a) states, “the perception of the other founds morality by realizing the paradox of an *alter ego*, of a common situation, by placing my perspectives and my incommunicable solitude in the visual field of another and of all the others” (p. 26). Realising in the core of the most personal experience that there is an infinite number of alternative perspectives to one’s own, and submitting this experience for others to see is, for Merleau-Ponty (1964a), the ultimate remedy for scepticism and pessimism (p. 26). Such multi-dimensionality, risk, and invisible energy are present in a concrete meeting of persons in a shared space.

As a contrast to the we-relationship, in mediated communication we replace this rich contact with imagination (Schütz, 1932/1972, p. 260). According to Schütz (1932/1972), one engaged in mediated “They-orientation” seeks to understand the other indirectly by means of one’s own experience of social life in general (p. 264). Obviously Schütz’s writings date from a time when people only had access to mass media, whereas social media works interactively. Nonetheless, the risks of misinterpretation, simplification, and exaggeration that can become amplified in expanding communication cycles are evident in today’s social media. It has been suggested that substituting mediated communication for face-to-face communication has had consequences for our capacity to feel empathy (Turkle, 2011) – and perhaps even for our ethical and moral sensitivities (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a).

From a phenomenological perspective, one is not completely aware of all the intricacies of a face-to-face situation in which one is oriented towards the other by means of the habitual body. Kozyreva (2018) has aptly summarised a central idea of Merleau-Ponty’s theory: we live more than we can represent to ourselves (p. 206). However, the developers of affective and aesthetic “persuasive technologies” are

working hard to minimise the gap between mediated and face-to-face relationships. As a result, mediated communication is no longer necessarily experienced as something “less” substantial; social media and virtual worlds have been able to compete with and substitute for face-to-face relationships (Turkle, 2011). These technological developments have also given increased prominence to the argument, put forward by proponents of “new materialism”, that humans might not be the sole actors able to reform the material world and collective meanings, as traditionally thought (see, e.g., Fox & Alldred, 2016 for a review). The new materialist approach considers human action equal to that of the elements of its surrounding material-discursive constellation.

Seen in this way, technologies and artifacts can be considered to act, as they enable and constrain the actions of humans seeking to achieve their pragmatic goals in the workplace (see, e.g., D'Adderio, 2011). But this is not all. We may also eagerly offer up our thinking and acting to be modified by artifacts because of the way they make us feel. Organisational aesthetics, including brands and logos, are increasingly designed to offer easily available pleasure with an intuitive appeal of “common sense” and “direct human experience” (Mumby, 2016, p. 890). Hjorth and Pelzer (2007) write that we are increasingly organised by a continued flow of images and stories that aspire to the tone of a familiar and commonsense folktale – we have become a “recited society” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 186, cited in Hjorth & Pelzer, 2007, p. 877).

As creativity and self-expression are celebrated in the world of work, and value is increasingly produced in the ongoing communication surrounding work (Böhm & Land, 2012), everybody is encouraged to make their voice heard. Communication used to be considered a tool, but it has now become the core of work and organising (Mumby, 2016, p. 896, see also Vargo & Lusch, 2007). However, as practically everyone has become a potential content-producer, paradoxically, as Jodi Dean (2019) writes, everybody has also become audience members again. In what Dean conceptualises as “communicative capitalism”, people compete to be heard and communication has become a quantifiable asset for production. The ability to circulate is most important for the message (Mumby, 2016, p. 891). This is achieved by tapping into the lowest common denominator: affects, with sensations outrunning symbolic complexity. In this process, communication items become decontextualised and fragmented. I would suggest that the magnetic appeal of the affective communicative fragments lies in their reduced social nourishment so that one is always left wanting for more.

We revel in the current abundance of communication, but, perhaps due to its reductionist nature, we have simultaneously become suspicious of it. Feeling simultaneous fascination and repulsion for an object is characteristic of a fetish (Schwarzkopf, 2020). It could be said that social media works like a fetish, a “dangerous”, liminal object mediating between two worlds (Arnould & Cayla, 2015; Schwarzkopf, 2020). The “personas” or avatars we create in social media mediate between ourselves and a full, in-person human connection with someone. Arnould and Cayla (2015) state that a fetish substitutes for something that is too fearsome in the “other world” for us to make contact with it in its full measure (p. 1368). The passing affective intensities of mediated communication in multiple and overlapping spaces may have made the embodied personal presence of “we-relationships” (Schütz, 1932/1972) appear laborious and emotionally consuming (Turkle, 2011). It seems to me that the concealing openness of mediated communication techniques is a paradox of modern liminality. It is in fact the secrecy of the fetish – the short visual or verbal messages exchanged – that create an abstraction that keeps feeding the (subconscious) curiosity about the “real” person behind the messages and accounts. This tension and interest are maintained if one does not get physically acquainted with the person behind the surface image. It could even be said that in this sense we live in a society of increasingly partial and incomplete experiences.

Our surrounding artifacts offer affordances that become part of our embodied habits. It has been found that the persuasive and mobile technologies have been conducive to fragmentation of our use of time as they call on us to respond and comment instantly, and to work our visibility and image into various virtual channels on a constant basis (Cavazotte et al., 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Symon & Pritchard, 2015). Knowledge work is typically considered to be discontinuous in character. In their observational study, González and Mark (2004) found that non-stop work in an information management company lasted for an average of three minutes. Interruptions may of course be occasions for socialising and learning, but when frequent they also increase intensity and a sense of crisis, leading workers to strive harder in order to get their job done (Perlow, 1999; Zijlstra et al., 1999). Now if one considers the ubiquitous presence of communication technologies in contemporary knowledge work, one might concur with Wajcman and Rose (2011) that it is no longer timely or meaningful to speak of interruptions, because management of information has become core to any knowledge work, and workers can prioritise around messages and demands of different urgency. However, such work certainly does not favour concentration or in-depth thinking, either. In Article 1 I discuss how moving to work in the rural archipelago clearly affected such

restlessness at work, as the results showed a general decrease in how mentally exhausting work was perceived to be, as well as in experiences of interruptions, time pressure, negative feelings at work, and stress; on the other hand, there was an increase in general work satisfaction among the participants of the experiment.

Organisations have tried to tackle the addictive and fragmenting features of technology by establishing practices that provide occasional releases from technologically intensive environments, such as “quiet time” (Perlow, 1999), rules for digital communication – and telework. Neuroscientific approaches have underlined the role of individual-level techniques for self-control and discipline in containing the harms of restless work environments (e.g., Hallowell, 2005; Huotilainen & Saarikivi, 2018). However, it is hard to fight a materiality that implicitly and affectively conditions one to behave in a certain manner. As has already been discussed, one tends to become bodily and rhythmically habituated to one’s routines in ways that become a source of familiarity and emotional security (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012; Weik, 2019). In such cases, breaking a habit may not be accomplished by simply making a conscious decision. There is a lot more at stake. In addition, communication devices have enabled communication itself to become an arena of expertise in which one needs to appear to be a potent communicator who knows the name of the game. Contemporary communication ideals pull to different directions.

One of the major themes that emerged from analysis of the material discussed in this thesis was the contrast between the existence of participants somewhere in between multiple virtual and real spaces when back in the “normal” environment, and the clarity and simplicity of the rural archipelago setting, where daily practices and rhythms were created among a small group of people living together in a relationship with their colleagues (Schütz, 1932/1972). The participants synchronised their personal and embodied rhythms of work, leisure, and rest with those of their colleagues. This synchronisation also involved situated practices of deliberation, mentoring, and feedback. Private entrepreneurs and those whose communication with colleagues normally relied mainly on ICT revelled in the ability to have immediate feedback, to reflect, and to build views together with colleagues. Given this rare opportunity, their discussions with their colleagues occasionally went relatively deep with regards to work conditions, goals, dreams, and the future. They lamented the lack of such a rich social mirror in their everyday working lives. Yet it was evident that the benefits of the concrete physical work community were not limited to the opportunities to get professional help with obstacles. What had also

been missed were the casual communal life with colleagues and spontaneous collective sharing of any ups and downs of work.

One of the individual cases of Article 3, that of Mia, illustrates this socially more fundamental effect of the temporary we-relationship of the archipelago. Mia relied almost completely on ICT for communication with her colleagues during her everyday life. What became evident in her case was not only her satisfaction with face-to-face brainstorming in the archipelago, which gave her in-depth insight into the firm's core processes; even more fundamental seemed to be the opportunity to just be with these colleagues who were usually no more than avatars on her computer screen. The way Mia endorsed this act of spending time together speaks to the importance of this rich social contact as a precondition for the success of the more instrumental, collegial product development gatherings in the archipelago. We arrive again back at the insight, discussed in sub-chapter 5.1, that embodied participation in practice and its rhythms enables dwelling in that practice, which provides, at a deeper level, a precondition and a framework for the more cognitive sense-making processes (Weik, 2019). As I have discussed in Articles 2 and 4, the concrete archipelago community enhanced the participants' ability to mindfully concentrate on what they were carrying out at any moment. I attribute this recuperated ability to the calming effect of dwelling in the rhythms of this concrete interpersonal community. How this affected the participants' sense of time is something that I have discussed in Article 4.

When comparing their archipelago experience with their everyday environments, the participants were rather critical. In the archipelago, there emerged plenty of discussion about the habits of responding to different alerts and messages even at unconventional hours, or restlessly switching between different tasks or leisure chores. Participants also spoke about difficulties maintaining discipline when working alone, and how the aforementioned patterns of behaviour fragmented workdays, hindered their ability to manage workloads, and brought about a blurring of work and private life. In some cases, including that of Lasse – described in Article 3 – there had been little opportunities to deeply concentrate on something prior to the experiment. These reflections originated from realising how the fragmenting tendencies of everyday life were markedly diminished or even absent in the archipelago. The participants had themselves made preparations to shape the situation in this direction (e.g., by postponing meetings), but, interestingly, colleagues from their main offices also contacted them less than they would have under ordinary circumstances (Article 4). To me this shows how an embodied presence is

a special affective affordance, the absence of which lessens incentives for casual communication.

Curiously, the interruptions and interventions that participants described as affecting their concentration in everyday life were not always concrete and external, but in some instances were the result of a self-initiated habit, a reflex to suddenly search for something to do that wasn't the task at hand in order to, as it seems, restore affective balance. In some cases, such acting patterns had translated into a permanent state of anxious agitation or somewhat apathetic meaninglessness, referred to by one participant as "tunnel work" (Article 3).

As Stenner (2018) states, there is definitive critical potential in liminality. A liminal situation involves a turnaround of the normative symbolic order, as the archipelago period managed to provide. This process can shatter the normative symbiosis of symbol (appearance) and substance (reality), providing a higher-order view on it. However, in Article 3 I discuss the idea that contemporary liminality may not be exclusively transformative, which is the main characteristic of liminality in the original theory of van Gennep (1909/1960). Transitory liminality in the original sense of the concept deals with opposites and reversals, through which the world is realised and understood (Thomassen, 2014, p. 104). On the other hand, Thomassen (2014) considers modern or postmodern liminality to be a symbolically deprived as-if experience that does not contain the depth and existential threat of traditional liminality, which was bounded by community norms. Szakolczai (2000) and Thomassen (2014) have suggested that modernity is permeated by such liminality to the extent that it can be characterised as permanent. Thomassen (2014) speaks of our contemporary need for "kick experiences", in which basically the only thing remaining from original liminal rites is the affective intensity of being "in between". We increasingly seek escape from everyday "dullness" in virtual worlds. Such an ordinary or permanent liminality is also reflected in concerns about many contemporary office bureaucracy, management, communication, and brand management tasks drifting away from what can be considered substantial activity towards image management (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Spicer, 2018), as discussed in sub-chapter 4.1.

If affectively intense "in between" has become the new normal, what is there left to turn around and reverse, if one seeks to acquire a genuinely transitory liminal experience? How can one "realise" and grasp a deeper meaning in a world where boundaries have become blurred? Stenner (2018) suggests that when unresolved, liminality may result in an experience of paralysis. Dean (2019) has argued that under harshly competitive communicative capitalism, we may have actually given up on the

goal of welfare and now treat mere survival (i.e., an ability to keep up with the pace of agitated liminality) as a victory.

As I suggest in Article 3, permanent liminality may manifest in the form of individualised work that has been fragmented into multiple roles and time/space arrangements, both virtual and real. In such work the boundaries between work and private life may become increasingly inconceivable (see also Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). Although the pace and rhythm of such work was demanding particularly for two of the individual cases analysed in Article 3, Lasse and Mia, it was also their lifestyle. They had become habituated to the boundaryless, nervous intensity of permanent liminality. Intensive, networked expert work, such as that of Lasse and Mia, is idealised in our culture. I see it also as part of the pattern of the clarity of social structures being traded for the affective intensity of indeterminacy, speed, and potentiality in modern, liminal, virtually mediated experiences.

Paradoxically, the traditional, rural, and simple work setting of the archipelago experiment facilitated the creation of an alternative “world” that was able to provide the reverse experience to that of permanent liminality. Richard Sennett (2008) has suggested that a traditional craftsmen’s workshop, in which people worked and lived together and gave rhythm to their daily lives with social rituals and mentoring, was a social space that might still be able to teach us something (pp. 53–80). In this spatial we-relationship, mind and body were integrated in an immediate way that is probably distant to “these times of sophisticated multiple ‘readings’ of culture and postmodern irony”, to paraphrase Dale and Burrell (2008, p. 86). Going back to simplicity and crafting daily social rhythms in a we-relationship (Schütz, 1932/1972) on the grounds of how bodily and collective rhythms tune into that of a concrete, bounded environment, might be a way to create and experiment with a new social structure that is more sensitive to bodily needs and contains an ethical and social surplus (Mumby, 2016) compared to the increasingly fragmented contemporary ways of life.

6 WORK UNBOUNDED BY SPACE

6.1 Finding shelter on an open ground

The current ideal of the workplace is communicated by the high-tech, aerial, transparent headquarters of large corporations with open offices and hot desks (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Hirst, 2011; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015). Recent design of working spaces has also highlighted playful elements, which aim to support creative, expressive, social, and entrepreneurial behaviour at work (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; Dale & Burrell, 2008; De Paoli et al., 2019; Walker, 2011). There has been a move away from individual desks towards mobility within the organisational facilities and beyond (Dale & Burrell, 2008). De Paoli et al. (2019) have examined internet images of offices that were acclaimed as “creative” by their owners, and found that these spaces incorporated themes of home, play, sport, technology (both new and old), nature, and cultural history. Such spaces were typically open, eye-catching, and flashy, but also thoroughly designed and planned to embody the architect’s vision of creativity-enhancing surroundings. However, De Paoli et al. (2019) concluded that what the polished images left out was the role of the users. Absent from these “creative workspaces” was any hint of the messy, chaotic and experimentative processes typical of creative activity in practice, or, for that matter, creativity as a quiet thinking process (see also De Paoli and Ropo, 2017; Salovaara; 2014). There seems to exist a discrepancy between modern, designed, flashy “creative workspaces” and the oftentimes chaotic reality of creative work, a discrepancy between image and reality. Furthermore, despite burgeoning literature, it has not yet been shown whether the trendy creative workspaces actually spur creativity (Thoring et al., 2020).

Where do these contradictory tendencies in contemporary office space stem from, and how could a space of work be approached in an alternative way? Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) has provided a genealogical analysis of the coming into being of the modern space pervaded by total planning and an increased focus on visibility. This spatial logic is, according to Lefebvre, due to a very specific dynamic between dimensions that are at play in the social construction of space: conceived space, perceived space, and lived space; dimensions that together form a “spatial triad”.

The first term refers to the abstract realm in which space is planned rationally, conceptually, and scientifically by architects, urbanists, planners, and the like, while “perceived space” is the space of actual practice, and “lived space” represents the affective, emotional, and symbolic experience of space. According to Lefebvre (1974/1991), in our contemporary capitalist society, planning of space has become strategic and all-encompassing – in a word, total. A capitalist space needs to be suitable for exchange, before anything else, and therefore its qualities must be standardised as well as made transparent and measurable (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Stanek, 2008, pp. 70–71). This is global space by nature, and so does not valorise local differences (Stanek, 2008). Public and private spaces, urban and natural spaces – all of these fall within its purview. Conceived space is constantly seeking expansion, and thus has taken an upper hand over lived space – the space of lived experience, which creates difference (Wilson, 2013).

The conceived space of total planning, which Lefebvre (1974/1991) also defines as abstract space, is a fetishised space. Anything that seems unproductive or to be a relic from the past is in danger of being erased by this spatial logic. After first dividing space according to rational, commercial principles, this logic calls for the divided lots to be reunified in a new order, thus producing a concrete abstraction (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Stanek, 2008). Lefebvre (1974/1991) has argued that this process renders space reduced and unidimensional. However, rationalising cannot completely pulverise the history of space and its preceding symbolic or sacred dimensions, as some traces of these survive sedimented beneath the rational space (pp. 48–51). Ultimately this survival is granted by nature: the foundation of even the most rationally planned spaces (p. 110).

This orientation of total planning has drifted far away from the way space was anthropologically appropriated. According to Lefebvre (1974/1991), the anthropological or sensory-practical space was the state from which the historical development of social space begun. With anthropological space Lefebvre refers to how we concretely appropriate the space that is most immediately near to us. Lefebvre (1974/1991) demonstrates the meaning of this by delving into cases of early pre-modern societies. Within these societies, space was carved out of nature and expanded in an emergent and incremental manner, based on the situated social and physical needs of people and according to the taste of individual builders (see also Pallasmaa, 2005). Within this practice, Lefebvre (1974/1991) suggests that space became an extension of the body and a reflection of the community. Lefebvre (1974/1991) captures the formation of anthropological space with a metaphorical reference to a spider that creates its space by weaving a web concretely around its

own body (pp. 173, 193). As an example of space that reflects such immediacy while also manifesting relatively developed forms of production, it is suggested one look to medieval cities such as Venice. The city and its surroundings, incrementally constructed and expanded, created a texture and a multiplicity of layers (pp. 73–74, 76–77, 235). Some of these spaces, with their labyrinthine, mysterious pathways, resemble a work of art as if they had emerged by themselves, much as “a rose does not know that it is a rose” (p. 74). For Lefebvre, this fundamental mystery is the reason why these spaces continue to fascinate so many tourists even today.

The core of the early pre-modern space, which was very “lived” in comparison to modern space, was “absolute space”, a religious space dense with mythic and image-rich narratives. According to Lefebvre’s interpretation, the spiritual density of these spaces was such that they needed to be bodily experienced for their force to be understood (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 236), yet their significance was felt beyond their physical form. Lefebvre (1974/1991) specifically highlights those absolute spaces that derived their spiritual force from the mysteries of the subterranean world. The crypts of the Christian churches of the early Middle Ages epitomised these kinds of spaces, evoking the mystery and terror of the unseen and the limit of life (pp. 253–262). The crypts contained art that only priests were permitted to see, which must have only added to their mystery in the eyes of commoners (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). There existed a living dynamic between the realms of the “hidden” and the visible, between mysteries of the underground “world”, the everyday “cosmos”, and the divinity of “heaven”. Such a space reflected layers in human existence, layers that could be bodily experienced in one’s concrete spatial reality. According to Lefebvre’s interpretation, there was definitely a “haunted quality” to that space, a quality that Beyes and Steyaert (2013) consider to be enriching and worth teasing out even in our contemporary spatial experiences.

Much has changed in our modern times; such volumes and texture of space have largely been overtaken by the surface, where “any overall view surrenders to visual signals spaced out along fixed trajectories already laid out in the ‘plan’” of the abstract space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 313). In the anthropological spaces of pre-modern societies, the living body was the nexus wherein transition between an experience of depth and the surface was felt (p. 283). Space did not need to be completely laid bare and open, but instead it was experienced as containing duplications, echoes, and reverberations (p. 184), with glimpses of historical or religious worlds to be affectively sensed. In modern abstract spaces, reduced by the fetish of the “plan”, meanings are concentrated on the surface. When forms are governed by a single law or plan, a space is produced that has no qualities beyond an underpinning concept.

According to Lefebvre's critique, such a space no longer challenges or refuses as a materiality, but merely reflects. Instead of providing an experience of depth or ambiguous mystery, the surfaces simply gaze back at us, making us increasingly (and often uncomfortably) aware of our behaviour (Dale & Burrell, 2008).

As Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty both discuss, in human perception we comprehend ourselves through embodied reciprocal reflection between ourselves and our surroundings. However, according to Lefebvre (1974/1991), in an abstract space this mirror effect becomes curiously generalised (p. 286). Dale and Burrell (2008) have elaborated upon this experience with their discussion of the baroque effect of contemporary office design. In Baroque architecture, the sensual and the visual were overloaded and theatricalised with visual and spatial tricks, such as distorting mirrors, labyrinths, and mazes used to suggest visionary or miraculous scenes and awaken awe at the might of the sovereign (pp. 73–76). Baroque style relied on a play of vision from multiple perspectives. Dale and Burrell (2008) as well as Kerr et al. (2016) have identified similar qualities in the aesthetics of post-modern workplace architecture, which no longer seeks to enforce only disciplined behaviour but also affective bonding by means of creating dazzling experiences. Dale and Burrell (2008) state that by soliciting a certain “lifestyle” by means of trying to strategically design certain aesthetic experiences, this play with affects obscures power relations (see also Daskalaki et al., 2008). Dale and Burrell (2008) find here a risk of leaving the individual increasingly vulnerable and unable to maintain critical reflexivity towards the workings of the organisation (p. 76).

Dale and Burrell (2008) seem to suggest that despite their apparent informality and ease, the contemporary aestheticised and “creative” offices have actually managed to rationalise further aspects of the “lived” space than traditional offices, which were still dictated by the more direct control of assigning each individual their place (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004, p. 1096). The current aestheticised and creative offices are commonly portrayed as a radical break with the traditional Taylorist design of geometric planning, corridors, and cubicles. Aesthetics may be a tool to mould employee commitments and identities in subtle ways (Borch, 2010; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Mumby, 2016). Dale and Burrell (2008) claim that continued over-stimulus on one of the senses reduces multisensory experience (see also Pallasmaa, 2005). This is conducive to a detached, external sense of self with a heightened awareness of the norms that are to be followed.

Can there be room for resistance to such aesthetic seduction as that depicted by Dale and Burrell (2008)? Again, the last resort of resistance may lie with the lived body. Lefebvre (1974/1991) insisted that our “lived experience” cannot be

completely at ease in such spaces. Much in the same vein as Merleau-Ponty, Lefebvre (1974/1991) argues that humans try to appropriate spaces by means of the concrete situation of their bodies and their rhythms. We live multiple rhythms simultaneously, including the bodily ones of sleep, hunger and thirst, and the rhythms of social practice (pp. 205–207). Our bodily needs, conditions and embodied histories are expressed in these cyclically recurring rhythms (Fuchs, 2018). However, modern spaces that increasingly rely on an overarching abstract concept to the detriment of the more down-to-earth ways of dwelling, resist many of the more embodied ways of appropriating a space, which is why spatial experiences are so often contradictory (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). For example, Wasserman and Frenkel (2015) describe how female workers in a brand-new modern office building were aware and uncomfortable about their bodily presence and visibility to others, to the extent of even trying to avoid eating or going to restroom.

According to Lefebvre, contradictory spaces have consequences for our sense-making capacities – a theme that also emerged from the analysis of the archipelago experience and is discussed in the previous chapter. Lefebvre argues quite bluntly that space no longer enables us to understand and “live” the embodied, opaque dimension of our existence. As Lefebvre (1974/1991) states, “users” cannot recognise their embodied selves within an abstract space, with the consequence that thought “cannot conceive of adopting a critical stance towards it” (p. 93). It is interesting that here one finds a parallel to a theme that was discussed earlier in this summary in the context of work autonomy (chapter 2): the way autonomy – a very abstract idea itself – also creates difficulties in sense-making about the relationship between work and “life”. Lefebvre (1974/1991) states that in an abstract space “[e]go no longer relates to its own nature, to the material world, or even to the ‘thingness’ of things (commodities), but only to things bound to their signs and indeed ousted and supplanted by them” (p. 311). Fleming (2014) goes as far as to state that marketisation of modern space/time domains calibrates all behaviour to a cost-benefit analysis (pp. 881–882). This raises questions regarding the extent to which autonomous ways of working, being the least contained (and protected) by communal practices, spaces, and times, are vulnerable to consuming increasing amounts of personal time and activity under economic, calculating rationality, as has been discussed by autonomy paradox literature (see chapter 2).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1974/1991) advocates for a resurgence of differential and embodied spaces – spaces that would not be merely about their function, but in which there would also be room for human excess energy, that of play and enjoyment. These spaces would restore the unity that is lacking in

contemporary divided spaces (pp. 63–64). Although Lefebvre’s remarks about differential space are quite fragmentary, he urges us to think of spaces that would not be restricted to their “private” or “public” quality, but where these dimensions – and the transitions between them – could be combined and played with in unexpected ways (pp. 362–363). Lefebvre (1974/1991) calls for a “feminine” dimension of space: a mystic, labyrinthine and underworld quality, restored. He discusses how certain spaces, including leisure spaces like the beach, planned as they may be, may still possess the potential for transgressing the dominant conceived space as they may unleash bodily energies (pp. 383–385).

However, as Lefebvre generates a general theory of space, he pays less attention to how modern spaces are perceived and enacted in the concrete everyday lives of real people. He argues that the dimensions of the spatial triad come together in spatial practice but leaves their dynamics in human embodied activity underdeveloped. This is an aspect that geographer Eden Kinkaid (2020) has recently focused on. She suggests, very much in the spirit of this thesis, that Lefebvre’s spatial triad should be read alongside Merleau-Ponty’s bodily phenomenology. Bringing up the subject of the spatial experiences of those less privileged in society who she refers as “minority bodies”, Kinkaid (2020) highlights that the repression effected by dominant spaces may be perceived differently from the perspective of minority bodily identities. Kinkaid (2020) states that minority bodies may perceive spatial repression more acutely in comparison to more “normative” bodies. This may also grant them an enhanced ability for spatial critique.

However, I would argue that it is not only minority bodies that sense spatial repression because, according to Lefebvre, the late capitalist space is reductive and repressive in a more general anthropological sense. Most people do not escape its regulations and prohibitions, or the oppression of the visual – as Lefebvre states, it is practically impossible to feel completely comfortable in contradictory and reduced spaces. Furthermore, “minority body” is a representational term, and, following the thinking of both Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty, embodied perception does not originate from external, representational categories. The realm of the body is opaque, and its “memory” is of a habitual and practical kind, not of the external and narrative kind. However, in other regards Kinkaid’s suggestion that we should examine further the intricacies of the lived experience in modern spaces provides a fruitful path forward for understanding the workings of the spatial triad in the embodied experience of an individual, and how these patterns could be critically manipulated and exposed in practice.

The case of the archipelago period provides an example of a process by which the spatial triad could be exposed and perhaps even critically transformed. The study participants travelled to the archipelago to carry on their daily knowledge work. The project promised facilities for this purpose, therefore the participants expected a continuation of their conceived space in some version of a familiar working and living space. However, what was perceived in situ – the concrete physical and practical properties of space, the things that were not abstract about this space but local, natural, and culturally idiosyncratic – did not quite match the culturally dominant idea of working and living spaces. This contradiction was articulated by the participants in their humorous and contemplative remarks about their encounters with the space, as described in all the articles. For the participants, it was a source of wonder to bodily experience how normative images of modernity, such as spending time in traffic, had switched to walking on narrow natural paths, or how the sight from the window was no longer a grey block wall but a sea view with animals in it, and how the noise of the city was replaced with the splash of the waves or sheep baaing outside the window (Article 2). This contrast created by an extraordinary work environment produced cracks in the spatial triad as experienced in a spatial practice. The participants were aware that they were heading to countryside, but the break in the conceived space did not become real until it was bodily experienced through contact with spaces, rhythm, and the local environment.

This experience was eye-opening for the participants. As they were asked by the interviewers to reflect on their archipelago work practices in relation to those of their everyday lives, their answers often had a surprisingly deep and critical tone. The participants expanded the subject of discussion from work practices to their whole lifestyles, or even to urban lifestyles in general. They recounted, for example, that in the archipelago they had begun to question the meaningfulness of money and materialist lifestyles, the homogeneous tendencies of urban life, or their own prior neglect of their bodies and health. Some entertained a dream of a completely different kind of life compared to their everyday experience. In the archipelago, in the words of one participant, imagination had only the sky as its limit. To me, these remarks reflect precisely the kind of transition between surface and inner realm that, according to Lefebvre, is increasingly difficult to experience in a dominant, abstract space that is conceptual, blurs surface and substance, and distracts our understanding of ourselves as embodied beings.

Thus, in my interpretation, the experiences of the curious misfit between conceived space (the dominant idea of workspace) and perceived space (the actual material conditions) in the archipelago had surprising repercussions on the level of

“lived” space and experience – the affective, emotional, and symbolic plane. The power relations that are concealed and obscured behind the illusory “common sense” of everyday dominant spaces became exposed, although perhaps not in a completely thematic way, as the participants anticipated further mental revelations that could emerge upon reflection after the archipelago experience.

For Lefebvre (1974/1991), the roots of absolute – sacred – space lie in nature and agro-pastoral space, but in a modern world we may find absolute space in the space of art, where both the symbolic and embodied realms condense and intensify – which for Lefebvre is a mystical space of “in-between” (p. 251). It is a space where Ego “falls from its perch on some crag of the Logos” and enters the “world”: the underground space and the body (p. 251). Stenner (2018) states that spontaneous liminal experience (as created by an environmental shock like the change of environment in the case of the archipelago experiment) and an artistically crafted liminal experience are on the same phenomenal spectrum. It is the shock created by a spontaneous liminal experience that produces a need for new symbolic expression (pp. 168–169). This does not have to mean art in a strict sense. Creating a novel way of dwelling in space by means of experimenting, playing with, and adapting to an altered environment is itself a kind of artistic technique. The liminal space is made sense of through the practico-sensory realm, not by following some pre-existing regulations. In the case of the archipelago, the embodied experimentation of participants resulted in ritualistic action and symbols, which had an artistic quality of their own about them as they were a situated creation in the sense of the “anthropological space” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). As an example, consider Eeva’s story in Article 3: how the duo created cyclical patterns of using different built and natural spaces in order to maintain a creative atmosphere and how Eeva metaphorically captured this pattern as a “puzzle”. Or, how Mia and her group, from the same article, devoted the hours after work to restorative activities of cooking and going to sauna where work matters were left out.

Work that is not place-bound may offer the possibility of working in spaces that are not overwhelmed by norms and prohibitions, and which, by leaving us in a liminal no-man’s land, allow the lived dimension of space – bodily existence, rituals, and rhythms – to find room and be re-created. A transformation at the level of embodied practices also has bearings on our understanding of the conceived level of space, where so many of our activities are already pre-planned, bringing it into the light for critical exposure.

6.2 The possibility of a lived and layered workspace

While the previous sub-chapter's focus was on the development of the dominant and conceived spaces of modern life (and knowledge work), here I intend to go deeper into the phenomenological experience of living and working in a space that is characteristically anthropological and "lived" in the sense used by Lefebvre (1974/1991). Beyes and Holt (2020) have recognised a growing tendency towards multiplication, heterogeneity, process – and contestation of space. There is an intensifying search for new ideas for working space, and thus a reformation of what it means to be "at work" (see, e.g., de Vaujany et al., 2019; Spinuzzi, 2012). With the advent of "creative workspaces", experiences of aesthetics and comfort when working have taken on an increasing prominence, with telework being one way to potentially increase the preponderance of such experiences. The "lived" dimension may thus, at least in theory, find new ground in working space.

It might seem that in home and private spaces the lived dimension of space would be at its strongest. However, Lefebvre (1974/1991) argues that this shouldn't be taken for granted. He claims that modern homes suffer from the same homogenising, globalising, and divisive intent as public and more "formal" spaces, which causes them to resemble containers instead of real residences. According to Lefebvre, housing subsumed by such planning impoverishes lived experience in the same way that more official spaces do.

Even if one took this to be the case, it is a human need to try to appropriate the spaces where we spend our time, even if the lived experience of such spaces might be "reduced" to begin with (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Homeworking, a practice that brings different spheres of life under one roof, might be a way to provide the unity of space that Lefebvre is advocating. However, to what extent current, ICT-supported homeworking has been conducive to creating spaces in which different arenas of life can exist side by side in harmony and, in particular, under which material conditions this has been achieved is still uncertain and in need of more research, wherein phenomenological or ethnographic research approaches could perhaps provide most nuanced data. Studies by Koslowski et al. (2019) and Cederholm (2015) have provided such spatial perspectives on how homeworking enables flexibly juggling the worlds of work and family. In Cederholm's case study of entrepreneurs and their families producing services and entertainment related to horse-riding in their homes, this unification of different life-worlds had been the dream of the entrepreneurs, but it required a constant balancing act. This lifestyle was not only a work-life condition, but also a product sold on the lifestyle market,

which at times raised questions as to what extent intimate emotions and relationships should be used for commercial ends (Cederholm, 2015).

A more ordinary case of homeworking; that of ICT-assisted telework examined by Koslowski et al. (2019), shows the realms of work and family as more conflictual and constantly competing for the homemaker's attention. Koslowski et al. convincingly argue that a homemaker cannot be fully present in both worlds simultaneously, and that the fusion works best when communication channels to work are narrowed (voice only, not video) or when home others "narrow" their presence by not disrupting or demanding conscious attention from the homemaker. In this study, there was a tendency for spatial arrangements to be made on conditions determined by work, with family withdrawing when needed. It was as if work and private life could co-exist spatially to a lesser extent than in the case of the horse-riding entrepreneurs. Although the latter too had experienced challenges with their spatial arrangements, their experience concerning such co-existence seemed to be slightly more positive. From a Lefebvrian perspective, in the case of the horse-riding entrepreneurs, the integration of their work and private lives was spatially more holistic as the conceived space (the plans the entrepreneurs had had concerning space), the lived space (home-entrepreneurship as the "dream" lifestyle), and the perceived space (the material conditions) seemed to be relatively well aligned.

In both of the abovementioned studies, despite the differing nature of the work in which participants were involved, the practices and logic of work had a tendency to take over and intervene in relationships (Cederholm, 2015) and moments (Koslowski et al., 2019) that were of the private and intimate realm. These contestations had spatial contexts, such as the bedroom (Koslowski et al., 2019) and the kitchen doorstep (Cederholm, 2015). This intermingling also caused feelings of ambivalence, absurdity and confusion. However, even though the structural divisions of work and life were questioned by these workers, the researchers concluded that the constant negotiations that the homeworkers needed to submit themselves to concerning the boundaries between the two also ended up reinforcing these boundaries (Cederholm, 2015; Koslowski et al., 2019). The studies did not address whether there were any transitional practices or zones in use that might have facilitated movement between worlds of work and private life.

For individuals expecting increasingly meaningful and personal work, home, as the most personal and meaningful space of our lives (Dale & Burrell, 2008), seems logically to be a very fitting space for this kind of work. As I discuss in particular detail in Article 3, home-based, independent, and ICT-supported work that leaves the responsibility of drawing the boundaries of different life spheres to individuals

may cause work and private life to blur in such a way that work time practically never ends. As I discuss in Article 4, it is worth remembering that ever since the advent of the Internet, our corporeal existence has no longer been bound by physical space alone but is constantly being penetrated by the virtual one, positing us often vaguely “in between” different worlds. So it is no longer only the boundaries of physical space that count – these other spaces need to be added to the equation of our spatial constellations.

Indeed, interesting tensions between the virtual/ideational and the embodied/material spheres have emerged. While virtual living is gaining ground, it is almost paradoxical that, particularly in work that is characterised as “knowledge work”, many are obsessed with the body, measuring its functions and medicating it to overcome its limits (Bloomfield & Dale, 2020), or even abusing it violently (Michel, 2011) to reach their professional goals, if not even some superhuman ideal (Karjalainen et al., 2021) enforced by many elements in popular culture. Homes that are supposed to be the realms of our bodily recreation are tethered to the all-encompassing world of external achievement and competition, which looms behind one click on an IT device. This means that public “others” are brought home with us, along with an increased critical self-awareness of personal achievement. While spaces of modernity were aimed at discipline and machine-like efficiency (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004, p. 1096), this design principle being applied to domestic spaces as well (Dale & Burrell, 2008), the spaces of late modernity seem to be reaching towards the other extreme, becoming increasingly restless and elusive (Beyes & Holt, 2020). Between these two extremes, what is to a great extent lacking from spatial discussion is attention to how spaces succeed in their most fundamental human function amidst all the accelerated efforts to keep up with the others: providing shelter for our embodied existence and emotional nurturing.

In Articles 1, 2 and 4 I discuss literature on green environments, which have been found to positively influence both psycho-physiological restoration – such as by diminishing stress levels (Ulrich et al., 1991) and restoring attention (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) – as well as personal recreation, by means of introspection and community development (Conradson, 2005; Hale et al., 2011). Green spaces have been found to be particularly beneficial for groups such as elderly people and those in recovery from illness. Rantala and Valtonen (2014) have discussed the experience of nature holidays from the bodily perspective. They have shown how in the stillness of nature bodily experience became foregrounded and bodies began to conform to the rhythms of the surrounding nature. The absence of social rhythms and demands could open a meditative space. These experiences that people have had with green

spaces or therapeutic landscapes, as shown in the literature, coincide in many ways with those of the participants of the archipelago experiment. Merely to glance at the natural scenery amidst working could be a comforting experience. Attuning to natural sights and sounds occasionally made the participants transit to a more reflective and contemplative mode. For example, some serious reflections were carried out while meditating close to the sea. Collective excursions to nature knit the groups together. Sensing and exploring the nature intertwined with working and living practices in many ways, as is discussed in sub-chapter 5.1.

As the data analysis presented in this thesis showed an unexpected richness in the experiences of the archipelago participants, it seemed appropriate to delve into the literature concerning the phenomenological experience of protective, intimate, as well as natural spaces. One of the most prominent figures in this area is Gaston Bachelard (1958/2014), who is keen to point out that space should not be regarded as a mere geometrical and external entity, but, more importantly, as a foundation of our anthropological experience of ourselves and of our imaginative capabilities.

In Bachelard's (1958/2014) thinking, space is definitely more than a surface, a decoration, or random visual scenery that happens to surround us at any moment. Bachelard's space is a reservoir of forgotten histories that might be brought to life anytime by an attentive and sensitive seeker, and spaces where one can reach a sense of dwelling and comfort offer countless pathways for the imagination. The different layers of space, whether cultural, historical, or natural, enable us to enlarge and enrich our perception. Like Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard places great importance on the subject perceiving the space. In perception, any mundane spatial forms can evoke countless different meanings depending on the perceiver's embodied history and imagination, as Bachelard (1958/2014) shows in his literary analysis.

For Bachelard (1958/2014), a house shelters daydreaming, which is an important activity constitutive of humanity. Through daydreaming one is able to inhabit a place, to give it a meaning. These ideas are also clearly echoed in Lefebvre's (1974/1991) later concept of "lived space". Spaces enable us to locate our memories and thus compress time in a way that has an integrative, even healing function, while localising memory in time alone creates only an external narrative (Bachelard, 1958/2014, pp. 57–58). When in a new place, we find comfort when the space evokes memories of earlier dwellings where we have felt protected, our earliest memories from childhood being the most fundamental of those. Bachelard (1958/2014) states that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (p. 54). In this dreamy dimension of existence, our previous dwelling-places co-penetrate, so that memories and imagination interpellate each other (Bachelard, 1958/2014, p. 54). Maybe it is

because of this embodied, dreamy, and intimate quality to our spatial experience that we are also able to sense a “haunted quality”— layers of alternative, absent histories – in a space, although this may require “unsiting” that pushes our everyday habitual perception aside (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; see also sub-chapter 5.2).

For Bachelard (1958/2014), spaces where we can experience high intimacy are also places where our inner world is able to grow. He observes that, in a way, we are continuously in search of the ultimate shelter. An important point for this thesis is that spaces that are particularly associated with solitude and silence are creative spaces because such “retreats have the value of the shell” (p. 58), one in which creative expression is incubated and nurtured. It is by dwelling in such protective spaces that we are later able to “come out of ourselves” and enter the world (p. 59). This is an opposite view to a creative space as compared to the mainstream contemporary one that underpins spatial openness and transparency. The way Bachelard revels in the sheltering qualities of shells and other such formations such as nests, corners, and huts has an interesting parallel with Lefebvre’s discussion of the protective qualities of crypts (see sub-chapter 6.1), which he regards as feminine or uterine spaces.

Bachelard (1958/2014) also discusses our need for natural spaces. He examines small, natural “houses”, such as shells and nests, but also, interestingly, their opposites: the vastness and immensity of nature found in forests, deserts, and seas. These latter kinds of natural places are powerful as they resonate with feelings of grandeur and depth; it is as if the same vastness was found within the human being experiencing them (pp. 228–253). For Bachelard, we eventually need both kinds of spaces – the protective shelters and the vast (natural) spaces – because they both open imagination, the former through repose and the latter through an intensive experience of grandeur and adventure. An isolated hut amid wild nature carries a particularly mythic resonance for Bachelard because such a place accentuates the play of these extremes: a shelter standing against the threatening forces of nature (pp. 77–84). The isolated hut also has an important role in our cultural imagery as the residence and working space of many creative minds, such as authors Philip Pullman and Virginia Woolf, philosopher Martin Heidegger and, in the Finnish context, glass designer Tapio Wirkkala and actor Vesa-Matti Loiri, to name just a few examples (see also Newport, 2016).

All in all, Bachelard’s (1958/2014) examinations of the most intimate and protective spaces and, by contrast, the adventurous natural spaces, underpin a theory of a rhythmic dialectic between retreat and expansion that is necessary for a creative psyche to operate. Bachelard (1958/2014) is interested in rather extreme spatial

images and prefers to direct his gaze to the point where these extremes contrast with each other: “everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate” (p. 87). It is interesting from the point of view of the theoretical framework I am putting forward here how Bachelard brings up that “by leaving the space of one's usual sensibilities”, one ends up in a space where “here” and “elsewhere” overlap in a way that can produce psychic innovations (pp. 249–250). This is relative to the temporal complexity of affective experience that was discussed in sub-chapter 5.2. Movement can produce an affective, liminal sensation of different worlds overlapping (Greco & Stenner, 2017), which creates, at least momentarily, a new perspective. Some remarks of the archipelago participants capture the invigoration created by an unusual natural experience. This is how a female coach and consultant expressed it in Article 4:

You are in the middle of a different landscape, different rhythm; here the pulse is much slower than in the metropolitan area. Here you have nature and I am a visual person, I am very much affected by what I see ...

According to Bachelard (1958/2014), in order to assist in the expansion of our inner world, a dwelling should enable the rhythmical dynamics of expansion and withdrawal. Bachelard claims that the more concentrated the repose is, the greater the corresponding expansion (pp. 108–113). He also criticises modern architecture for being overly unidimensional and for forgetting how the whole verticality of human being – conscious and unconscious – should be housed (pp. 74–75). Downplaying other senses and forms of affective experience in favour of visuality and visibility is also a form of power, as Dale and Burrell (2008, pp. 69–70) remind us. With such architecture, we may be impeding dimensions of human experience, creative power, and imagination.

As described in the previous sub-chapter, office design that is supposed to induce creativity typically makes use of themes related to private life and pastimes. It seems that the aim is to create spaces that resemble a child's paradise, with colours, objects to play with, the serenity of nature, and the comfort of home, all designed to make everyone gather together (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; De Paoli et al., 2019). However, these “creative” spaces have been found to be still subsumed by organisational rules and restrictions, meaning that in the end they are not much more than faint simulations of the spaces they were aiming to represent – therefore, they can only evoke play in a limited sense (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; Walker, 2011). It seems that even though designers of creative spaces may have had the intention of encouraging freedom and playfulness, they remain trapped by the

modernist top-down planning imperative. It thus becomes unclear whether “creative” workspaces are more about creativity or organisational image management.

In Bachelard’s (1958/2014) theory, a (lived) space is not an immobile construct or a perfect exposition to be viewed but is on the move; it gathers traces of a life lived and therefore embodies the lived past. In a similar vein, organisational theorist Karl Weick (2009) suggests that a creative use of environment necessitates that it appears indeterminate, loosely coupled, and malleable to action (p. 199) – by adjusting to and changing such an environment also the user is reformed and able to commit to the activity carried out within such environment. However, it has been claimed that organisational studies have curiously adhered to “a metaphysics of presence” (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018), preferring to look away from what is not neat, complete, and orderly in organisational space: things that might be absent or worn (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017; Shortt & Izak, 2021). This has been the case even though the contradiction between “contemporary” and “past” might be that something that could produce creative tension – after all, many artists and other creatives have sought shelter in old and abandoned facilities (De Paoli & Ropo, 2017, p. 163; White & Seidenberg, 2017).

Temporal layers are able to convey the “presence of an absence” through the haunted quality of another world felt through what is absent (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017; see also Hetherington, 2004). These marks of hidden realities could provide a potential vastness to our existence and animate dormant energies (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017). As Lefebvre (1974/1991) has stated, a space does not have only one meaning, but is more like a force field (pp. 144–145). Space thus tends towards ambivalence, which total planning tries to overwrite. According to Giovannoni and Quattrone (2018), who have studied the unfinished building process of Siena Cathedral, it is the incompleteness of a space that stimulates creativity and allows different rationalities to co-exist. Spatial history, as the presence of an absence, may evoke alternative beginnings and dreams from the past, thus producing a space in which past, present, and future can intertwine (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017). These “echoes and reverberations” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 184) may allow an escape from a present temporality which, in recent times, has become curiously paralysing instead of being open to past and future (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017, p. 140; Heidegger, 1927/1962).

In my analysis of the archipelago experiment I found that in the natural and rural environment, which is a historical and characteristically lived space in the Lefebvrian sense, some of the study participants were taken to their imaginative past. Eeva,

whose story is depicted in Article 3, found that in her archipelago experience the world of her childhood fantasies became alive anew. Another participant, a male designer, experienced a surprising creative inspiration that reminded him of another creative period in his professional past (Article 4). The nuances of emotion and happiness in these participants' stories conveyed that something emotionally powerful had happened to them. These stories showcase the satisfaction of a person who finds a strong sense of connection with their past and what is presently happening to them, as described by the literature reviewed above. To me these instances speak of the Bachelardian imaginative experience, produced as they were by an intimate contact with a space that awakened memories and past reveries.

At this point I wish to build on the ideas of the spatial scholars discussed so far to sketch an ideal workspace that could bring forth the “lived” spatial dimension as theorised by Lefebvre and Bachelard. The aim of this sketch is not to offer a comprehensive model of a workspace – such a model would actually just produce another conceived space – but merely, in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty, to suggest an alternative way to perceive a workspace. In my view, a properly “lived” workplace would not efface the original meaning of built space as a shelter, as modern transparent office design to my view has done. It would be sensitive to body and its rhythms, and reflective of our anthropological needs for nesting and expansion – as, it seems, many office workers still try to create “nests” for themselves even when this is forbidden, as it is in a hot desk environment (Elsbach, 2003; Hirst, 2011).

The sense of a “lived” space could be produced, firstly, by unique artistic touches in the architectural design or by appropriating some already existing space. Users would be allowed to make incremental changes and amendments to the space according to their needs. These small marks of care could enable the sensation of a space that is there to be bodily appropriated, and thus gradually “woven” forward by human action, while the space would not ever have to become finished or complete. Such a space would also be friendly to different bodies. Signs of mental strain have been on the increase in Finnish working life (even before the corona virus). People go to work with differently strained and sedimented bodies, having different dispositions and omissions, which condition the ways they react to spaces (see particularly sub-chapter 5.2). Strained and energetic bodies have different needs in a dwelling. A lived working space would be malleable and allow different degrees of protectiveness and expansion. Obviously, this would also signal some ownership of the space by its users – an opposite direction to currently popular open and hot desk architecture. While private workspaces would be allowed within the facility, there could also be access to spaces with no definitive function, such as nooks and

corners, and with some closeness to nature, such as a balcony, a rooftop, or a park. The aim of such a space would be to allow lived history to be constructed between the space and its users, and thus enable the thickness of spatiotemporal experience that is absent from much of the strictly functionalist design (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

Another dimension that has so far been underdeveloped in organisational research on space is the transition between different kinds of spaces. The discussion on spaces often operates at the level of binaries (Beyes & Holt, 2020) such as private space against public space, space of power against space of resistance (Courpasson et al., 2017), or urban space against rural space. Space is thus discursively constructed as an immanent whole, as if it had a Cartesian identity of its own, an approach that neglects how space “becomes” in the perception of the user. However, the way we experience a space depends on our social position, as well as on whether the space is foreign to us or familiar and well-occupied. Both Lefebvre and Bachelard noticed the intensity of the space between “inside” and “outside”, and paid attention to spaces that operate as a pathway or view from one world to another. Bachelard (1958/2014) describes the special sensation of descending stairs to a cellar or ascending to an attic, and how the physical act of taking the stairs is part of the experience of these different areas of the house (p. 74). Similarly, he noted how a light in the window of an isolated hut is a poetic and transitional sight because it gives the impression that the hut shelters a soul that is friendly and accommodating amid its oppositional surroundings of potentially frightening wilderness (pp. 78–84).

In Bachelard’s (1958/2014) view, it is in those thresholds between different spaces where one becomes most aware of cosmic forces, meaning that they can be the most intense of spaces. This leads one to pay attention to the special attraction windows, gates, and doors possess, as they reflect and accentuate the human experience of being in between intimate space and outer world (see also Lefebvre, 1974/1991). In the architecture dating from before industrial planning, these thresholds were often artistically designed and decorated as if to recognise and highlight this special ontological character. This can be seen, for example, in the preserved Empire-style and Art Nouveau architectures of my hometown, Helsinki. Thresholds are also associated with the transitional qualities of liminal spaces (the Latin word *limen* signifies a threshold), where one is suddenly able to see the world from a higher-order point of view (Stenner, 2018). However, there is a need to further examine these spaces, which are not easily categorised but instead possess the quality of a passage, of “going through” something (Greco & Stenner, 2017, p. 156; Stenner, 2018, pp. 174–175).

6.3 Liminal space

We have come a long way from people living and conducting their everyday affairs above the mysteries and spirituality of the crypts, which sheltered what was symbolically most important for the community (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). As has been discussed in the previous sub-chapters, modern spaces are designed with function, rationalism, and economy in mind – most of the spaces have been assigned a place in the production chain. This has even become something of a problem for workplaces where production has become increasingly immaterialised. While ICT tools are typically up to date, and while there are appropriate spaces for them on any credible employer’s premises, their users may struggle to find comfortable spaces in the bodily sense for concentration, social relations, privacy, and breaks – in short, room for dwelling in space.

To counteract such problems, employees may develop idiosyncratic ways of constructing personal shelters within the premises of their employer. Harriet Shortt (2015) asked employees of a hair salon to take photos of spaces that had a special meaning for them in the workplace. The spaces that emerged as most personally meaningful for the employees were rather surprising and outside the “frontstage” spaces of the organisation: corridors, stairs, cupboards, toilets, even the streets outside. A hairdresser’s work takes place in a very visible space and involves plenty of emotional labour. When these employees needed a rest, a moment for themselves, or a bit of casual communication with colleagues, they sought out these undefined and leftover spaces within the facilities. The employer provided a formal staffroom for breaks, but even there the employees felt their behaviour was constrained by normative expectations. They carried out their most “creative conversations” in spaces that Shortt (2015) conceptualises as liminal, which gradually became more established as “transitory dwelling places”. There was an element of absurdity about the use of these spaces, and they were a source of wonder for the employer, who wondered why these fruitful conversations could not be conducted in the break room specifically set aside for such a purpose (Shortt, 2015).

From the earliest formulations of liminality theory, liminality was seen as having a strong spatial dimension. Liminal phases of a rite often took place outside ordinary social spaces to augment the extraordinary experience (Turner, 1974a, 1974b; van Gennep, 1909/1960). Liminality involved relinquishing previous social roles, and could render initiates “impure” (Douglas, 1966); for this reason they were often excluded from the everyday spaces of the community. Spatial movements themselves could necessitate a liminal rite, such as even the act of passing through a

door sometimes did (van Gennep, 1909/1960, pp. 19–21). A stranger approaching a community's territory was an ambiguous figure, potentially either malevolent or benevolent. Crossing the border required a rite that punctured the moment of a person wavering between two worlds (van Gennep, 1909/1960, pp. 18–19) – for Stenner (2018), it is precisely this idea of wavering between two worlds that captures so well the idea of liminality: the infinite and sacred that comes from somewhere “beyond” as compared to the finitude of our everyday worlds (pp. 183–188).

There are spaces that signal liminality due to their geographical situatedness. These are spaces that are characterised by borderline and extreme natural qualities, such as a beach (Dietrich, 2007; Meethan, 2012; Preston-Whyte, 2004). Being in between land and a sea, a beach has represented a dream-like quality for poets (Dietrich, 2007). On the other hand, it has also evoked a sense of being an outsider, existential anguish, and an ability to view the oppressive quality of social structures from afar (Dietrich, 2007). Although geographically a beach is a final frontier of human habitation, Andrews and Roberts (2012) remind us that geography is not a definitive dimension of liminal spaces: seaside spaces can also be central as regards social infrastructure. Therefore, Andrews and Roberts (2012) emphasise that liminality is not a fixed characteristic but one that is relational, depending on its status in the social matrix. Stenner (2018) states that liminality in fact pivots: the stranger became liminal due to the indeterminacy of their social status only in particular social circumstances (pp. 181–183). Similarly, the same space that is odd, extraordinary, and liminal for a traveller may be the home or workplace of an inhabitant. In pre-modern societies, partitions between different social groups and spaces were clear, and liminal situations and rites could be rather institutionalised (Stenner, 2018, pp. 180–181; van Gennep, 1909/1960). By contrast, in modern societies our needs for transition and personal transformation have become much more individualised (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). Our lives and economies revolve increasingly around experiences, lifestyle, and self-betterment, and thus transition has come to closely accompany, sometimes uneasily, the mundane, utilitarian attitude of the world of work (Schütz, 1945; Stenner, 2018).

In organisation and working life studies, liminal spaces have been identified both inside and outside the premises of the organisation. Within organisational facilities these spaces have been found to have a leftover and marginal character, as was the case of the staircases, corridors, cupboards, and toilets that Shortt (2015) identified. Even an odd curvature in a corridor may become a liminal excess space that can host informal conversation in between phases of formal work (Iedema et al., 2010). On the other hand, spaces may be experienced as liminal not primarily because of their

lack of spatial identity but more due to their ability to blur different sets of social codes. Sturdy et al. (2006) have discussed how having business meetings in a non-organisational environment, such as during a dinner in a restaurant, made business and more personal matters, as well as formality and informality, merge in curious and creative ways. The same phenomenon has been found during workshops and away-days in leisurely facilities (Concannon & Nordberg, 2018; Johnson et al., 2010).

Shortt's (2015) findings show elaborately how employees searched for a protective, intimate shelter for their almost ritual personal and collective re-creation during workdays, and found such shelters in leftover spaces that were otherwise regarded as "no man's land". These spaces became creative and authentic spaces in which employees could drop their official roles and discuss things in freer terms. What can be learned from Shortt's study, also regarding "creative workspaces", is that spaces that are designed to initiate certain behaviours may not realise their objectives in the straightforward manner their designers imagine. Employees needed to create their liminal moments on their own terms in order to restore their emotional balance during consuming workdays. This finding supports discussions in the preceding two sub-chapters regarding how creative workspaces need to allow room for the user's appropriation.

On the other hand, liminality is about making the surrounding world appear extraordinary. This is why even modern-day organisational workshops are so often carried out outside organisational premises. A novel space may create a "shock" that is necessary for transcending the ordinary, pragmatic way of thinking (Schütz, 1945; Stenner, 2018). Liminal experience may thus necessitate spatial novelty and movement for it to happen. Shortt (2015) found that the liminality that was experienced in the self-found resting spaces tended to fade over time. These liminal spaces gradually ceased to be as liminal as they were in the first place, as their role in the user's social practices became established – what first lay outside employer codes and inscriptions gave way to an emergent spatial identity. Similarly, Liegl (2014) has shown how urban creative freelancers used novel workspaces found in cafés and co-working spaces in order to facilitate an experience of extraordinary, beautiful, and creative moments. The movement to and constant search for new spaces was thus important preparation and conditioning for their creativity to emerge.

What can be deduced from these reflections is that, in addition to officially coded and regulated spaces, employees need spaces that they can enact within for incubation, reflection, and easy sociality, where they can drop their formal roles and express their personalities in socially more unbounded ways – spaces that are malleable, indeterminate, and lack restrictive rules regarding their use. Lefebvre

(1974/1991) was fascinated with the early middle-age religious crypts because they most pointedly embodied a space that contradicts the contemporary spatial logic of pompous visibility and conceptual domination of which he was so critical. The image of a hidden crypt most adequately captures a characteristic inherent to a lived and historical space, as discussed above: that of the presence of an absence and of the transcendental, which also makes the overall space “complete” in an experiential sense. Yet, as is discussed in the previous sub-chapter, a hidden and haunted quality can be traced in any social space, even though designers of abstract, modern spaces typically try to negate this dimension in their eagerness to rationalise space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

What seems to me to be characteristic of an experience of a liminal space is that it entails some of this cryptic character. It can be a formless, ephemeral, and hidden space as opposed to one that is normatively categorised, highly visible and socially central. It may feel like a void, suffused with the presence of something that is felt through its absence (De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017; Hetherington, 2004). A liminal space definitely conveys a very lived sense (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) as it almost calls for a ritual for the enrichment of the affective and existential experience, but also one to soothe the anxiety that comes about because the nothingness/infinity is almost too much to bear. A liminal space can also evoke a sense of curiosity and absurdity in cases where social codes and practices lose their habitual, commonsense nature, which can be said to have happened in the archipelago. As the analysis contained in this thesis shows, a liminal space can be experienced as hilarious, which leaves one socially bare and unguarded. The only way to proceed is to improvise and probe one’s way forward in order to make sense of and learn to dwell in such a space.

The participants of this study approached their archipelago dwellings with such an attitude. The facilities were emblematically local, often improvised to start with, as they were adapted by the service providers from existing spatial resources in the municipalities. There were traditional archipelago villas, former town houses, and modern office hotels available, among other types of facilities. Not everything always worked as expected, and participants had to manage with (and sometimes renegotiate) the local arrangements, such as schedules of access to facilities and unconventional office arrangements. The spaces were thus actively appropriated by the participants – what became spaces for work and rest were not necessarily the ones that were thus assigned; instead, spaces were adapted and transformed in situ. It was a bit surprising that typically the participants were not very critical about the “homemade” and sometimes relatively modest character of the facilities; instead, as they had adopted a liminal orientation due to their circumstances, they perceived this

space as a chance for playful experimentation. They enthusiastically worked out the practical challenges, and in doing so discovered new opportunities. In the course of this appropriation, various spaces inside or outside came to be regarded as potential working spaces. This was possible because the participants experienced the space primarily as liminal and open-ended, not overlaid by the social codes and inscriptions that guide our use of and movement in everyday spaces so tacitly that they often go unnoticed (Baldry, 1999; D'Adderio, 2011). These spatial appropriations, which ensued from affective sensations and experimentations, led to the innovation of new work methods, products, creative artistic work, and, in some cases, the rethinking of whole careers.

Simultaneously, the participants expressed being relieved by the relaxed normative expectations regarding their work, which in some of the individual cases were quite notable – or at least the different environment made them seem so. The participants could let their “thoughts fly toward tomorrow”, as one participant poetically put it (Article 2), or care for their own well-being (Article 4). Interestingly, the participants felt they could reflect upon issues or carry out kinds of work that were difficult or impossible to engage with in their everyday lives. Mostly this related to creative activities such as planning and designing, but in some cases it related to more supportive maintenance activities. Depending on the participants’ everyday environments, either type of work could have suffered, and the archipelago environment was experienced generally as an outlet to such frustrations having built up in the everyday environment. This is how the “hidden” character of the archipelago space translated to the activities carried out there. Thoughts, dreams, and work activities that were given no room in everyday life found their space in the archipelago.

The period enabled some participants to identify a particularly sensitive work phase that would not fit into typical normative descriptions of work: a phase that typically took place in the evenings, with PCs and memos set aside, when participants would allow themselves to be immersed in in-depth discussions about their work situations, as well as in planning new steps and dreaming about the future. This was the kind of “hidden” work that fit particularly well into the informal and playful character of the liminal archipelago space. One participant conceptualised this activity as “soft planning” (Article 2). The participant’s intuition in this conceptualisation captures to me the formless and fragile phase of creativity, in which something that has been incubating is starting to emerge to consciousness. In our society, there exists a pressure to label and categorise these insights prematurely (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). A malleable and “hidden” liminal space would perhaps

be particularly supportive of creative phases such as this, which need the most free reign, be they about creative work products or planning one's future career.

7 COMPETING RHYTHMS OF WORK

7.1 The interplay of linear and cyclical time

Working time is one of the most pressing issues in contemporary organising of knowledge work. It is increasingly realised that creative knowledge work struggles to fit within the boundaries of the strict nine-to-five rhythm. On one hand, work environments have become temporally and spatially more unbounded, allowing new opportunities for the organisation of work. On the other hand, it is recognised that the creative thought process does not proceed in a strictly linear and sequential manner but necessitates incubation – phases of unconscious processing (Dane, 2018; Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006; George, 2007, 2009). However, the developments in work environment design, as discussed in the previous three sub-chapters, may contradict these requirements. Open offices produce opportunities for co-creation, but also noise and distractions. As new virtual platforms and tools are being developed at an increasing speed, there have emerged respective requirements for self-representation within these diverse virtual channels. We feel that we need to leave marks that indicate that we are online, present, and engaged, which is itself time-consuming (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Symon & Pritchard, 2015). Furthermore, it has been argued that there exists a data fetish in many organisations (Schwarzkopf, 2020), a collective effervescence about seeking and reporting on new data, in which everyone must participate with their communication acts (Mumby, 2016). While technologically facilitated production of data overrides careful analysis, a sense of uncomfortable ignorance and guilt over potentially lagging behind paradoxically adds further fuel to the fire, spurring on this cycle of content and data production (Schwarzkopf, 2020; see also Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017).

In everyday understanding, when discussing time, we implicitly think about clock time. Our current understanding of time as a linear, forth-going, measurable, and homogeneous phenomenon dates to the birth of modern time and the related scientific-technological developments that came about in response to the needs of industrial production (Elias, 1992). As our everyday spaces are socially produced (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), clock time was developed to answer to the societal need for discipline (Elias, 1992).

As a contrast to homogeneous clock time, there exist alternative temporalities that relate to our physicality and the course of human social life. The conception of time in pre-modern cultures was based on the cyclical recurrence of cosmic processes: day and night cycles, seasons, ebb and flow, lunar and planetary practices (Elias, 1992). This cyclicity also rhythmised the premodern social rites, which provided cultural interpretations of the passing of time and thus a sense of existential security. Even though clock time dominates the modern understanding of temporality, a more embodied and affective collective rhythmicity can still be identified even in contemporary organisations: the cyclical repetitiveness of collective institutional practices and rituals (Weik, 2019).

Psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Fuchs (2018) argues that the conception of cyclical time originates from the temporality of the lived body. He proposes an interesting theory on the foundations of such cyclical rhythms and how they are ultimately based on the processes necessary for the self-preservation of our animal life (see also Damasio, 2018). According to this theory, cyclical bodily processes such as heartbeat, respiration and circadian rhythms form the basis of our consciousness (Fuchs, 2018). The bodily organism follows an internal order of metabolism and homeostatic regulation that does not consist of continuous and static processes but of a dynamic of high and low activity: substance-seeking and regeneration, waking and sleeping (p. 49). These movements are guided by an emotionally charged appetite of “not yet” having fulfilled one’s need (such as thirst and hunger), which, when satisfied, gives way to a new phase characterised by a relaxed mood (p. 50). There exists an on-going exchange with environment to satisfy these needs. According to Fuchs (2018), our cyclical experience of time is based on this affective directionality of anticipated satisfaction (p. 50). Anthropologist Arpad Szokolczai (2017) has suggested, along quite similar lines, that our basic sense of the stability of temporal cycles is already formed in the maternal womb through exposure to our mother’s heartbeat.

Recent neurobiological research also suggests that the basis of our felt sense of the duration of time – which works quite independently from clock time – relies on our rhythmic bodily signals (Fuchs, 2018, p. 51). Furthermore, this sense of time differs according to the state of our arousal – time seems to fly when we are positively aroused or even in a manic (or flow) state; the opposite happens when we are tired, bored, or depressed (p. 51). Even our subjective experience of the “present” does not take place in the linear continuum determined by clock time but is formed around a meaningful rhythmic synthesis of elements within our perceptual field (Kiverstein, 2010), this rhythmic period being, however, approximately of the

duration of three seconds (Pöppel, 2004). In a study examining the televised interaction of mothers and infants, a three second delay in the connection was enough to disrupt the affective rapport between mother and child (Henning & Striano, 2011). These accounts point towards a view that beginning from our very first experiences in this world, our social life has as its foundation the rhythmical capabilities and sedimented experiences of our bodies and their cyclical, even musical interaction with other bodies. Cyclical, bodily rhythm thus has embodied experience and meaningful events rather than objective time as its basis. This observation hearkens to Heidegger's (1927/1962) theoretical thinking regarding our practical orientation in circumstances that are familiar to us. We have a ready-to-hand orientation relative to familiar objects and spaces, which is motivated by care and does not need conscious, external deliberation unless somehow interrupted. According to Fuchs (2018), rhythmic-periodical bodily existence is expressed through bodily habits that sustain this foundational familiarity with the world.

Fuchs (2018) also states that although this rhythmical habituality is primarily formed in early childhood, it develops over the course of a lifetime, despite an eventual diminishing of plasticity (p. 54). This seems to suggest that bodily, cyclical time reigns during childhood, a phase of life in which the influence of linear time is minimal, as the child is allowed to play and become immersed in the worlds of imagination and adventures in the immediate environment. We need to maintain at least a basic sense of this rhythmic, bodily stability throughout our lives, but this has become increasingly difficult within the fragmented temporalities of modern life (Szakolczai, 2017).

These ideas suggest to me that personal bodily rhythms are not merely biologically determined, but, in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's ideas, become sedimented in bodily memory through individual life experiences and socialisation by our various institutions, however ephemeral and fragmented they may be in our modern societies. One might wonder, for instance, how stressful experiences in adult life, such as highly intensive work periods or liminal and precarious career situations (Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019; Daskalaki & Simosi, 2018), affect this sedimented bodily memory. Can one become habituated to intensive work to the extent that one becomes alienated from the bodily needs for rest and recuperation? Bloomfield and Dale (2020) suggest that we are moving towards an economy that is dependent on manipulation of the body – such as by sleep medication and stimulants – for its maintenance and growth.

It has been suggested that we also rely on this primary, bodily, rhythmical sensitivity when creating and maintaining work routines and practices. This

rhythmical character of practices is perhaps most visible in cases of physical work, as described in Strati's (1999) example of roof makers (pp. 88–92), in the work of seafarers (Mack, 2007), and, perhaps most obviously, in the improvisation of jazz musicians (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001; Kamoche et al., 2003). However, Elke Weik (2019) has suggested that we are able to “feel-perceive” even complicated constructs such as institutions immediately through the rhythmically repetitive patterns in which we are immersed in everyday life. These findings beg the question of how the primary, bodily, rhythmical sensitivities function in the practices of more immaterial, technologically mediated knowledge work, which, according to studies, has become increasingly fragmented, interrupted (Chesley, 2014; Jett & George, 2003; Perlow, 1999), and blurred with other areas of life (Bloom, 2016; Cavazotte et al., 2014; Gant & Kiesler, 2002; Gregg, 2011; Mazmanian et al., 2013).

As boundaries around work have become blurred, particularly due to technological affordances and necessities, some have made this necessity a virtue and willingly fused work with leisure and “lifestyle” (Andersson Cederholm, 2015; Land & Taylor, 2010; Lewis, 2003). In Finland it has become a habitual practice to continue work at home unofficially (Ojala, 2014). Living simultaneously in several worlds, in addition to that of work as understood in the traditional sense, may seem like a practical and efficient way to avoid missing out on anything related to any sphere. Such “informal organisation” is increasingly sanctioned by employers (Fleming, 2014, p. 886). However, in addition to this (and perhaps partly because of the blurring of worlds in the first place), work has also become a mentally more elastic concept. It is not uncommon to hear professionals recount how they have had important ideas when occupied with the most mundane everyday matters, such as when jogging, in the shower, or sleeping (Valtonen et al., 2017). Allowing one's mind to wander unrestrained (e.g., to home chores when working) is starting to be considered as potentially beneficial for creativity even in scholarly discussion (Dane, 2018).

Taking work away from the workplace may also feel like a convenient option, particularly if “official” work time at the workplace abounds with tasks related more to metawork (González & Mark, 2004), such as keeping up with (not necessarily useful) information and gossip, keeping score of and reporting about the use of time, adjusting technologies, and continuously setting up one's workspace anew due to an increasingly mobile work life (Gregg, 2011; Hirst, 2011; Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017; Spicer, 2018). It has been noted that the management of the work conditions and social relations of work are taking up an increasing share of actual work time, to the detriment of the so-called substance of work (Spicer, 2018). Despite of this, it still

seems that the only work that counts is work that can be measured and rendered visible, which is paradoxical in a world of increasingly immaterial work (Ukkola, 2016; see also Niemistö et al., 2017).

However complex it may be to navigate contemporary communication landscapes, the affordances in our material and immaterial environments eventually push us towards the action patterns of least resistance (D'Adderio, 2011). Research, particularly that in line with “new materialism”, suggests that we can adapt to an intensified flow of information, people, and traffic by bodily tuning in. Gilles Deleuze (1992) has suggested that our contemporary lifestyle resembles surfing, in that one must continuously balance oneself bodily with the changing resistance of the tide (i.e., changes in the environment; see also Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015). The non-representational theory advanced by Nigel Thrift (2008) argues that we might cope better if we relieved our intellectual focus from representations of fixed states, such as place, identity, or individual consciousness, and instead embraced the material side of life, the flow of events, and feeling the moment. In a similar vein, Karen Barad (2003) suggests that, rather than holding humans and objects as static entities, one should focus on their performative formation within material-discursive practices where the boundaries of different entities become fluid and open to change. These approaches have been particularly influential in inspiring organisation scholars who have worked with practice, affect, or sociomaterial relations perspectives (see, e.g., Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Gherardi, 2019; Hultin & Introna, 2019; Michels & Steyaert, 2017; Orlikowski & Scott, 2015; Shotter, 2013). According to these studies, individual human experience as an organising nexus of activity is less relevant than the whole affective-discursive context in which we are embedded, which consists of humans, artifacts, and material more generally, and is still relatively unexamined.

If we should intuitively, bodily, and resiliently react and adapt to changing situations and environments in working life, we are approaching rhythm as something of a personal tendency instead of it being outwardly and categorically determined. In knowledge work, rhythm no longer depends on a machine in the factory; as it is the minds of the employees that are the source of productivity, what is looked for are the optimal bodily and mental states for thought processing. For such optimal states to emerge we are increasingly designing for comfort, playfulness, good vibes, communality, and beautiful surroundings in workplaces (De Paoli et al., 2019). The act of taking a break in pursuit of a change of rhythm becomes dependent on personal mood rather than being dependent on the arrival of a general phase applicable to every employee in an identical manner. It may depend on the individual

bodily state of tiredness, or the old, accustomed ways of working may become worn out and cause boredom, producing a need for change. Thus, there seems to be a clear development towards foregrounding the more embodied, rhythmical dynamics of deficiency and satisfaction of need also in knowledge work activity.

In this study I found that a change of work environment can influence work rhythm in a significant way. Merleau-Ponty (1964a, 1945/2012) has argued that we implicitly understand that we live in a world with an infinite number of perspectives, where the ones other than our own remain hidden to us. This implicit infinitude provides a primary sense of wonder and invites us to engage in a reciprocal exchange with our world, one in which we rhythmically become afforded and then act back. Some accounts of the archipelago participants depict the subtle formation of this rhythmical relationship with a new environment. A particularly evocative example is seen in an interview excerpt (see in Article 2) in which a female career and life coach described her experimentation with different spaces for working. At first, this interviewee, went to the office space to work on product development, but felt she did not make progress in this space. There was a balcony on the premises, so she decided to try working there instead. She described how the sun was shining on the balcony and how she could see the sea from her vantage point there, and she immediately started having new ideas. The environment was new to her, so she did not have previous routines regarding where to settle down to work. She merely looked for a solicitation from the environment. The next day, encouraged by the experience, she planned to take her PC and go out to work, but after first popping into the office, she felt an inclination to stay there, and did so. According to Merleau-Ponty, essential to perception is movement, and each new movement brings a new perception and a new bodily synthesis with the environment. Rhythm is not only an external measure, but also a matter of bodily, personal, and existential security and comfort, as also goes Fuchs's (2018) argument described above. On the balcony, a space that was between nature and the facility, and which was both previously unseen and comfortable for working, the consultant may have had an affective liminal experience brought forth by the novelty of the space and the scenery (see Stenner, 2018 and sub-chapters 5.2 and 6.2) – an experience that pleased her and awakened her imagination at that moment. The creative experience outlasted this particular physical moment and made working in the office space pleasant enough the next day.

Greco and Stenner (2017) have discussed the liminal dynamic of two worlds overlapping, using as an illustrative example a minor and seemingly unimportant social context, in which someone having dinner with friends is interrupted by a call

from their mother. The moment is tense, as the individual is trying to dissolve the conflict between being a party host and a dutiful son or daughter at the same time. There are ways to resolve this liminal situation relatively easily, such as by taking the phone call to a different room. At a more general level, it seems to me that the phenomenon of different worlds overlapping is increasingly common in modern life, even in working life. Greco and Stenner (2017) argue that the situation is paradoxical as the person sees the world from different perspectives simultaneously; and, according to them, there are basically two ways to proceed. In the negative case, liminal paradox can engender paralysis or attempts to escape the situation through polarisation. However, the creative potentiality of liminality lies within a possible pattern shift in which, if successful, the different social contexts can be integrated into a wider unity (Greco & Stenner, 2017).

The archipelago environment, a rural and remote place now suddenly serving as a work environment for knowledge work, was already conducive to such a paradoxical experience in its own right. I suggest that the coach in the example, by experimenting with spaces for working, sought to intensify the paradox and thus her liminal experience by first going as close to nature as she could. As is discussed earlier in this summary, liminal occasions are characterised by affective volatility: a heightened sensitivity to become affected (Greco & Stenner, 2017, p. 160; Stenner, 2018). Very poignantly, Greco and Stenner (2017) argue that the void-like character of liminality has a minimum of concrete actuality and a maximum of potentiality (p. 160). For the coach in our case, working in a pleasant space close to nature was an affective and creative experience. However, it is equally interesting that, despite her plans to go a step further the next day, she chose the conventional option of working in the office instead. This way she was able to manage the intensity of the liminal experience using liminality as an “affective technology” (Stenner, 2018). Bachelard (1958/2014) has theorised that it is the interplay between experiences of vast and secure spaces that might be particularly provident for innovation. It seems to me that, for liminality to remain creative, one must have the means at one’s disposal to resolve it when needed and return to more structured order.

There is yet another insight to be drawn from this little vignette. The creative and extraordinary character of liminality may only last for a limited time. This is also what Shortt (2015) found when studying the liminal spaces in hair salons, as was discussed in the previous sub-chapter. Liminal space tends to become incorporated into the existing structure. Perhaps this is the reason why some creative urban freelancers like to habitually search for new and different venues for working, to evoke the liminality

of a novel space again and again (Liegl, 2014). For the coach in the archipelago, working in that place so close to nature was extraordinary only on that first occasion.

The theme of overlapping worlds was prevalent in the interviews in the context of different scales, ranging from minor moments to the whole archipelago period. I have tried to capture this with a picture in Article 2. The interviews suggest that the liminal experience does not necessarily stop along with the concrete activity that initiated it, but rather that the experience may continue to exert its affective presence even after the activity itself has terminated. This alternative, lingering temporality of liminality was reflected in how the participants viewed the overall archipelago period. There was a sense of unawareness of the full meaning of the archipelago experience at the end of it, but an expectation that its meaning would crystallise later with the passing of time (Article 2). Perhaps there is another occasion of two worlds overlapping when the liminal phase later transitions to the “normal”. The longitudinal survey results suggest that the positive changes in well-being during the archipelago experiment were partly sustained even some weeks after the period (Article 1).

Overall, the interviews of the participants highlighted experiences of time as cyclical and connected to meaningful activities and spaces instead of being described in terms of linear and normative time. When the participants were asked how they had carried out their work in the archipelago, they described their ways of working as consisting of meaningful concrete events, such as the day when work was conducted in the yard as opposed to working in the office room, or working alone and then working together with colleagues. Separate bouts of activity found their meaning in how they were brought together in the framework of the whole day or the whole work period, and in how the whole of particular concrete events (work phases, leisure phases, beautiful moments of wandering in nature, smaller breaks, and dining together) became arranged – not in a planned manner but more according to the momentary feelings of the groups and individuals.

There was a tendency for the collective ad hoc arrangements, if found comfortable, to become repeated, creating a sense of ritual (Weik, 2019). In addition, as these rhythms were collectively experimented with and decided upon, they became the foundation of the situated archipelago communities, determining their way of life (Turner, 1974b, 1969/1991). When one participant, a male engineer with a small group of colleagues, was asked to elaborate further on his preceding description of the archipelago work period as having been both a comfortable and productive phase to him, he found it hard to reduce this experience to individual factors, but instead answered in a holistic way (as quoted in Article 2):

May it sound good or bad, but I'll say that when you leave home or your normal office environment the efficiency of working increases significantly. And as you make up nice activities here for the evening, you can say that the soul is resting, and that way you become more efficient.

In my interpretation, the engineer aims to convey the idea that to understand the meaning of the period it must be viewed in its totality, from the point of view of the lived experience of a new social reality that took place. He and many other interviewees spoke of work not in isolation but as a phase among other phases that together made up the day, and the period. Electrician/writer Eeva (Article 3) used the metaphor of “a puzzle”, which can be interpreted as referring to an overarching “whole” which organises separate instances and which can be reconstructed according to the same principle. The idea of cyclical time as a recurring principle like that of a puzzle can be identified in the following quote depicting sequential transitions between events. A meaningful time was formed from the cyclical, recurring coming together of these events (quote from Article 3):

Somehow it has been wonderful here. Of course it is due to being in a new environment, that once we have been working and then gone to walk, and then when we are walking, there are so many new and wondrous things, that you forget work (...) it has been like this, you go from one ambiance to another. Somehow you can focus on where you are and not where you were a moment ago... that is what has happened here.

There has been some organisational research that has analysed the relation of cyclical and linear time in organisations, suggesting that the prevalent, official linear time concept be combined with that of cyclical time, as such a combination would be more conducive to innovation (Ancona et al., 2001; Crossan et al., 2005). For example, Crossan et al. (2005) categorise linear time as being oriented towards future goals, while cyclical time contains experiential knowledge about the past of the organisation: routine and tradition. Crossan et al. (2005) suggest that creative and improvisational organisational activity needs to be allowed more freedom – in terms of rules and use of time – for the actors to be able to use their tacit knowledge of the organisation and craft effective, situated solutions. According to this perspective, rather paradoxically, to be creative and future-oriented, organisational actors need resources from the organisational past, and such resources may be evoked in creative organisational improvisation. From the perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), one is dealing here with an organisational past that consists of individually and collectively embodied habitual memory.

Combining the theoretical and empirical insights presented in this sub-chapter, one may conclude that cyclical time is temporality of the lived experience that is both ritually constructed and feeds on largely unconscious bodily knowledge, memory, and needs. The elements of cyclical time are grounded in our past experiences, and can thus also be manifested in bodily memory (see also discussion in sub-chapter 4.2). As Fuchs (2018) states, “[b]eneath both a passing lifetime and those memories lined up in a linear way in autobiographical memory one can find a layer of bodily experience that is not organized sequentially, therefore not passing by, but rather constantly growing through new experiences” (p. 56). Like in improvisation, when sensitised to such resources, one is not in complete control of the affects or thoughts that might come to the surface. Even previously distant life-historical points may connect in a given material setting (Brown & Reavey, 2018).

There is an example in the interview material of this thesis that shows how a participant, a female coach and consultant, was preoccupied with such bodily memory as she envisioned the possibility that the archipelago experience and its atmosphere could be reawakened later in her everyday life. Reliving the archipelago period was then seen as a future escape from the linear progression of time. The participant implicitly saw this escape as a way to tap into affective resources that are infinite (“we only have the sky as our limit”) as compared to those of ordinary life, in which “everyone is walking at the same pace” (citation from Article 2):

It is a bit like as you step out of the train in Helsinki [the capital of Finland], everyone is walking at the same pace. And [after the archipelago period] we could consider having occasionally a sort of ‘Korppoo’ [name of an island] mentality day’, already to begin that day differently and construct it. . . I mean we only have the sky as our limit, you just have to realize it. You have to sort of reflect about it and become aware of how we can make use of it in a different way.

Furthermore, there were at least two participants for whom personal pasts became current and vivid, as if they were relived anew in the archipelago. These were the individuals whose stories I have already touched upon in sub-chapter 6.2. One of them was Eeva, whose story is examined in Article 3; she expressed a profound fascination with and affective immersion in the environment, and felt that in the archipelago work-style and lifestyle she was reliving a fantasy she had had as a child. Eeva began to envision a career change after the period. Another participant, a male designer, experienced a sudden burst of creativity which took him mentally back to an earlier phase of his life in which he had experienced something similar. His case is briefly discussed in Article 4.

Fuchs (2018) describes how sometimes sensual affective experiences, such as seeing, tasting or feeling a familiar object from the past, may create a curious “*déjà vecu* experience” in which past and present unite and one suddenly sees and feels like one once did in the past (p. 55). This is what I interpret as having happened to the two individuals described above. They may not have encountered a concrete object resembling something from their pasts, but the sense of familiarity could also have been evoked by something more fleeting, such as an atmosphere, an activity, or a rhythm. This experience is also famously depicted in Proust’s “*Recherche*”, in which tasting a Madeleine cake created a vivid sensation of a past experience (Fuchs, 2018, p. 55). Such “past coming live again” is characteristically a deeply happy moment, and enables escaping the linear flow of time (Fuchs, 2018, pp. 55–56; Heidegger, 1927/1962). I would add that it is another manifestation of a liminal overlapping of worlds which can create an experience of higher unity in one’s life (Greco & Stenner, 2017). These experiences are antidotes to the fragmentation of our technologically overlaid, increasingly hectic everyday worlds.

The experiences of the participants described above speak of a cyclical experience of time in both the horizontal and vertical senses – horizontal within the frame of the liminal phase of the archipelago world, with its rituals, practices and material affordances, and vertical in terms of present experiences being integrated with and ascribed meaning in relation to the participant’s embodied subjective history and memory. With this discussion I aim to show that even if it is important to underline the activity of materiality around us in the formation of practices and even subjectivities, as materially oriented organisation scholars have done (see, e.g., Hultin & Introna, 2019), our past embodied experience is also constantly involved in our activity, although it remains below conscious awareness most of the time. With this I am referring to the vertical dimension of human experience, which gives an individual a gravitas within his or her immediate material-discursive constellation. I have also discussed this in sub-chapter 6.2 in relation to how spaces may evoke our sensitivities of past. This thesis suggests that a subjectivity is not formed merely in the present situation by means of its particular, situated materiality, but also by how one responds to this materiality due to sedimented, habitual memory: body memory (Casey, 1984; Fuchs, 2018; Kozyreva, 2018; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012).

I have suggested in Article 4 that the participants’ experience of time during the archipelago period gravitated towards Heideggerian “authentic temporality” – it was an experience that was significantly liberated from the tethers of outside, normative expectations that encourage busily leaping after the ever-escaping present (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Instead, time was more inner-oriented, bridging and

traversing personal history, present, and future, and creating continuity and meaning rather than fragmentation. As Heidegger (1927/1962) states, authentic temporality always “has” time (p. 463). As was also shown by statistical analysis in Article 1, the participants’ experiences of time pressure and interruptions were diminished during the period.

This thesis shows how a transfer to a completely alternative work environment is a bodily and affective experience that provides room for cyclical, ritual, and liminal temporalities. In the archipelago, time was not experienced as essentially moving forward, towards the future. Rather, the experience of temporality resembled more a deepening cycle. Liminal situations such as the archipelago period can sensitise us to the temporalities of the body. Our body memory comes forth in our situated practical interactions with the world. Putting oneself in the liminal position of a stranger (sub-chapter 6.3) by entering an environment that is free from everyday normative inscriptions may act as a sort of rhythmical reset which can sensitise one anew to one’s embodied rhythms and needs. Situated rhythms, rituals, and practices can be created with embodied, affective existence as their foundation.

Periods outside of externally and formally controlled temporality can also awaken dormant layers in sedimented body memory. From Merleau-Ponty’s bodily perspective, creativity is not about producing something completely new, but is rather about using one’s existing repository of experiences and knowledge in an alternative way. The perception of the environment is a two-way system of exchanges, and thus in perception we also lay our desires over the perceived field ahead of us, seeing what we deep down really want to see (Fuchs, 2012). It is particularly in malleable and uncertain spaces that these latent and hidden needs can surface (pp. 75–76; see also Weick, 2009). The question then becomes how we can use space to create alternative connections between perception, sense-making, and memory in work situations.

7.2 The anxiety of losing rhythm

In contemporary working life there exists an increasing number of professionals who are “in between” clear organisational roles and thus in a liminal position. Consultants, temporary workers, and independent workers are primary examples of such professional types. These individuals are characteristically carriers of outside information, and their professional requirements include considerable adaptability, self-reflectivity, social skills, and an ability to endure stress (Bechky, 2006; Budtz-

Jørgensen et al., 2019; Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003; Garsten, 1999, 2008; Petriglieri et al., 2019; Tempest & Starkey, 2004). Wynn and Rao (2020) have even suggested that consulting has become the archetypical contemporary profession that other occupations are gravitating towards (see also Haapakorpi, 2020). Furthermore, even within organisational boundaries there are those who operate in the grey areas of organisational structures, such as those involved in post-bureaucratic innovation communities working beyond organisational silos (Howard-Grenville et al., 2011; Swan et al., 2016) or facilitators between organisations (Ellis & Ybema, 2010).

Resilience and an entrepreneurial attitude have become highly valued, while becoming attached to existing organisational structures, places, and co-workers has come to be seen as less than ideal, despite its to some extent remaining a necessary practical consequence of work (Lamprou, 2017). In this discourse, the ideal worker no longer resembles the stable and loyal “organisation man” of William H. Whyte, but a nomad capable of self-transformation (Julkunen, 2008, p. 229), a “lone wolf with excellent social skills” (Garsten, 1999) or someone able to keep their guard up while orienting towards the organisation (Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019, p. 927). A supportive network of colleagues and clients can enhance the chance of success in such careers (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). However, being neither inside nor outside a structured career path can also be frustrating, as such individuals do not necessarily find sympathy for their career aspirations from those operating along more established lines (Bamber et al., 2017). They are ambiguous figures.

As regards time and temporality, this ideal of working life endorses change and “becoming”, but in doing so it curiously also gives up a sense of time (Holt & Johnsen, 2019). Holt and Johnsen (2019) have claimed that management of time structures has given way to a more fateful orientation of simply letting time pass, as employees become endlessly enterprising, self-updating units according to constantly mutating organisational conditions (p. 1565). Paradoxically, while time has become increasingly difficult to grasp, it has actually tightened its grasp on all organisational activity (Holt & Johnsen, 2019), hindering the ability of workers to concentrate and control time (Cavazotte et al., 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Moen et al., 2013; Perlow, 1999). Johnsen and Sørensen (2015) studied an overworked consultant who was living in a “zone of indistinction”: a situation in which he was practically always potentially working, except on the weekends. According to their interpretation, work had essentially become “life” for the consultant; consequently, he had lost his ability to create meaningful boundaries between work and life. The consultant described the situation with the corporeal and evocative metaphor of being on a “fast moving train”. Finally, the situation became unbearable, which led to the consultant quitting

his job. Johnsen and Sørensen (2015) referred to this very existential experience of having stagnated into a state of “in between” as permanent liminality. The resilient going with the flow of the moment (also discussed in sub-chapter 7.1), may start to feel hollow if one loses the ability to distinguish experiences from one another in terms of their meaning and distinctiveness. I suggest that in modern working life there exists yet another rhythm in addition to the linear and cyclical ones discussed in the previous sub-chapter: a rhythm of permanent and distorted liminality, in which personal control of working and life rhythms has suffered, leaving the individual in a rhythmical “free fall”.

As has been discussed in sub-chapter 4.2, following Merleau-Ponty, our perception is “grounded” by how it is solicited by the world. However, in the present era, our concrete environments are heavily interpellated by virtual worlds. De Vaujany et al. (2019) have suggested that our embodied experience of space is no longer systematically connected to a precise “here and now”, but has become something more fluid: it is challenging to perceive work as happening in a specific space when work is “taking place everywhere all the time” (p. 1). This sense of the overlapping of multiple worlds is also depicted by Daskalaki et al. (2016), who describe how the identities of highly mobile people tend to lose their stability, instead emerging as temporary crystallisations of embodied emplacements, but also by means of displacements (from where one no longer is) – and perhaps particularly through the lived contrasts between the two. The liminal experience of contestation of different present and absent sites is felt within the embodied experience, and in this physical and mental movement identities are forever lost and found anew.

Perceiving is simultaneously a sensing and sense-making activity. Failure to have a grasp of the surrounding world may produce existential anguish. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012) used the case of schizophrenia to demonstrate the development of such a process: the embodied concrete relation with the environment suffers, enclosing the individual in his or her mental space, which, being no longer supported by environmental cues, enters an imaginary state isolated from the concrete world and from intersubjective relations with others (pp. 293–296). Traces of such an anxiety have been identified in permanently liminal work situations wherein one might find oneself in an aporia that is nigh-on schizophrenic (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003). For example, an inability to project career trajectories in an organisation created a “big mess in everyone’s heads” (Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019, p. 926) which eventually made it “hard to really figure out what it is you want” (p. 927). Modern liminal situations often lack external guidance (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). The reason why those passing through liminal phases were carefully mentored in pre-industrial

societies was to ensure that the passage to the new status succeeded – today’s more idiosyncratic liminal situations carry the risk that those who enter them will remain paralysed in the state of being in between (Greco & Stenner, 2017).

In the extremely hectic work situation depicted by Johnsen and Sørensen (2015) and described above there emerged an increasing inability to take hold of situations and categorise them meaningfully within the scope of the subject’s personal life. As a result, the individual felt increasingly alone and unable to communicate his situation to others, preferring to turn to self-help measures instead (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). In this case, the individual effectively became his own “ceremony master” in navigating his stagnated liminal phase. One could coin the term “boundary labour” here to capture the individual responsibility for making sense of and reconstructing the contingent boundaries between work and “life”, which are increasingly up to the individual to sort out. The results of such labour may lead to individualised work and life rhythms that make the ideal of being always alert and perfectly recuperated when resuming work increasingly distant (Bloomfield & Dale, 2020; Helin, 2020; Valtonen et al., 2017). These arrangements are often fleeting and makeshift in nature (Gregg, 2011). As coping at work thus relies increasingly on managing the body’s resilience, the uniqueness of each body’s ability to handle disrupted rhythms comes to the fore, giving some bodies a career advantage while others fare only if supported medically (Bloomfield & Dale, 2020). There may also emerge challenges for sharing one’s experience in an intersubjective manner with colleagues, as liminal situations are on the verge of being considered socially anomalous (Greco & Stenner, 2017). As Elias (1992) reminds us, the external, social compulsion of time requires some moderate but uniform self-control from each of us – there are typically limits to the possible individualisation of time arrangements, meaning that there is an increasing tension between social and personal rhythms (Helin, 2020).

In this study, many of the participants of the archipelago experiment reflected rather openly about challenges in their everyday work habits and rhythms. Many struggled with concentrating on what they were supposed to do at a given moment. Some recounted having difficulties carrying out one task at a time without bouncing restlessly to other chores, while others spoke of being interrupted frequently by others (e.g., in open office settings). The challenges communicated also related to working according to multi-role job descriptions, which requires plenty of self-management in terms of being able to swiftly switch orientation according to a role change. One participant captured the confusion this induced well by expressing how, as appeared to be the case of several other participants, he had “felt this strange burden and worry that [he was] always doing the wrong thing” (Article 4). This is

also a form of mind-wandering (Dane, 2018), but one that has gone to the extreme. One may of course wonder whether the archipelago experiment was particularly effective at attracting individuals suffering within restless work environments, or whether it was the calm, rural archipelago environment that awakened these reflections. My interpretation is that it was a bit of both. The interviewees described their astonishment at their newfound ability to concentrate on their work during the period, which came effortlessly and as if by itself, highlighting the effect of the archipelago world but also the experiential contrast it presented to the everyday environment of the interviewees. As suggested in the previous sub-chapter, a rhythmical reset had taken place in this temporary liminal environment and broken the loop of situated habits in which work was normally embedded. The liminal situation enabled a fresh affective and embodied experience that allowed for the resynchronisation of rhythms.

In Article 3, in discussing the relationship between permanent and temporary liminality, I have presented three cases, out of which the case of Lasse is perhaps the most dramatic in terms of its rhythmical obscurity and the resemblance it bears to the individual consultant discussed by Johnsen and Sørensen (2015). Lasse was also a consultant by profession, and his working life was both strained and fragmented. Working in a network-based manner, Lasse was a private entrepreneur involved in several companies and networks; he worked long hours, and travelled extensively from his home-based office. Habitual liminality was demonstrated in many of Lasse's remarks in the interview. He felt that he was practically always working, yet the fragmentation of his entrepreneurial activities hindered his efforts to concentrate effectively on one task. He had developed a habit, when working, of switching focus restlessly between work as well as home chores. To some extent, Lasse had given up pre-planning, both in his work and his private life. For example, he described, although sarcastically, how he would be only limitedly aware of where he was travelling regardless of whether it was a work or a private trip, applying a sort of making-sense-while-doing philosophy, just forcing himself to adapt to any situation at hand. Lasse's lifestyle was exemplary of Thrift's (2008) moving within the onflow of events, or Deleuze's (1992) surfing. However, Lasse clearly felt somewhat uneasy about this lifestyle, regretting mostly his lack of family time as well as feeling that his multiple efforts did not pay off the way they were supposed to. On the other hand, another case discussed in this article, Eeva, an independent electrician/writer, also conveyed that her work and private life had blurred, except not in the frenetic manner described by Lasse, but more in a manner that was associated with a somewhat aimless apathy (see also Julkunen, 2008, p. 230). Eeva described how her

work and life had blurred into something that she depicted as “tunnel work”. In her local and home-based life, there were certain automatic, habitualised rhythms related to waking, working, and sleeping, but these did not provide enough meaning for her. The third case examined in the article was that of client project manager and PhD student Mia, who juggled heroically with two lines of work (the other being her PhD), two self-arranged workspaces, and relatively unpredictable and fluctuating workloads in a virtually operating company with no physical premises of its own.

I suggest that some of the factors that contribute to the fragmentation of work routines and practices have to do with independent, multi-role work that relies heavily on ICT. I argue that the lack of meaningful social structure and community rituals in daily working life may produce permanent liminality – a void-like existence that may exhibit heightened affective intensity, but be devoid of the soothing effect of collective ritual (Greco & Stenner, 2017) that used to render liminality easier to handle psychologically. It seems that permanent liminality tends to escape complete conscious awareness and may instead be manifested more in the realm of the habitual body – and it can be exposed when one’s habitual settings go through a change. As the slightly melancholic reflections of Lasse and Eeva show, constant resilient adaptation and simply following the flow of events may hinder one’s ability to grasp the deeper purpose and direction of one’s work, one’s career, and, ultimately, one’s life. These findings also contribute to discussions concerning mental strain at work. It may be too narrow a view to understand stress, and mental work strain more generally, as the results of easily identifiable causes, such as work tasks that are too challenging or too numerous, because such a view may miss important nuances of how this strain can silently and gradually build up through completely ordinary but fragmented embodied habits. It seems that as independent, multi-role and ICT-based work may produce distant and ephemeral social networks, this in turn is conducive to somewhat confused embodied habits in everyday life.

Even if the digital and spatial dispersion of work already places us somewhere in between multiple spaces and times, our perception depends on our ability to take a hold of our environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Parallel to Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, Brown and Reavey (2018) have suggested that we see the world through a form-giving loop built by contextual memories, in which “a reciprocal shaping or informing” goes on between people and things (p. 215). For example, adjustments made to one’s workspace, tools, and other aspects of one’s work environment “act back”, becoming part of one’s habitual history. Brown and Reavey’s (2018) perspective expands on the idea of distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995) by underlining how situated relationships with people and objects do not merely help

our cognition but create a “world” within which one perceives. This habitual loop, in which objects support our daily embodied remembering, is thus not only a cognitive but also an existential condition, making it difficult to see beyond the loop without some kind of “unsiting” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; see also sub-chapter 5.2).

I suggest that fragmentation of work by processes related to the prevalence of ICT and individualised arrangements further fragments the symbolic meanings and uses of our everyday concrete environments, which act back by participating in the creation of habitual loops that sustain our lifestyles. Koslowski et al. (2019) depict how space becomes the terrain of contested meanings in their study in which ICT-assisted homeworking was found to mean “inhabiting unclear furniture objects” (p. 171) and “being neither here nor there” (p. 172). With liminality having become a lifestyle and a permanent condition, the environment resists a stable meaning being created – instead meaning is “left in the air” and open for continuous renegotiation. Dwelling (Bachelard, 1958/2014), in the sense of creating a meaningful lived space for oneself (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), may become indefinitely postponed. This thesis was only able to examine the participants’ everyday work environments indirectly, through their retrospective reflections while in the archipelago, during which everyday conditions were seen as being opposed to the archipelago experience. Whereas the archipelago conditions they experienced were similar, the participants’ backgrounds and typical everyday conditions varied. However, a general picture emerges from their accounts, one that points to how the level of complexity in one’s job description affects the possibilities of finding a comfortable working space in everyday life. For someone living alone with a rather uniform ICT-based job description, occasional homework could be an optimal solution. However, the situation was significantly different for participants whose work required switching between multiple roles and orientations, which ranged from accurate administrative activity to creative activity, salesmanship, and the handling of interpersonal situations and multiple projects. Add such pressures to possible spousal and parenting expectations and these individuals could be in a state of constant turbulence regardless of the space they happened to occupy while working.

For those being pulled in different directions, the first benefit of the archipelago period was that it was able to put a stop to such intensity. A simple and communal space was able to clarify and structure their work experience. As shown in Article 3, Lasse and Mia’s reactions reflected a relief due to a simplification of work rhythms, with Lasse exclaiming how important it was to have a “clear” work period. Similarly, Eeva found a way to arrange her work and start her long-planned project with the help of the spatial change, which had an energising and inspiring effect for her. It

was as if the rhythmic reset helped to illuminate the perception these participants had of their work and life, becoming an antidote to what Eeva referred to as “tunnel work”. The work of many other participants was also facilitated by the transfer to the archipelago environment, perhaps reflecting a more general sense of a crisis of space in working life, and possibly in lived experience more generally. I suggest that a liminal period outside the ordinary social matrix may assist in grounding employees who are immersed too deeply in the rhythmically obscure limitlessness of the increasingly virtual worlds in which we are living.

7.3 The active-passive rhythm of engagement

Studies of working life and organisation recognise one famous work mode that escapes the confines of linear time – that of flow. Flow is a subjective state in which individuals are fully immersed in the present moment (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The state of flow consists of the following characteristics: intense and focused concentration; merging of action and awareness; loss of reflective self-consciousness; a sense of being in control of the situation and one’s actions; a distortion of temporal experience, typically in the form of feeling that time has passed faster than normal; and the experience of this activity as intrinsically rewarding (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 240). Here we find several connections to the prevalence of bodily cyclical rhythms as sketched above: while focusing intensively, the person discards external, reflective self-consciousness and consciousness of objective, homogeneous time. The intrinsic motivation driving this activity is built upon embodied rhythms.

Flow is believed to be a state of both productivity and happiness – a source of good life (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The state is essentially about an optimal fit between action capacities and perceived action opportunities: the activity should be challenging, but not one that exceeds one’s skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, pp. 146–147). According to the theory, flow is a contextual phenomenon, and appears in the dynamic system of person-environment interaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 137). To this extent, the theory of flow is compatible with the understanding of the cyclical rhythms in working life discussed in previous sub-chapters. However, although descriptions of flow emphasise a “distortion” of the sense of time in favour of an inner rhythm that takes the lead in experience, in other respects the theory is tied to an immediate feedback loop: “what happens at any moment is responsive to what happened immediately before within the interaction” (Nakamura &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 242). Thus, there is linearity and disciplined orientation to the present moment in flow, which may not leave room for awakening of the more distant experiences stored in embodied memory. Quite to the contrary, limiting the stimulus field is essential to flow experience to restore an intensive focus on the ongoing activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 146). Flow theory is also vague as to what extent actors need to consider a given activity to be personally important and meaningful in order to enter a flow state, or whether the mere kicks of intense concentration, self-forgetting, and expansion of skills are sufficient conditions for a flow experience. The latter option seems probable, as actors are encouraged to reflect on the ethics of a given activity when still “outside” the experience, before engaging in flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 257).

By contrast to research on flow, Gomart and Hennion (1999) have taken a more context-oriented approach to goal-directed activity in their “sociology of attachment”. They found that individuals who are driven by passion towards a given activity use techniques, devices, and skills in their aspiration to create an optimal contextual setting and encourage a disposition in which they could become “seized” by the valued activity. According to Gomart and Hennion (1999), such a passionate attachment involves a mixture of and alternation between activity and passivity, each of which enables the other. The personal experience is embedded in its setting (p. 235), where the material has the power to affect and mould the practitioner. With this idea Gomart and Hennion make an important statement about how a passionate immersion in an activity does not depend on an actor’s deliberate effort only, which is the implication of flow theory. Instead, there also needs to be an element that simply happens beyond conscious control, as an unanticipated consequence of the devotion to the object of the practice. Activity becomes thus transformed into an event. The “passivity” of letting oneself be seized by the event is preceded by skilful preparation, but also by an attitude of openness, patience, receptivity, and sensitivity to the situation, which directs the taking of turns of activity and passivity (Gomart & Hennion, 1999). Furthermore, attention is not limited, as in the case of flow, but open and “available” for the event (p. 241). This uncontrolled and context-dependent element is something that flow theory leaves less developed. In “flow” the engaged actor is the main hero pursuing a challenging task while never losing control over the process. By contrast, in “attachment”, too much control would ruin the power of the object (Gomart & Hennion, 1999, p. 244). Thus, in attachment, there is an interplay between activity and submission, even humility, in the face of the object.

Perhaps due to the emphasis on context, the time loop of activity is looser in a state of attachment than in flow. For example, as Gomart and Hennion (1999) state, sometimes one may have to wait for inspiration until the moment of exhaustion, when one no longer expects any inspiration to arrive (p. 241). There is wisdom in knowing when to hold up. In this sense even the outwardly passive phases are never completely “inactive”, but are filled with intense orientation towards the event. In fact, modes of activity and passivity are often so intertwined so as to become almost blurred in practice. We are dealing here with the kind of register that moves somewhere in between the two opposites of activity and passivity (Gomart & Hennion, 1999, p. 236). The theory of passionate activity is a reminder of how visible and productive activity relies upon the entire gamut of our embodied, affective and contextual existence – productive activity does not happen by means of sheer will-power only, but is conditioned by meaningful, embodied being-in-the-world.

Current mainstream work research, such as that produced by the work engagement school, which is influenced by the concept of flow, has also aimed to gain further knowledge of the role of the body in maintaining engagement at work. For example, new bodily sensitive methods, such as respite intervention techniques during the workday, have been developed for the sake of the management of personal energy resources (Steidle et al., 2017). However, it has still not been addressed how far one can go in this experimentation with embodied rhythms, as the linear working time window between the hours of nine and five is still so official and prevalent. Thus, the contradiction between linear and cyclical rhythms is left unresolved. Furthermore, what Gomart and Hennion (1999) propose is partly recognisable in the current management fashions that emphasise play and creativity but is practically possible only in very independent and flexible work.

Due to its open-ended character, attachment might at a first glance seem relatively distant to work. However, it is essentially being pursued because it eventually enables one to do more and differently than one thought one would be able to (Gomart & Hennion, 1999, p. 240). I think the sociology of attachment suggests that a creative process can be deliberately pursued only to a limited extent. Instead, it is the connection with the environment, the social setting, and material devices that engage the individual holistically and bodily, stimulating creativity in an indirect manner. Similarly, the rhythm of the phases of activity and passivity cannot be predetermined, meaning that the “event” may take over from deliberate active preparation at any time.

Gherardi (2009) has detected similar active-passive rhythms in her literature analysis of taste-making communities of practitioners, such as haute cuisine

personnel and mathematicians. In these cases, work proceeded incrementally, as the flow of action was occasionally suspended by phases of negotiation and reflectivity. Gherardi (2009) described this as “a process of innovation through incremental repetition and stabilisation of a social and material world” (p. 545). Thus, in these cases, work rhythm became formed through the requirements of the work/passion and the rhythm of the engaged collective. Depending on the situation there may arise needs that the practitioner will then aim to satisfy using experience and reflection (see also Schön, 1991; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). Here we can identify once again the pattern of Fuchs’ (2018) embodied rhythmic cycle of deficiency and need satisfaction, although in a socially and culturally developed form.

To elaborate upon Gomart and Hennion’s (1999) theory, I suggest that work practice can be more integrated and creative when one is allowed to be connected to deeper layers of bodily memory than those that are routinely necessary in a narrow sense, with opportunities for alternating states of focus and active concentration, affectively sensing the environment, and mind wandering in which even distant memories are allowed to come to the surface. This can be stimulated by a liminal experience of an environment that is unusual and experienced as contrasting to one’s usual sensitivities. An environment that is not habitual can open a liminal field of perception that can reflect something of our more hidden dreams and desires back to us (Fuchs, 2012, 2018; Greco & Stenner, 2017).

Work does not always proceed in a linear manner if it is conducted with a passionate and creative orientation, as knowledge work often is (Gherardi et al., 2007; Helin, 2020; Sennett, 2008). This is also what research on incubation has suggested (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006; George, 2007, 2009). There emerge mental blocks in the workflow, but instead of being treated as a hindrance they may be seen as signs of a need for alternating between modes of activity and passivity. The everyday rhythmical framework of the archipelagic experimental periods was very much constructed around such “passings” between different modes of activity (Gomart & Hennion, 1999). Examples of such cyclical rhythmic patterns included alternating working alone and together, and alternating active work with walking breaks (see Articles 2 and 3).

There emerged one social form that particularly seemed like an unintended consequence of the context, a type of “event” (Gomart & Hennion, 1999) where active and passive modes of being were intricately mixed. This was “soft planning” (see also sub-chapter 6.3), a practice in which conscious, forward-pushing activity gave way to an intersubjective space of simple dwelling together and giving feedback and reassurance to each other’s thoughts in an ambiance of trust so characteristic of

a liminal space. This is something that linear time and normative expectations, the stress of “doing the right thing”, and the increasing speed of working life typically do not allow.

The participants who engaged in “soft planning” during the archipelago period struggled to define its character as either work or leisure, as it was an unconstrained and spontaneous mode of being. However, even if such a “passive activity” was not quite part of the world of everyday routines and obligations (Schütz, 1945), and thus would not directly produce something concrete and visible, these phases were revelatory and even therapeutic, thus promoting conditions for the more utilitarian and “ordinary” work activity. “Soft planning” allowed work and its conditions to be collectively processed in a holistic manner, creating meaning and community, and combatting fragmentation of permanent liminality. What the idea of soft planning makes visible are the parts of the work process that take place “under the radar” of official job descriptions: the ways how meaningful symbolic frameworks are constructed around the concrete work acts. This type of activity can readily be associated with contexts of craftsmanship, where work is processed thoughtfully and thoroughly because the craftsmen’s skills, professional pride, and passion demand it (Banks, 2010; Sennett, 2008). A craftsman’s concentration does not take place in linear time, but rather in embodied cyclical time (Sennett, 2008). Yet any advanced professional competence involves craft-like skills (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005), so such modes of activity have a wide relevance.

From the point of view suggested by the findings of the archipelago case, an excessive focus on self-realisation in discussions around creativity may be misleading and conducive to valorising compulsive “pushing” for results which, if it is the sole working mode, is not optimal for achieving the desired end result (George, 2009) or perhaps even outdoing oneself. The archipelago case exemplifies how creativity is not only about the obvious visible activity directed towards the result, which would be the stance of flow theory. In the archipelago, the creative process began with the sensing, perceiving, and exploring of the environment and was furthered in the forming of the practices and rituals that created the situated community (see also Weik, 2019). I suggest that dwelling in a liminal space, as participants did in the case of the archipelago, has the potential to intensify a fruitful alteration of active and passive modes of being (Gomart & Hennion, 1999), a condition which can help creativity to emerge as if by itself, as an event, drawing from potentially vaster human resources than are recognised by flow theory.

Furthermore, as Stenner (2018) observes, a liminal situation is fundamentally open, and a ritual-like rhythmicity may come to anchor the fluidity and inherent

indeterminacy of liminality (p. 237). I suggest that in transitory liminal situations such as the archipelago period, embodied rhythms may thus take prevalence and become an organising device for the situated social process. Recurrent “passings” between active and passive modes of being actually indicate that a liminal experience of different worlds overlapping (Greco & Stenner, 2017) is taking place. The situated, collective rhythm of such passings engaged the participating individuals holistically and became an important driver of both the formation of community and the general work process within the archipelago period.

8 THREE LENSES ON CREATIVITY AT WORK

In organisation research, creativity has traditionally been defined as a work outcome that is both novel and useful, but there have been recent calls for an increased focus on the process behind the outcome (Anderson et al., 2014; Drazin et al., 1999; Shalley et al., 2004). In this thesis, creativity has been approached in an iterative manner, by interpreting findings from data with the help of different theoretical approaches. A guiding theme of interest, as suggested by an analysis of the data, has been the link between the lived body, space/environment, and creativity. The central argument of this thesis is that creativity does not become visible solely in the outcome of activity, nor even in the preceding work process. Rather, creativity is already present in the way one perceives and encounters the space in which the given activity takes place. In the following sub-sections, creativity is discussed from three perspectives relevant for this thesis: organisational psychology, practice-based organisation studies, and liminality. The first can be considered the most mainstream approach to creativity in organisational studies, and the second is also an established paradigm, albeit primarily a sociological one. The third is a particular contribution of this thesis, and aims to integrate and elaborate on the creativity-related insights found in liminality theory while being informed by the other approaches on creativity discussed. In this theorisation, liminal creativity emerges both as a situated process and a form of awareness that can extend our routinised ways of inhabiting the world. I suggest reading this account of liminal creativity as a theoretical construction, while in the “real” world liminal creativity would probably appear in more or less fluid forms and merge with other more norm-bound processes.

8.1 Psychological perspective

Creative and innovation processes have traditionally been related to single persons, often persons considered to have something akin to heroic predispositions. Since the mid-20th century, the connection between individual characteristics and creative performance has been examined by a number of scholars, mostly in the domain of psychology. Summaries of this research have shown that such factors as personality

traits (e.g., openness, broad interest, toleration of ambiguity), cognitive style (such as divergent thinking, problem finding, and conceptual combination) and intrinsic motivation are considered to enhance creativity (e.g., Mumford, 2003; Shalley et al., 2004). There has also been a marked interest in developing general models of creative processes for various levels of analysis, from analysis of individuals and groups to organisational systems (Drazin et al., 1999). For example, an old but often referenced step-model of individual creativity developed by Wallas (1926) consists of the following steps: 1) preparation, in which the person focuses on a phenomenon and starts to investigate it from all angles; 2) incubation, in which focus on the problem is relaxed, allowing the creative process to continue unconsciously; 3) illumination – when an idea emerges to consciousness in a flash-like manner; 4) verification – when the new idea is assessed and elaborated rationally so that it can be communicated to others. This model is broadly accepted and built upon, if not in a strictly linear form (Haner, 2005, p. 289).

In the 1980s, psychological research on creativity in organisational context experienced a transition as it became widely acknowledged that creativity would not depend only on individual characteristics, but on environmental ones too (see, e.g., Amabile, 1988; Woodman et al., 1993). According to Amabile's (1997) influential componential model, the major components of individual and small team creativity are expertise, creative thinking skill, and intrinsic motivation. The componential model emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation, which can be affected by one's social environment. According to this theory, encouraging environmental factors include properly challenging work, work group support, organisational and supervisory encouragement, sufficient resources, and freedom, while obstacles to creativity may comprise workload pressure, organisational politics, risk avoidance, harsh competition, or criticism of new ideas and overemphasising of the status quo (Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile, 1997). In Amabile's version of a general model, creativity proceeds in five stages, starting with task presentation and passing through the stages of preparation, idea generation, and idea validation to arrive, finally, at outcome assessment (Amabile, 1988).

In their revision of this model, Amabile and Pratt (2016) added four new elements to the already existing attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioural elements of the model. The first addition concerns affects and moods. Amabile and Pratt (2016) consider positive affects to often both precede and succeed creative accomplishments, thus encouraging further creative efforts, while negative affects may also have their role to play in encouraging analytical and critical thinking (see also Amabile et al., 2005). Affects also enforce the second added element: a dynamic called a "progress loop",

which is contingent on the willingness to iteratively return to the earlier stages of the creative process and start new creative processes. The revised version of the model also includes an increased emphasis on the role of the experienced meaningfulness of work during the creative process. Furthermore, reflecting the increasing interest in group creativity (Mumford, 2003; Shalley et al., 2004), Amabile and Pratt (2016) balance the role of intrinsic motivation by also considering extrinsic motivation in terms of external acknowledgment and rewards for creativity. All in all, Amabile and Pratt (2016) emphasise the increased dynamism of their enhanced componential model as compared to the original version of the model.

This model originally aims to be comprehensive and has been one of the cornerstones of organisational creativity research. However, even though in its modified form the model considers the dynamism of the creative process by addressing affects and further environmental influences, it cannot escape an evident cognitivist and rational bias. It still depicts creativity as an orderly process that essentially involves thinking skills that can be learned, trained, and conscientiously improved. It does not take into account the possible effects of serendipitous, situated factors or how the risk-taking of creativity is not merely a rationally calculated decision but may be triggered by such sentiments as lack, frustration, and even depression (see, e.g., Akinola & Mendes, 2008). Amabile and Pratt depict creativity as an admirable achievement that, given that conditions remain favourable, may presumably be iterated indefinitely. Poignantly, Anderson et al. (2014) question whether such a state is realistic or even feasible given the actual reliability of any organisation (pp. 1319–1321).

Typically, creativity is valued because of its “novel and useful” end results, which is also the position that Amabile and Pratt (2016) take. This leads them to ignore the threats of uncertainty and chaos that often accompany a creative process. While Amabile and Pratt aim to clarify the nature of the creative process by diligently distinguishing its constitutive elements, they paradoxically dismiss the intangible fuzziness of creativity and innovation (see, e.g., Gassmann & Schweitzer, 2014) despite admitting in passing that such a thing exists (Amabile & Pratt, 2016, p. 166). Furthermore, Amabile and Pratt (2016) do observe that an experience of meaningfulness influences intrinsic motivation and an ability to persist with the possible difficulties of the creative process. However, they do not further elaborate or probe into the nature of this experience, such as whether it originates from everyday experiences such as those facilitated by a supportive environment or is perhaps something more foundational to the self, and how it actually influences and foregrounds attitudes towards creativity.

There has been criticism of the implicit functionalism in much creativity research that assesses creativity by referring to the “usefulness” of its outcome (Drazin et al., 1999). Recently there has been an increasing interest in the darker and messier sides of the creative process, such as how uncertainty and ignorance (Brinks et al., 2018) or constraints (Ortmann & Sydow, 2018) may drive creativity.

Jennifer George (2007, 2009) has considered the ambivalences of the creative process in her discussion on incubation and the role of unconscious thought in the work process. According to George, automatic thought has been vital to human survival, and has an elementary role even in our everyday activities. Automatic thought processes are characterised by their ease, lack of control, and lack of conscious intent, while conscious thought processes are conducted by will and with a clear intent (George, 2009).

George (2009) counters the view that supposedly positive job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback will directly translate to expected psychological states: experienced meaningfulness of work, a willingness to take responsibility for its outcomes, and awareness of work results. George (2009) considers that typical job design thinking includes an underlying emphasis on workers’ conscious internal states as drivers of their behavioural responses to the way their jobs are designed (p. 1320). Instead, George (2009) argues that the consciously willed processes and explicit goal orientation at work, as beneficial as they often are, might not always lead to the most optimal consequences, and, in fact, may not even be as prevalent as modes of work behaviour as they are usually thought to be (p. 1322). Unconscious processing is superior to conscious processing in terms of its significantly greater capacity, as conscious processes can remember and handle only a limited number of things at a certain time. When people are engaged in complex tasks requiring creativity, it might be more productive to engage in less conscious deliberation and leave room for incubation (George, 2009). According to George (2009), contemporary models of job design rely on “the more the better” logic, although alternative modes of thinking and behaving, even if conducted while carrying out more mundane and less demanding tasks, might provide workers with much-needed time for unconscious deliberation on the complex problems (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006). What if creativity, particularly in our age of excess of both goods and consequent environmental problems, in fact does not always require more of something in terms of support and resources, but instead tuning down, working with and not against limitations, and becoming more sensitive to minor situational cues?

8.2 Practice-based view on creativity

The practice-based approach to understanding creativity does not generally look for pre-existing characteristics typical of creative people, nor does it assume that to be creative one needs certain inherent qualifications. Rather, it identifies creativity as an emergent constituent of the work process – or practice. From this perspective, creativity is a mundane matter that is part of almost every job, while formal job descriptions are not able to cover and guide every possible situation that occurs in the daily conduct of work, meaning that actors need to learn ways to cope with the surprises that may come along in their work (Schön, 1991; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). The communities of practice perspective underlines this difference between formal job descriptions and the actual practice by highlighting how practice is a local and social accomplishment, something that is learnt by participating in a collectivity of actors (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Gherardi and Perrotta (2014) further elaborate on this view in a post-humanist vein, stating that practical creativity is a collective, rather than individual, accomplishment, and that not only human but also non-human actors are included in this collective.

There are some differences in emphasis within the practice-based approach concerning the origin of “practical creativity”. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) and Schön (1991) discuss the type of creativity that is enabled particularly when actors are detached from their absorbed coping which, following Heidegger, is the prevalent mode in any practical action (see also Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009). It is during detached reflection caused by a temporary breakdown (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011) when practitioners can become aware of what they are doing in an abstract manner and ponder upon whether any other course of action could be more beneficial. On the other hand, Gherardi and Perrotta (2014) downplay the importance of such detachment for practical creativity. In their study of craftsmen, Gherardi and Perrotta (2014) found that the crafting process was creative in itself, as it depended on aesthetic experiencing and judgement that took place almost intuitively. For these craftsmen, the materials and their qualities themselves provided solicitations that were sufficient for creative activity. In their work, creativity emerged as a “miraculous” accomplishment of sensual and engaged immersion with the task at hand (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014). Thus, for Gherardi and Perrotta (2014), creativity happened somewhere in the contact between “the hand and the head”, not by means of detachment from the practice. Similarly, Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) observe that reflection-in-action may be achieved by an immediate, essentially kinaesthetic adjustment.

Nayak (2008) realistically reminds us that from the practice perspective, organisational actors – apart from those working in the creative sector in a narrow sense – typically do not aim to be particularly creative; their main aim is to get the job done. In the practice approach, creativity is mainly seen as being interesting due to its being a medium for producing a successful work result, but is also understood to be a basic human and social need that is organically inherent in the way we pursue our work aims. Bigo (2018) has suggested that creativity happens on a scale ranging from minor adjustments to a work process all the way to radical, unexpected inventions that emerge from within the person without outside goal setting. While approaches emphasising artistic creativity pay more attention to this more radical end of the creativity scale, the practice theory approach underlines the mundane, practical, collective creativity and incremental innovation that other approaches have tended to ignore.

Proponents of practice-based organisation research have emphasised how creativity of practice depends on the embodied and aesthetic engagement of the practitioner with the task at hand. The ability to mindfully correct and adjust the practice is part of what makes the practice beautiful, because it indicates that the practicing person is engaged with his or her work and cares for the end result (Gherardi et al., 2007). For the practice-based approach, emotional involvement at work is of importance, because often for the practitioner to be able to judge when work is “good” they also need to have a feel of what is ethically “right” (Gherardi, 2009; Guillet de Monthoux & Strati, 2002; Strati, 2008). Thus conducting a successful practice cannot rely merely on the intellect but also relies on the holistic engagement of the practitioner with all the senses. From this holistic perspective, the good, the right, and the beautiful are no longer separate matters – each informs the practicing person about the state of the others within the sensible practical activity.

Yet this embodied, holistic, and satisfactory engagement is still subordinate to the norms, taste, and judgement of a particular collective. Without the goals and values of the collective, practical creativity would not have any meaning. For practice-based approaches, and in contrast to mainstream psychological perspectives, creativity is fundamentally a social phenomenon, and presupposes a degree of belonging to a community that provides the criteria for the judgement of quality and aesthetics (Gherardi, 2009). The social context that enables creativity could potentially be widened to include the whole of society. For example, Gherardi and Perrotta (2014) emphasise the importance of examining the whole actor-network around the practitioners, which consists of humans, materials, and wider social institutions that condition the creative activity.

While time is implicitly included in psychological theories about creativity, as it is evidently needed for incubation (George, 2007, 2009) and gaining expertise (Amabile, 1997), in practice-based theorising regarding creativity the understanding of time is concrete and phenomenological. Practitioners need time to “dwell” in the practice in order to develop a sense of belonging to the community of practice (Gherardi, 2009, p. 538; see also Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009). The elaborate collective moves, twists, and turns as well as aesthetic judgments can only take place when a certain amount of experience and tacit knowledge at work have been acquired. As Sennett (2008) has elaborately described, a craftsman can experience the full pleasure of their work only once they have reached an advanced level at which not every step of the process needs conscious attention, but a certain level of automatism has taken place that enables improvisation and the developing and fine-tuning of one's work (see also Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005). In summary, the contribution of the practice-based approach to creativity research lies in the way it reminds us that creativity does not only emerge with the end result but also within the preceding process in its collective context, extending to its most minor details as practitioners engage in the process with their all senses. Even radical, impressive inventions typically rely on experiential learning and acquisition of existing, mature knowledge (Schoenmakers & Duysters, 2010).

8.3 Liminal creativity

From the perspective of practice-based studies, creativity, the embodied, sensual, and social activity that skilfully responds to the solicitations of material and situations, is allowed free reign except regarding one thing – questioning the meaning of the practice itself. In practice-based approaches, practice comes first, in that creativity must obey the logic of the practice (i.e., its defining features; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). After all, as has been claimed by practice-based theorists, practice is mainly about absorbed coping (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009).

The functioning of a practice depends on a shared life-world of practitioners (Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009), a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or a taste-making community (Gherardi, 2009) that shares the tacit knowledge, codes, rules, and professional communication style that is often not completely transparent to outsiders. However, in a world of work that is increasingly mobile, multilocal, and network-based, and that transgresses the boundaries between organisations,

work, and private life, one often finds oneself in between different life-worlds, as has been discussed many times in this summary. For example, as stated in Article 4, translocal patterns of work may challenge the dichotomies between place and non-place, oneself and others, as well as mobility and fixity, making identity a matter of situational renegotiation (Daskalaki et al., 2016). In such work, absorbed coping characterises the practice less as one is increasingly in a detached mode of reflection, repairing one's work arrangements, and finding one's way in contingent environments (Brown & O'Hara, 2003; Felstead et al., 2005; Mark & Su, 2010). According to Dale and Burrell (2008), current open and aestheticised office spaces contribute to this mode. Reflectively setting the work environment for oneself has itself become part of the job, as one considers whether one needs a collective or silent and uninterrupted space, which hot desk to settle at on this particular day, whether one should telework from home, a café, or a co-working space – and how to make these choices in a way that both answers personal needs for comfort and maintains a professional image (Liegl, 2014). Continuous reflective assessment on one's work methods and spaces may help to increase reflective awareness of one's needs (Felstead et al., 2005). I suggest, however, that these contemporary, unbounded, and individualised ways of working and organising may also produce detachment and concomitant cynicism (see also Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Being no longer in the warmth of the (community of) practice, but looking from outside or somewhere in between, the organisation may increasingly start to look like a spectacle.

Ruptures to practice, or breakdowns, as Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) call them, are perhaps becoming more common today due to the increasing overall fragmentation of knowledge work in particular (e.g., Gregg, 2011; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017). I argue that these ruptures simultaneously provide an opening for a liminal kind of creativity. As stated earlier in this summary, liminal rites in traditional societies were related to life phases in which people had to step into the unknown with regard to their prior personal life experience, such as when acquiring a new social role or status. It was, and is, an existentially threatening situation to leave an old role and learn to occupy a new one. The liminal initiands were temporarily stripped of social status, moved outside of normal society, and allowed to reverse and carnivalise the existing societal norms. Being outside of the society, initiands were considered polluting or impure with reference to the rest of society, but bonded intensively with their fellow initiands as they were together exposed to their society's deeper cosmic values and significations (Douglas, 1966;

Turner, 1974b, 1980). Although liminal situations were pre-scripted and mentored, they contained an element of danger, surprise, and creativity.

In more recent accounts, liminality has been identified as being a characteristic of practically any situation that falls in between known social roles, norms, and spaces. Stepping beyond the realm of anthropology, liminality has been defined in general psychological terms as “a condition of ontological indeterminacy that is at play in occasions of transition”, possible at manifold societal levels (Greco & Stenner, 2017, p. 152; see also Thomassen, 2015). It has also been noted that liminal phases today do not necessarily take place within known social trajectories (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). Regarding careers, one may follow a path of expected promotions in a traditional organisation, but one may equally choose to become self-employed, change jobs, downshift, or decide to re-educate oneself, or do several of these things simultaneously. Liminal situations may eventually lead to individual solutions – or fail to do so. For example, Bamber et al. (2017) have discussed how certain jobs that exist in organisational side-lines – as opposed to mainstream career paths – may turn into dead ends, “limbos” for their occupants, who are in danger of being institutionally forgotten. However, Turner (1974b) has noted that although liminality shares some characteristics with marginality, the two states are not identical. Liminality is in search of a transition, a solution, and an incorporation back into the social structure, which is not necessarily the case for marginality.

In today’s working life and organisations, liminal situations are not necessarily “in-between” in a clear sense, as it may not be easy to define what the preceding stable situation was or what the following stable situation might be for a person in a liminal situation. However, even such liminal persons are most definitely outside well-categorised social roles. These people are uncertain of their position but do not necessarily know where they should be heading. Simultaneously, and perhaps a little paradoxically, liminality is becoming socially more acceptable, and may even be considered a desirable and promising state in which one is allowed to dig deeply into personal desires and dreams – what does one really want from life (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016)?

Heidegger’s being-in-the-world, with the “world” already being there conditioning our every perception as well as our habitual and practical activities, has served as an important philosophical basis for practice theory. Practice-based studies have made a considerable effort to examine the situated communal capacity for improvisation and knowledge formation that is often ignored in formal, top-down job descriptions. I argue that liminal creativity is also about such a situational sense-making, but unlike practical creativity, which takes place under the auspices of an

established social setting, a liminal person finds him or herself in a state of ontological and existential indeterminacy. Therefore, being in a liminal situation, one is more attuned to seeing the world as strange again (Heinämaa, 1999, pp. 61–62), a phenomenon that Weick (1996) has discussed under the theme of “dropping the tools” that defined one’s professional identity. In spatial terms, one may also have an experience of being “unsited”, of having one’s normal spatial framework shaken (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013). A need to reach beyond a habitual point of view – a need for transition – may develop from within the existing practice if the practice’s ability to function in a changing world is deteriorated. Practice-based studies do not discuss much the possibility of a practice becoming inept, outdated, empty, or meaningless for its practitioners. Sandberg and Dall’Alba (2009) assure us that one is never outside a social practice (p. 1356), but from the perspective of liminal experience this is not quite the case. Failing to read and grasp a given situation may result in something that Stenner (2018) has depicted as a “this is not” experience (see also Garfinkel (1967) on breaching). If such occasions are repeated within a given practice, the practice may no longer seem to fit with its environment.

In this study, the change of environment spurred existential reflection, as can be seen in Articles 2, 3, and 4. This reflection went deeper than merely aiming to re-establish the equilibrium of the embodied practice (Yakhlef, 2010). However, the reflection was still situated and solicited by the environment. Dissatisfactions that have silently been building up may not find a channel for their expression in an everyday environment that has been habitually scripted and appropriated (D’Adderio, 2011; Lefebvre, 1974/1991). For liminal experimentation, one needs an environment that is less normative and rule-bound, and instead more malleable and loosely coupled, to paraphrase Weick (2009). To elaborate upon Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, our subconscious is situated in habitual bodily memory, which is implicit and thus surfaces in movement and activity, in the interconnection between a person and their environment. Our lived environments facilitate our remembering (Brown & Reavey, 2018). Being in a reciprocal relationship with a stable environment produces a habitual loop (Brown & Reavey, 2018), but an unfamiliar environment may provide our bodily memory more freedom, particularly if the hegemonic connections between the conceived, perceived, and lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) are disrupted, as has been discussed in sub-chapter 6.1. Once the inertia of habits is broken, a route is open to alternative sedimentations and connections within embodied memory. Such a situation, indeterminate as it is, may even feel threatening and cause anxiety. However, as this study has shown, an open and undefined liminal experience may also enable the reliving of something from one’s

earlier life in a way that is fascinating and therapeutic for how it reminds one of the continuity of life – an awareness of which may be missing from more mundane, day-to-day “absorbed coping” and leaping after the ever-escaping present moment (Heidegger, 1927/1962) to keep up with a working life that has become increasingly oriented towards immediate survival (see, e.g., Viljanen & Toivanen, 2017).

According to my analysis of the experiences of the archipelago participants, despite the potential tension, such liminal moments can also be curiously peaceful, as one is temporarily detached from the expectations of society that lead to “scatteredness” – as Heidegger (1927/1962) theorised in a way that feels particularly prophetic from the perspective of today’s working life and mediated realities. Transitional liminal moments are authentic in the sense that they exist in the realm of embodied, cyclical and lived time instead of linear time – one is “in and out of time” as Turner (1969/1991, p. 96) described it. The present does not hastily “run away” but allows one to take hold of it in a way that simultaneously awakens one’s past and future (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

In bodily terms a transitional liminal experience can be described as a restabilisation of a shaken living rhythm that again feels affectively “home”, although located in an alternative reality characterised by hypothesis and play (Schütz, 1945). This can inspire a creative expression of the extraordinary lived experience in an attempt to bring it into the realm of symbols and meaning – where it can potentially become a new innovation (Stenner, 2018). Here I would again like to recall the idea of “Korppoo mentality” expressed by one participant, which was a creative conceptualisation of a rhythm that was experienced with a colleague in the archipelago, and which was juxtaposed with the inauthentic rhythm and lifestyle characterised by “everybody walking at the same pace” (see sub-chapter 7.1).

As opposed to the ontological security of creativity in the practice-based approaches, the process of liminal creativity may be rather loose and even wild. In a liminal situation, the world may seem chaotic, as if one were seeing it for the first time. To grasp the affectivity and radical openness of liminal creativity, it needs to be analysed as an embodied, holistic experience, which is why I once again turn to Merleau-Ponty. The way Merleau-Ponty (1964b) described Cézanne’s process of painting (see Article 3) is to me indicative of the liminal kind of creativity. According to Merleau-Ponty (1964b), Cézanne tried to capture the moment of perception: the embodied contact with the world where one takes hold of and organises the outside chaos and its innumerable opportunities for the first time. Merleau-Ponty evocatively referred to this as “deflagration of being” (p. 180). Merleau-Ponty conveys that this was also a very lonely state for Cézanne. Even in our arranged and organised lives,

we may occasionally find ourselves in a chaos where an inability to organise our environment meaningfully creates anxiety – such situations are described in organisational liminality literature (e.g., Budtz-Jørgensen et al., 2019; Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003) and they are also possible in mobile work (Brown & O'Hara, 2003; Daskalaki et al., 2016; Felstead et al., 2005). To me, one insight that can be drawn from Merleau-Ponty's ideas is that, as embodied beings who are equipped with not only conscious awareness but also more implicit bodily memory (Casey, 1984; Kozyreva, 2018), we have more tools in our possession than those that we are consciously aware of to take a hold of the environment and act meaningfully within and upon it. These resources form our unique and thus authentic style of being-in-the-world (Heinämaa, 2015; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), but they are also a latent, collective, creative resource (Turner, 1969/1991). Dropping our social status (or tools, as Weick (1996) put it) makes us more suggestible to affective experiences (Stenner, 2018) and subjectively more transparent to each other (Bigo, 2018). Thus, an indeterminate, liminal situation also has the benefit of heightening our sense of togetherness and our ability to synchronise our personal streams of consciousnesses with those of others (Schütz, 1932/1972).

It is typical to understand creativity as involving some sort of transcendental event. In flow theory, we find a merging of awareness and action (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). In Gherardi and Perrotta's (2014) practice-based approach, creativity happens in the contact between “the hand and the head”. For Merleau-Ponty, transcendence is already part of our general embodied existence, which is not fully transparent to itself but can express itself only in action and movement, in spatial and social embodied interconnections. We are not self-sufficient but need environment as a proxy for our perception. According to Summa's (2017) insightful interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's take on creativity in perception, creativity establishes a new way of thinking and acting, which becomes a model for future thinking and acting, but, importantly, not as a strict representational template to be followed, but rather as a Gestalt-like unity or style. This intangibility is due to the transcendental process of creativity, which does not happen in the subjective mind, but rather in the “in between” of situated subjectivity and world/otherness (Summa, 2017, p. 118), or in the “flesh” of the world, as Merleau-Ponty (1968) put it in his later writings. Merleau-Ponty does not dismiss subject completely as the constitutor of the creative act, but sees the productive capability of the subject as originating from the subject's responsiveness to and relationship with otherness (Summa, 2017, p. 118). Establishing such a new horizon of meaningfulness, which was neither given nor even thinkable before (Summa, 2017, pp. 117–118), could be described as

liminal creativity. Similarly, Stenner (2018) states that in liminal situations the world needs to be “presented” in new artistic terms, because something so extraordinary has happened to us that our ordinary representations fail us.

From such a perspective, creativity is an actor’s responsivity to the surrounding world, not as a practitioner, not within a certain set of rules, but as a pre-objective being (Summa, 2017), prior to any act of affirmation, identification, or representation (see also Article 3). This kind of creativity is not explicitly social, as in the shared world of a community of practitioners, but is social in a more implicit manner that extends the conventional understanding of what “social” means. From this perspective, the actor never was anything but social in that their bodily schema and implicit memory are situated “in between”, in worldly interconnections. Merleau-Ponty has characterised this interconnection with the world as “faith”, not “in the sense of decision but in the sense of what is before any position” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, cited in Heinämaa, 1999, p. 52). Thus, the social extends from the logic of a practice and collective rules and norms to all one’s lived experiences and sedimentations of habitual bodily memory. Stepping out of a familiar practice situation may open up this usually hidden reserve, which has the tendency to reveal itself by means of affective responses that have the potential to evoke connections to more distant worlds that we have inhabited (see particularly sub-chapters 4.2 and 5.2). This is a non-thematised, subtle, and affective way of expressing one’s sociality, one that relies on an embodied style of responsiveness and expression.

Stenner (2018) makes an important point about liminality as a force that can create communities. Referring to Susie Scott’s (2018) important discussion about the “sociology of nothing”, moments of liminal creativity as I have depicted them are perhaps more common than has been acknowledged within the field of sociology, which has been more interested in marked and identifiable social action. We do not always abide by the social processes, structures, and forces that offer or prescribe their options for doing and being (Scott, 2018). According to Scott (2018), rejection of explicit social codes may lead to silence, invisibility, and emptiness; however, this does not have to mean a symbolic and social “death”, but can signal the beginning of a more imaginative process that allows both the ghosts of the past and dreams of future to enter the stage (see also Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; De Cock & O’Doherty, 2017; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Liminal non-identity, non-prescribed activity, absence, and silence are fertile states.

9 CONTRIBUTIONS

9.1 Findings in a nutshell

This thesis examined the living dynamic between a working person and his or her environment by means of analysing knowledge workers' collegial work periods in an alternative and rural work environment. The thesis focused on how these workers perceived and experienced such a change of work environment and how they assessed the meaning of the period spent in this new environment. The main findings of this thesis are as follows. Even in the era of Internet and mediated communication, there is still value in meeting colleagues in person. This value concerns not only the end results of work, but also, and importantly, work conditions. In this thesis I come to the conclusion that productivity and creativity have their seeds in the collectively created situated practices and rhythms that enforce recognition of the other as a complete person – not just a fleeting avatar on the computer screen.

In increasingly fluid work, such encounters may take place in unconventional spaces such as the rural and green space discussed in this thesis. These kinds of spaces have the potential to create a sensation of different worlds overlapping and thus produce a liminal experience. In a liminal space, personal and affective experiences can be communicated with an openness and trust that is conducive to creativity. Space of work, like any space where we dwell, is not merely a practical arrangement but also a proxy for our overall perception. Thus, space of work is also an existential condition, although it is not typically realized this way when we pursue our practical aims in everyday life. Regarding the way we perceive and move about our surroundings, we never operate like *tabula rasa*. Our vision is based on what we have become habitually conditioned to see. An alternative space can dismantle these expectations and, in the fashion of a liminal space, illuminate our situation with an extraordinary clarity. With norms relaxed in such spaces, they facilitate not just the mere adjustment of existing work practices, but also creative experimentation with new ones. Such a creative collision of worlds may produce a higher-order and critical view concerning the paths one's work activities and career have previously taken. Liminal space is "a no man's land" able to jolt the inertia of routines, induce different

degrees of transformation, and provide an opportunity for mentally starting over with one's projects. In addition, reducing the complexity of the environment by means of living according to situated collective and natural rhythms produces a calming effect on both body and mind that can alleviate the strain caused by intensive work.

9.2 Theoretical contributions

9.2.1 Body as a condition for practice

One often detects certain contradictions in discussions concerning the body in organisation research. On one hand, recent processual and material approaches have foregrounded “organising”, not the organisation; they thus focus their view on the smaller-scale phenomena that constitute the wider organisational forms, including the body in their purview. On the other hand, while approaches indebted to (for example) practice theory and “new materialism” question dualism between mind and body, they, after having generally acknowledged how we participate with our whole bodies in working, learning, and knowledge production, transfer focus to the use of the body as a provider of sensible and aesthetic knowledge according to the needs of the practice. The body seems to be granted some force, yet it is still treated implicitly as a medium or object at the service of the practice.

Elaborating on Yakhlef (2010) and Weik (2019), I suggest that embodied practitioners cannot be reduced to the “logic” of the practice they are carrying out. As sedimented bodies we are not even temporally the same with a particular work act taking place in a given moment. One comes to a work situation with a historically and individually sedimented body, and it is through this overall sedimentation or “depth” (Casey, 1984) that one affectively senses the situation, even before any actual practice has started. The habitual body does not respond to some pre-existing mental constellation, such as a “logic” of practice, but to any possible cues in the situation, including its atmosphere. Such a process was found in the ways the archipelago participants settled into the new environment.

This embodied perception is necessarily one's own, but is not transparent even to oneself. However, through this perception, and practical action in which our perception seeks out affordances from the environment in order to grasp and appropriate this environment, we express ourselves and find ourselves again. An

open liminal space that does not readily afford habitual action, is an occasion for creative development of practices. In such a space, any sediment of one's lived past may become a creative resource. In the midst of practical activity, we do not merely use the equivalent "practical knowledge" but any of our previous familiarities, dispositions, omissions, and other life experiences may come at play in the situation. Experimenting with practices in a liminal space of the archipelago illuminated how the lived, sedimented body conditions practical action.

9.2.2 Workspace for the lived body

ICT-driven work or knowledge work has gained a somewhat ethereal image: work takes place in networks (Castells, 1996) and practically never in one single space at a time (Pekkola, 2002). The question of workspace has become somewhat complicated in this kind of work. Researchers have noted a phenomenon of absent presence or quasi-presence wherein a person, while being physically present, is not emotionally and completely available for others who are concretely in that space (de Vaujany et al., 2019; Gregg, 2011; Koslowski et al., 2019). This kind of hiding behind the computer or phone may equally take place in meetings – where one may discretely be sorting e-mails – or in home-based work where one's attention is withdrawn from (often disappointed) family members to what is happening on the PC screen (Gregg, 2011). Another kind of absent presence stems from the difficulty of actually inhabiting and dwelling in designated space that seems to be evident in modern open office spaces. Such offices are celebrated by their designers and employers as innovation nests, but it is much rarer to hear someone who actually works in them commend them so wholeheartedly. It is as if these spaces need to be continuously fixed either through collective rules – spoken (e.g., no loud conversations) or unspoken (hot desks can be "conquered" by domesticating them with personal items) – or with additional tools, such as earphones that block noise. While there may exist silent spaces for activities such as taking phone calls in these spaces, co-work is widely the norm and open spaces eventually have to be returned to. While ICT infrastructure may be running impeccably in these facilities, human bodies may not find it as easy to find their space and dwell there.

This thesis found that entering an alternative work environment may produce a shock and a situation where the body, this normally "big silent" aspect of our conscious awareness, suddenly makes itself known through changes in embodied rhythms or through affective and aesthetic responses to small things to which one

might remain indifferent in an ordinary context. Natural environments are particularly capable of providing a sense of fascination that simultaneously facilitates recuperation (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), but I would suggest that any kind of lived space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) where one is surrounded by organic creation has an affective resonance that enables embodied comfort in the space. The lived space of Henri Lefebvre is a space where human (or natural) beings have been able to create their own circumstances by their own inclination: these spaces have layers and history. There is a warmth of craft to such spaces (Bell & Vachhani, 2020), as if one can sense the touch of hands, inspiration, and purpose there. These are the kinds of spaces where one can sense an echo of other natural bodies operating there. To me, this is the central difference between the lived and abstract spaces Lefebvre discusses (Wilson, 2013): the former is guided by touch, feel, craftsmanship and inspiration, while the latter prioritises a concept and derives its practical application and form that concept. Borch (2010) discusses how feeling comfort in a space is an embodied process that depends on the concrete tactile and material conditions of that space, and whether one can practically create a protective sphere around oneself there. If we think of designing spaces where people could feel bodily comfortable and relaxed, merely following a general mental concept is not enough. It is as if the abstract and conceptual spaces had very little “body” of their own. This is apparent in many contemporary office spaces that are designed to be as light and transparent as possible, from as many angles as possible, and simultaneously seek to dazzle the user to get the “creative juices flowing” (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018; Dale & Burrell, 2008; De Paoli et al., 2019).

But if space is to reflect a human body, not just the mind, not everything needs to be visible. Several philosophers have pondered over the tendency of life to conceal its essence. For Heidegger, it is our practical knowledge of our world that provides the basis for our Being. Yet this practical knowledge is essentially ready-to-hand in the sense that we need to immerse ourselves in the world in order to grasp it – and as soon as we mentally distance ourselves from the world we relinquish this primary knowhow. We live more than we can represent to ourselves (Kozyreva, 2018; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Equally, sometimes creativity happens in silent and solitary dwelling. From the perspective of the lived body, complete spatial transparency and visibility seem contradictory design principles.

Both Lefebvre and Bachelard searched for an alternative to the hegemonic modern space, which they called mechanical and unidimensional (Bachelard) and abstract (Lefebvre). On several occasions, Lefebvre (1974/1991) depicts a “feminine” space that could be described as hidden or uterine, which he associates

with recreation and bodily energy. Bachelard's (1958/2014) spatial imagination is more fine-grained, in that he finds his fulfilling space anywhere that awakens in him a sense of home, shelter and intimacy – even a curvy line in a wooden panel can offer comfort and rest for the eyes. Bachelard connects creativity with daydreaming and a sense of the past, and this kind of dreaming requires a sense of security. However, as if recognising that this is not enough, Bachelard also examines vast and grand natural spaces, and seems to conclude that innovation is found in the transition between protective and adventurous spaces. Yet, as for Bachelard more generally, this experienced transition, or transcendence, does not simply follow a simple mechanical movement from one space to another; one can also experience this stimulating contrast, or a sense of different worlds overlapping (see also Greco & Stenner, 2017), in glimpses of moments or images, such as in the poetic image of a welcomingly glowing window of an isolated hut.

In many ways, the archipelago period took place in such a hidden space amidst powerful nature, distant from many everyday demands and troubles. This extraordinary and liminal space allowed free reign for thoughts, dreams, and needs that could not find space and time in the everyday environment. However, the archipelago experience also seemed to intensify in minor moments of getting mesmerised by the environment. We experience space through the sedimentations of our spatial memories and dreams, so there is an imaginative element present in a spatial experience (Bachelard 1958/2014). Some participants in the archipelago experiment had even fundamental awakening experiences in which some pleasant or productive periods of their past seemed to be affectively repeated or relived in this space (see also Fuchs, 2018). In the archipelago, the passages between being alone and in community; intimacy and adventure, supported this incubation, introspection, and creativity. When thinking of workspaces, I think it would be important to emphasise the “lived space” (Lefebvre 1974/1991) more than is currently done, even though reaching such a level of comfort in space called for small and modest things rather than brand-friendly and grand architectural vision. A lived space signifies allowing individuals to create their own passages and pathways between open and more intimate spaces and between different atmospheres, instead of trying to design “the life” of the space from above. If space is to be creative, certain incompleteness and user participation should be allowed. On the other hand, from an individual perspective, such movement and activity in space could be more conscientiously used as an “affective liminal technology” to connect to embodied affects and refresh one's perspective when needed. Furthermore, in times when everyday working life

seems too pressured and chaotic to handle, a more profound break from the everyday environment could support deeper reflection.

9.2.3 Affective-rhythmical body at the centre of creative process

Affects are integrated into the cyclical rhythmicity of the body. Our desire for or lack of something becomes known to us through affects, which may or may not be translated into reflective awareness. Any interruptions to our internal or external conditions are registered by affects; thus they work to retain our bodily balance (Damasio, 2018). Familiar organisational rituals and rhythms may provide us affective reassurance (Weik, 2019), but with very routinised activity there looms the risk of inertia. Some approaches to creativity within organisation studies have implicitly explored the idea of affective balance-seeking through movement and rhythmical changes in working practices. In his study on nomadic workers, Liegl (2014) has shown how physical mobility was a mediator in conditioning workers affectively, and in their finding new workspaces that sustained their “attachment” for creative work. Gherardi (2009) has underlined how communities of passionate practitioners created a rhythm of practice by means of affective and aesthetic judgements that required occasionally “abandoning” oneself to bodily sensations. Both studies derive from Gomart and Hennion’s (1999) theory of attachment which foregrounds affective engagement in the conduct of practice and shows how passionate amateurs skilfully shift between active and passive modes of being, such that activity relates more to careful preparation that lets the essential creative moment “arrive” in the manner of an anticipated event. I found that dwelling in a transitory liminal work environment and being exposed to evocative affective experiences had the potential to spur the creative alteration between active and passive modes of being. This could enable even surprising achievements and realisations regarding work and life, in the manner characteristic of liminal space. When embodied affects are given a role in creative work, some amount of control needs to be given up. Studies on incubation (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006; George, 2007, 2009) and mind-wandering (Dane, 2018) advocate allowing time for unconscious, embodied processing, particularly when complex judgements and creativity are needed. Many knowledge workers already implicitly perform these kinds of techniques, as popular anecdotes about problem-solving show: sometimes solutions are said to have “arrived” while one has gone to the shower or out jogging.

Finland's former prime minister Matti Vanhanen recounted that he "invented" an increase in Finland's national retirement age while he was skiing in Lapland.

These approaches underline our need to increase our understanding of the cyclical rhythmicity of the body in work activity (see sub-chapter 7.1). This includes the non-linearly arranged body memory, which comes forth in practical action, connecting potentially distant points of our lived time – and which is the ground for our self-understanding as well as our ability to improvise. Our bodily rhythmicity is sensitive to changes in our environment. My analysis has shown that we are differently conditioned to respond affectively to an environment – this conditioning derives from our dispositions, omissions, professional backgrounds, and more general life experiences, including the strain we have experienced. A malleable space that is not too rule-bound would allow affective dwelling in that space in ways that cater to personal needs without unnecessary external and critical self-awareness so often produced in modern spaces (Dale & Burrell, 2008).

9.2.4 Liminal experience as a reset to habitualised strain

Feeling comfort in space is not merely a physical experience. Dwelling in space or in situated practice (Gherardi, 2009) may also produce a more existential sensation of being "at home". Yet, paradoxically, to reach this sense of comfort, sometimes adventure, transition, and putting one's body and its habits under pressure are required. We feel the most profound comfort in our shelter once we have defied cosmic or external forces (Bachelard, 1958/2014). Taking a liminality-inspired approach to work moves our understanding of work somewhat away from that of a utilitarian, pragmatic activity with externally set, predefined goals, towards understanding work as a dynamic process of transformation involving not only the object, but also the self as well as the environment, and involving the cyclical bodily rhythm of intake-output (Fuchs, 2018), while making use of the practical and affective memory of the whole embodied persona.

Theories of liminality complement Bachelard's insights regarding innovative spaces discussed above by highlighting the threshold in between different worlds: a mental and physical extension from safe routines to a space which is not settled, but rather in between worlds, with awareness not being limited to a single viewpoint. For Stenner (2018), the original liminal phenomenon is the ritual (p. 24). Pre-modern rites of transition were liminal spaces in which new communities were born, as initiands were stripped of their previous social status and began their worldly journey

as if anew, socially uncategorised, and, at first, impure (Turner, 1974a, 1974b, 1969/1991). In our present era, experiences of liminality are typically found in art and entertainment, and these “affective liminal technologies” are plentifully available to us (Stenner, 2018). Some theorists have even stated that liminality is a determining, even permanent condition of modernity (Szakolczai, 2000; Thomassen, 2014), but “our” liminality apparently differs significantly from how it was used and experienced in premodern societies. While liminality used to be sacralised and integrated into local mythology and tradition, today liminality has been set loose, and individuals are free to seek out liminal experiences in the worlds of games, the arts, entertainment, extreme sport, etc. Liminality has been commercialised and entered the world of work as well, as is evident in the playful and imaginative workspaces discussed earlier, as well as those extraordinary experiences that have come into the core of our economy. We want to live and experience intensively, both at work and as consumers.

I suggest that as liminal experiences distance us from ordinary social hierarchies of everyday mundane worlds, they leave us sensitised to the more natural side of our existence: affects and the lived body. This is also the view of Daskalaki et al. (2016) and Stenner (2018). For Daskalaki et al. (2016), liminality happens in mobility, which leads to questioning fixed identities, while corporeal processes of displacement and emplacement are foregrounded. Movement between places calls symbolic identities into question, while momentary encounters with objects, such as suitcases, corridors, doors, and tickets begin to carry increased affective weight (Daskalaki et al., 2016). I would add that feelings induced by specific moments increase their prominence in anchoring individual emotional experience. Liminal experiences ground us in our affective body, while this encounter with the “real” offers us a chance to refresh our frameworks of meaning. However, this does not have to be a mere “kick experience” (Thomassen, 2014). As we encounter liminality through the lived, habitual body, any sedimentations from the lived past may become reawakened. It may be only a short passage from a liminal affective experience to critical, existential reflections, in the form of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) authentic Being.

That said, the dangers of permanent liminality of modern condition also need to be borne in mind. “Always on” working styles may end up in a rhythmical “free fall” with social rituals having lost their meaning, recognisable life spheres lacking, and, consequently, fewer frames through which to communicate one’s reality to others. We are also encouraged to probe deeper into our affects to find new layers to our experience in working life (see, e.g., Karjalainen et al., 2021). Yet one might also ask whether conscious efforts to “feel the moment” (Thrift, 2008) are always delightful

occasions of healthy mindfulness. Might they sometimes also signal paralysis in that moment, just fatefully letting time pass simply because meaningful horizons cannot be found? The increasing fragmentation of knowledge work arrangements affect embodied rhythms directly, and individuals may be differently constituted to handle such rhythmical obscurity. Many remarks of the archipelago participants conveyed a confusion with work and life rhythms, and in the calm atmosphere of the archipelago, this state of the matter could constitute even something of an existential crisis.

There is a place for liminal experiences in (working) life; not just those that merely constitute an entertaining escape, but also (preferably) the more complete kind, in which our bare human condition can be mirrored in the embodied experience of another person. This is the source of hope, as Merleau-Ponty (1964a) has written, and a breeding ground for the liminal kind of creativity, which does not aim for a mere adjustment of the existing conditions but for a new vision of reality. Transitory liminal spaces may assist in resetting a too intensive work pace and increasing our sense of ontological safety in an increasingly turbulent world of work. In order to see and perceive, one needs a perspective, and I suggest that in our modern day and age liminality may be most beneficial when it is used to collect and “centre” ourselves out of a state of dispersion (or fallenness in Heideggerian terms), enabling us to find again the course gone missing from our fragmented working lives.

9.3 Practical contributions

This thesis suggests several ways of how creativity and well-being at work can be supported by an increased awareness of the lived, sedimented, and spatial body as the condition for practical action. Creative work is not just about collective discussions and action, but also about being sensitive to minor cues and weak signals in the environment and one’s affective reactions. There emerge different kinds of imaginative activity in intimate and secure spaces in comparison to open and adventurous spaces, and imagination is spurred in rhythmical movement between different spaces. It could be interesting if workspaces were designed with attention to the rhythmical and opaque existence of the lived body instead of merely a brand concept. For example, liminal embodied experiences are conducive to creativity, but they can appear paradoxical from the outside. Liminal experiences often happen when different worlds or atmospheres overlap, therefore people may experience their most creative moments in unlikely times and spaces. Thus, it might be advisable

not to overdo the visual cues of play and creativity when trying produce creative environments, but, instead, to allow a more malleable and versatile space for the users to appropriate and dwell according to their own rhythms. Modest, homemade, historical, and natural spaces reflect the human scale of existence. Such spaces can facilitate the projection and communication of more personal thoughts, dreams, and emotions in comparison to spaces that suggest certain lifestyles or ideologies in more forceful ways.

For individual workers, this thesis suggests approaching work process with attention to embodied lived rhythms and spatial experience. Instead of taking time merely as a calendar to be filled, one could take phases of lesser work intensity or even passivity, if these occur, as opportunities for withdrawal and incubation that allow a more thoughtful and qualified performance when action is resumed. Rhythmical variation can also be created intentionally. One could, for example, construct alteration of different intensities of action by exchanging between phases of working alone and in community or changing spaces of work.

Our pressured workstyles and lifestyles may lead to a situation where concentration to important work matters suffers and, furthermore, our daily life rhythms become affected by such scatteredness and inability to direct attention. A withdrawal to a completely different work environment, and a natural one in particular, may offer a chance to reset disturbed rhythms and to reconnect with one's bodily needs. An open and liminal space enables a different experience of time compared to the everyday pressure, facilitating existential reflection as to whether one's career responds to one's deeper needs and values, although such reflection might also involve some discomfort. For a collective, this may become a therapeutic space for the exchange of support and feedback regarding work and life situations. On the other hand, such a withdrawal may also produce a space where creative work such as planning, idea creation, and strategising for future can be carried out in a collegial atmosphere of spontaneity, trust and equality. A group that might particularly benefit from such a collective retreat is independent workers who often lack an immediate work community in their everyday lives, have already done plenty of independent deliberation, and could use collective reinforcement for their projects. Another group of people that could use a retreat in a calm natural environment are workers suffering from exhaustion or burnout. However, a key thing to remember is that main benefits of the liminal space may not be something planned, but the illumination of the more hidden wishes, needs, or creative inclinations of the subject.

9.4 Limits of the study and further research

As is already discussed in chapter 3, the study participants applied themselves for the study, were often familiar with flexible working patterns, and had special reasons to participate. Such preparedness of the participants may have affected to the relative success of the periods and could thus be seen as a limitation as regards generalising from the findings of this thesis. Furthermore, the number of participants was relatively small. Further studies could examine other types of employees working in natural environments. It could also be interesting to explore further the outcomes of more systematically formed constellations of creative workers in a rural and natural environment – and particularly of groups that do not normally work close together. For example, could early-career workers and entrepreneurs form new supporting networks in such an environment or start up new businesses? How about those in the later stages in their careers – could a secluded environment become a space to reflect upon career dreams that are yet to be fulfilled because of other turns in careers or personal lives? Yet another group worth of studying would be workers in need of rehabilitation.

In addition to a more systematic selection of study participants, increased attention could be directed to the environment. What kinds of services should rural villages offer to their visiting workers? Would the workers prefer old-style, historical habitation over modern office hotels? Just how close to nature would the workers be willing to go, and would there be interest for camping-style work experiments in the most isolated outer islands, or in the forest?

10 EPILOGUE: CORONA PANDEMIC AS A LIMINAL PHENOMENON

While I write this summary, coronavirus has swept the globe for a year. The pandemic has been an extraordinary spatial and embodied experience for knowledge workers. Telework has peaked. These workers fight this battle against the virus from their homes, as Bachelard's (1958/2014) imaginary isolated hut fought the storm outside. Homework itself seems to have become more relaxed because it is more socially sanctioned than ever, and one is not expected to be anywhere else. From the protection of home, one shares only a narrowed presentation of oneself with colleagues: video or voice only (Koslowski et al., 2019). However, knowledge workers may have also gotten a better view of their colleagues' private lives than ever before. Many open offices forced employees to remove personal items from the workplace (Elsbach, 2003; Felstead et al., 2005; Hirst, 2011), but now one can routinely look into the personal dwellings of others through a computer screen, which has brought a new degree of intimacy to meetings.

The pandemic is yet another extraordinary, liminal situation in the contemporary world. This special period may have allowed us to increase our sensitivities to our nearest physical surroundings. While workspace may have occasionally become a practical problem (Brown & O'Hara, 2003), there have also been new opportunities for creating comfort and playing with the idea of workspace. In the typical manner of a liminal period, these strange times may allow for a heightened prevalence of the world of dreams and imagination, providing a time for reflecting on personal values and planning life changes, particularly if there was dissatisfaction with preceding work conditions. However, I would expect some variation regarding how such opportunities have been met by different individuals. For those happy with their previous conditions, the negative effects of isolation and the loss of familiar office routines may have been the thing that stood out. After all, telework works best when it is voluntary (Pyöriä, 2011).

Knowledge workers arguably have more flexibility with regards to engaging in physical isolation than many other workers, but isolation has costs of its own. Thus, in the grand scheme of things, this is a solitary crisis that leaves no one intact. A shared experience may enforce a feeling of solidarity, particularly as we struggle

together to overcome the virus and reach the horizon of a new “normal”, whatever that may be. The pandemic may also provide us an occasion to create a transformative liminal space for ourselves, one in which we can reconnect with our innermost wishes and start conscientiously and reflectively constructing our future instead of just reacting to whatever comes our way.

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APPENDIX A

Errata

In the first article “Slowing work down by teleworking periodically in rural settings?” the following mistakes have been noted:

Table 3: in the post hoc test for variable “stress” the p-value is 0.55, when it should be 0.055

Table 3: in the post hoc test for variable “time pressure” the p-value is 0.25, when it should be 0.025

PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATION

1

Slowing work down by teleworking periodically in rural settings?

Vesala, H., & Tuomivaara, S.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, globalisation and technological revolution have resulted in the emergence of new forms of organising work that has become increasingly knowledge intensive (Osterman, 2013; Benner, 2002). Knowledge work can be defined as creative production of, dealing with or conveying knowledge in a network with activities facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICT) (cf. Castells, 1996; Drucker, 1993; Blackler, 1995). Networking and innovation processes are no longer bound by the boundaries of the organisation (Castells, 1996; Vargo and Lusch, 2008), nor is the placement of workers (Hislop and Axtell, 2009, 2007; Urry, 2000; Felstead *et al.*, 2005; Bosch-Sijtsema *et al.*, 2011). Traditionally, a personal office or desk delegated to an employee has been a symbol of employee status and a device of management regulation and control, but in recent decades the idea that some spaces and times are marked for work has become questionable (Felstead *et al.*, 2005). This article engages in discussion about the significance that new and alternative work environments may have for knowledge workers.

The virtual organizing forms, ‘space of flows’ (Castells, 1996), operating alongside the real and physical ones generate new kinds of instabilities and unpredictabilities at work (Knox *et al.*, 2008; Mark and Su, 2010; Brown and O’Hara, 2003). The development of ICT-based knowledge work has been found to create new kinds of pressure, disruptions and discontinuities in the work processes (Chesley, 2014; Jett and George, 2003; Gonzalez and Mark, 2004; Perlow, 1999). Often knowledge workers need to synchronise their work effort simultaneously to several work processes with potentially unlimited geographical spread (Wajcman and Rose, 2011; Brown and O’Hara, 2003), and ICT enables the employees to be reached by colleagues and clients even in unconventional hours. These may create challenges to the personal management of work process,

working time and individual well-being. There is evidence of increased experiences of work intensification in various statistical surveys (Green, 2006; Green *et al.*, 2013).

Flexible working arrangements and especially telework have been considered one way to support work-life balance and personal well-being of the employees. Telework can be broadly defined as remote work substituting for work in the same location with colleagues, employers or customers supported by workers' use of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Garrett and Danziger, 2007). Telework has included promises of better work satisfaction, balance between work and private life, and work peace and autonomy for the employee and increased efficiency, motivated workers, and decreasing office accommodation costs for the employer (cf. Van Horn and Storen, 2001; Green *et al.*, 2012; Heinonen, 2000). However, research results on the effects of telework on well-being have in many ways been contradictory. Telework has also been associated with more intense work effort and new problems with balancing work and private life (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; Tietze and Musson, 2005). Working in a distance from one's work community involves a clear risk of the isolation of the employee (Pyöriä, 2011). Telework has not diffused in a manner it was expected to (Pyöriä, 2011), even though many employees report conducting work in various locations such as client's or business partner's place, hotels, the holiday home, coffee shops or while travelling (cf. Felstead *et al.*, 2005; Brown and O'Hara, 2003). Recently, perhaps reflecting the shortcomings of isolated telework, more social alternatives for flexible working arrangements, such as various private or public co-working space arrangements, have been developed (Spinuzzi, 2012; Bilandzic and Foth, 2013).

The majority of telework research has concentrated on home-based or home-office telework instead of the more mobile forms of telework (Hislop and Axtell, 2007, 2009; Garrett and Danziger, 2007; Mark and Su, 2010; Brown and O'Hara, 2003). However, also literature examining mobile telework

or mobile work has focused on such work processes where employees have little discretion on their work environment, such as commuting, travelling for work purposes, working at client's or business partners' premises or other premises of the employer (cf. Hislop and Axtell, 2009; Garrett and Danziger, 2007; Mark and Su, 2010; Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010). There is a gap in the existing mobile and telework literature regarding other environments that workers may utilize for purposes such as supporting concentration, inspiration or recuperation from work pressure.

To address such an alternative telework practice, this article takes as its focus a periodical telework arrangement in rural archipelago environment. The arrangement can also be described as retreat type telework. This article examines by means of a longitudinal research design whether this kind of telework arrangement had an impact on knowledge workers' psychosocial work environment and well-being at work. The respondents of the study (N = 46) carried out one week's telework period in the rural settings of South-Western Finnish and Estonian archipelago. The data is derived from a survey that was conducted before, during and after the telework period within a research project of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

This article is structured as follows. It starts with literature discussing well-being factors related to knowledge work, telework practices, and urban and rural environment. Second, it elaborates the objective of the study and presents the process of data collection, background data of the participants, the measures used in the data collection, and the methods of the analysis. Third, the article analyses the extent to which changes in well-being at work were found during and after the telework period according to the measures utilized. Last, this article discusses these results in light of the previous studies and their possible implications.

2. Knowledge work and well-being

While the overall increase in tasks related to knowledge processing have given rise to expectations of work becoming intrinsically more interesting and rewarding, many studies have reported of experiences of increasing time pressure, tight deadlines or interruptions in knowledge work (Chesley, 2014; Perlow, 1999; Jett and George, 2003; Gonzalez and Mark, 2004). Paradoxically, statistically the average working hours have decreased or stagnated in the whole Western world, so the apparent intensification of work has generally been explained by changes in technology and the ensuing re-organization of work (Green, 2006). The prevalence of ICT is resulting in mediated communication replacing face-to-face communication, and this in turn has been associated with short, fragmented work episodes (Wajcman and Rose, 2011). In addition, the possibility to work in any place or time, or stay always “on-line” (Gant and Kiesler, 2002) has enabled work to ‘extend itself’ (Chesley, 2005; Duxbury *et al.*, 2007) and to break the boundaries between work and private life (Felstead *et al.*, 2005). Time management has become a more complex task than before for the individual worker.

Well-being at work has been approached from various disciplinary perspectives, such as psychology, sociology or economy. This study understands well-being at work as a multi-layered phenomenon, consisting of the subjective experience but being also strongly influenced by social and organizational aspects such as work community and management strategies (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Blom and Mamia, 2007). In general, well-being at work can be defined as a meaningful and fluent flow of work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) in the working environment and work community that promote safety, health, and career of an employee (cf. Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012). Well-being at work is often considered to comprise two dimensions: the absence of risks and hazards at work, but also the engagement and ability to realize oneself in work activities. Psychosocial work environment is considered an important enabler of well-being. According to a

famous model by Karasek and Theorell (1990), well-being at work results from balance between demands of work tasks and control of work process. A combination of highly intensive work effort and low workplace autonomy is likely to produce rising stress levels. Therefore the intensification of work could be sustained to some degree if it was coupled with autonomy and influence on one's work.

Some authors consider that changes in the work processes that are enforced by the technological development are in fact leading to universal development of more horizontal organization and greater responsibility and autonomy of an employee (Heckscher and Adler, 2007; Castells, 1996). This development, which is also described as transition from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic management, has the potential to make work more satisfactory and regenerative experience (Kira and Forslin, 2008). Flexible working practices such as telework are considered part of such a development. However, from a more institutional perspective, the post-bureaucratic development seems anything but linear. National industrial relations systems may also support employers to use new technology for tighter management control instead of investing in skill development, as has been observed e.g. in the so called liberal labour market. These practices may become an obstacle to employee autonomy, including the development of telework. (Oinas *et al.*, 2012; Green, 2006; Green, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2009.) In addition, telework practices have so far been associated particularly with employees with higher occupational status (Welz and Wolf, 2010; Pyöriä, 2011), which reflects unequal opportunities to utilize these arrangements (Pyöriä, 2011; Blom *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, in sum, development of well-being in knowledge work has many contradictory tendencies.

2.1 The possible impacts of telework on workers' well-being

The availability of mobile technology ‘liberates’ the employee from a fixed location (Brown and O’Hara, 2003; Hislop and Axtell, 2007), and potential workplaces may be found anywhere. In theory, knowledge workers are able to choose any space that suits their work task and supports their well-being, work-life balance, inspiration or productivity (cf. Felstead *et al.*, 2005; Brown and O’Hara, 2003). For workers engaging in creative knowledge production there is no more any logical reason for why the whole work process should be bound by specific place and hours. Mobile workers develop tacit skills to adapt to changing environments and conditions (Felstead *et al.*, 2005). Increasing experience of different work environments may increase willingness to experiment with various working styles and environments, as well as individual sensitivity regarding the changing conditions of work environment (Vartiainen *et al.*, 2007).

Despite of this positive horizon opened up by mobility literature, empirical research about other kinds of telework than home-based or home-office telework has not been very extensive. Many definitions of telework have been broad enough to include diverse locations of work, but the empirical research on telework has had the tendency of taking home environment as granted (Hislop and Axtell, 2007). However, research paying more closely attention to the more diverse work locations has generally found that these locations shape the work processes in unique ways (Hislop and Axtell, 2009; Mark and Su, 2010; Brown and O’Hara, 2003).

In general, telework as a form of flexible work arrangement is widely believed to ease the work load of knowledge workers by providing them with more freedom and independence at their work. From employees’ perspective flexible work arrangements are considered to result in increased autonomy over working arrangements (Tremblay, 2002), increased work productivity (Hill *et al.*, 2003), reduced commuting, and decreased interruptions (Haddad *et al.*, 2009) as well as enhanced opportunities of managing work-life balance (Tremblay, 2002). From the organization’s point of

view the benefits include an increased ability to attract and retain talented staff (Maruyama and Tietze, 2012), greater productivity, and decreased office accommodation costs (Green *et al.*, 2012). Telework arrangements also support the goals of regional development (Cornford *et al.*, 1996). As telework reduces commuting to work, transport emissions could also be reduced (Kitou and Horvath, 2003).

The studies of concrete telework practices have achieved mixed results. There has been evidence of increased work satisfaction (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; Tremblay, 2002) and autonomy (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008; Tremblay, 2003). Employees engaging in telework have also claimed larger organizational commitment (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010) and increased productivity (Golden and Veiga, 2008; Baruch, 2000; Tremblay, 2002). On the other hand, in some cases telework has involved alienation from the work community, experienced reduced visibility, weakening of the flow of information (Maruyama and Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2003), and intensification of work, partly as employees have experienced they have to compensate for “the privilege” with increased work effort (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). Telework has allowed better opportunities to answer to family needs, but sometimes it has been a source of new conflicts between work and family (Tietze and Musson, 2005). Similarly, some work suggests that job stress is lower among those who spend more time teleworking (Raghuram and Wiesenfeld, 2004), but others report teleworkers show more signs of mental ill health than office based workers (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). In conclusion, these results highlight that telework does not suit everyone and to all life situations (cf. Pyöriä, 2011). In addition, most of this telework literature has focused specifically on home-based telework or has not directly addressed the question of other work environments.

There are certain preconditions for the management in order for telework arrangements to succeed. The increasing autonomy and responsibility of teleworkers for their own work process necessitates

trust from the organization. In many ways this reflects the transition from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic organization (cf. Kira and Forslin, 2008). The organization has to give up surveillance of the actual work performance and working times (Pyöriä, 2011). All in all, telework has many potentials as well as risks for the individual employee, which is why uniform solutions should not be applied but instead the individual situation and personal will should be taken into account when managing telework arrangements (Pyöriä, 2011).

2.2 Knowledge workers, urban and green environment

Besides being configured in the abstract terms of descriptions, rules and procedures, work is also a concrete socio-material practice taking place within the relations of human beings and artifacts (cf. D'Adderio, 2011; Latour, 1992). The virtual 'spaces of flows' of knowledge work do not exist outside any local context, but it is the various local routines, rules and artifacts that make these flows work (Brown and O'Hara, 2003; Star, 1999), and the socio-material environment where the work takes place shapes one's subjective experience. Work environment has been suggested to have plenty of importance especially to knowledge workers' well-being and innovativeness. Discussion about environments attracting knowledge workers or "creative class" (Florida, 2002) has centred on urbanity and the cultural events and services a cosmopolitan city can offer. However, some creative industry workers or creative professionals have preferred to choose a rural area as their work environment. The most famous example of this is the nest of American innovation, Silicon Valley in Northern California, which is located in an area that that originally had a semi-rural character (Castells, 1996; Benner, 2002). Silicon Valley, the birthplace of both Microsoft and Apple, proves that sometimes leaving built environment and constituted societies behind can end up being a fruitful solution regarding innovation (Castells, 1996). In the British context case studies of rural

“creative clusters” consisting of broad range of small-scale creative practitioners and artisans have been carried out in west Cornwall (Harvey *et al.*, 2012) and Shropshire (Bell and Jayne, 2010).

A body of literature has focused on elaborating the characteristics and differences of urban and green environments and examining the individual psychological experience related to these environments (see Tzoulas *et al.*, 2007 for a review). According to an influential theory within such tradition, the attention restoration theory, the involuntary attention to or “fascination” of nature supports restoration from mental fatigue arising from work situations and recovers the capacity to direct attention (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). The natural favorite places are experienced to support reflection on personal matters, positive emotions, and helping to forget worries (Korpela *et al.*, 2001). It has been found that everyday unthreatening natural environments foster stress recovery and decreasing of negative emotions more effectively than urban settings (cf. Ulrich *et al.*, 1991). For workers suffering from deteriorated mental well-being, natural work environment offers a chance for recuperation (Korpela, 2009). In sum, there is a prevailing interest in the connection between urban environment and the preoccupations of creative knowledge workers, but also green environments have been found to support workers in various ways.

3. Objectives of the study

This article examines how periodical telework in rural archipelago environment is experienced by knowledge workers to influence their well-being measured by psychosocial work environment, stress, work engagement and work satisfaction, and whether the possible effects were sustainable. Time management, fragmented work episodes and work intensification are well-being risks that have been associated with knowledge work in previous research (Chesley, 2014; Perlow, 1999; Jett and George, 2003; Gonzalez and Mark, 2004). On the grounds of the research addressing well-

being effects of green environments it was assumed that the rural and green environment could reduce the amount of experienced stress, negative feelings and other psychosocial work strain factors (Korpela *et al.*, 2001; Ulrich *et al.*, 1991; Korpela, 2009).

Previous research also suggests that the success of the telework arrangement depends on the leadership culture and the level of trust in the organization (Pyöriä, 2011). This is reflected in telework being more common among those in higher occupational positions, where the issues of autonomy and authority are less at stake. On the other hand, private entrepreneurs also enjoy considerable autonomy. Therefore we also examined, whether the occupational position had any relation to the experienced well-being during the rural telework period. In order to do this we divided the data to subgroups of supervisors, subordinates, and private entrepreneurs.

The data for this paper was collected 2010-2011 in a study conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The study was sub-part of the project "Flexible Working Culture - Rethinking of work, place, time, and life" that was funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The informants of the study were employees and entrepreneurs who spent a working week in the countryside environment of Finnish South-Western and Estonian archipelago. The participants applied themselves for the experiment and the study on the basis of an advert spread by e-mail newsletters for entrepreneur organizations, newspapers, and also by television news. Besides these channels, the informal networks spread the word about the experiment. The appropriate time period and the specific location amongst the several available options were chosen by the participants beforehand.

Total of 49 knowledge workers did the one week's working period in the rural archipelago settings mostly in small groups (2-5 persons). Three out of the participants chose to apply and participate

the experiment alone. The participants were provided with a work space with ordinary office equipment and accommodation in the work location. As the work week and the experiment included the study part, the lodging and the work space were cost-free for the participants. In each work location there was one group of study participants at a time.

We conducted a longitudinal survey among the participants at three points in time: 1-3 weeks before, at the end of the period, and 2-8 weeks after the work period with an electronic survey system. Total of 46 participants answered to the first questionnaire out of which 39 participants answered to all three questionnaires. The number of participants is small, but the longitudinal research design enables studying the change in participants' experiences over a certain time period, which provides an additional dimension to the data.

4. Background of the informants

In the first questionnaire personal data and background information of the participants' work was collected. The participants had various professional backgrounds. A majority of them could be characterized as the so called creative industry or creative professionals. The participants consisted of journalists, advertising experts, textile designers, IT developers, well-being coaches, consultants, health care service providers, architects, and researchers, among others. The participants lived in various locations mostly in Southern Finland, but some of them also in the northern parts of Finland or in Estonia. More than four fifths (85 %) of them worked in small or medium-sized organizations (1–49 employees) and one third of the participants (30 %) were private entrepreneurs. The same share (30 %) was subordinates and two fifths (39 %) were in a supervising position in their job. One half of the participants were women and the other half were men. The participants were in different

phases on their careers, the youngest being 23 and the oldest 66 years of age. The average age of the participants was 44 (sd. 11,5 years). All but two participants were of Finnish nationality.

Generally, the participants were already quite acquainted with flexible working practices. Two thirds of the participants (64 %) announced that their working times yielded on a weekly or daily basis on the demand of supervisors or work tasks. Only two participants claimed that there was no yielding of work times at all. Half of the participants (50 %) worked during weekends at least on a monthly basis. A minority of 17 % performed no weekend work at all. For quite many of the participants (61 %) home was also an essential place of work or work station. Over a half of the participants (54 %) worked at home on a daily basis, only one respondent denying to work at home at all. Two thirds (65 %) of the respondents worked at a client's place or in another work station of the employer at least occasionally, one third (33 %) of the respondents on a weekly or daily basis. Four fifths (83 %) worked at least occasionally outside the usual work place e.g. in hotels, coffee shops, congress centres or parks, and almost as many (78 %) worked at least occasionally on a vehicle when travelling.

5. Data analysis

Measures were used that were already well established in the research conducted by Finnish research institutes such as Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Centre of Statistics. Variables of the psychosocial work environment included the following, based on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from one to five: How often do you have to hurry to get your work done (5=very often)? Do you have to interrupt your work tasks because of other intervening matters or busier matters and tasks (5=constantly)? Is your work mentally...1=easy–5=very exhausting? Do you have clear objectives and goals defined for your job (5=never)? Can you influence the things

that concern you in your workplace (5=very little)? Can you influence the amount of work assigned to you (5=very little)? Can you influence the order in which you perform your work tasks (5=very little)? Can you influence the length of your working day (5=very little)? How often do you encounter the sort of situations in your work that cause negative feelings for you, like anger, hate, fear or shame (5=constantly)?

As variables of well-being we measured stress with 5-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all, 5=very much). The question is: “Stress means a situation in which a person feels tense, restless, nervous or anxious or is unable to sleep at night because his/her mind is troubled all the time. Do you feel this kind of stress these days?” (Elo *et. al.*, 2003). We measured work satisfaction with a 5-point Likert type scale (1=very satisfied, 5=very unsatisfied) with the question being: “How satisfied are you with your current job?”. We also measured work engagement with 9 items ranging from 0 to 6 (6=always), consisting of vigor, dedication and absorption, three items for each (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). We included space for open comments regarding the experiment in each questionnaire.

In order to find out whether there had been changes between the three different time points, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Each dependent variable (mental exhaustiveness of work, time pressure, interruptions, levels of job influence, clarity of work goals, negative feelings at work, stress, work engagement, and work satisfaction) were modelled separately. If significant change between the three different time points (within-subjects effect $p \leq .05$) was found, a further analysis was carried out in occupational sub-groups. If Mauchly's test of sphericity reached a level above 0,05, we used the within-subjects effects test with assumed sphericity, and if it did not, we used the Greenhouse-Geisser test. In the analysis by sub-groups we used the Bonferroni test as the post hoc test.

6. Results

The repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the experienced time pressure at work was significantly lower on average during the rural telework period, and after the period it also stayed at a slightly lower level compared to the original situation ($F(1,548) = 58,934, p < .001$). Also, there were less of experienced interruptions at work during the telework period compared to the level before the experiment. Interestingly, the experience of interruptions was also significantly lower after the teleworking period compared to the original level. ($F(1,390) = 41,977, p < .001$.) The experience of negative feelings at work was significantly lower during the experiment, and it also stayed at a slightly lower level after the experiment ($F(2) = 46,275, p < .001$). Also, the experienced mental exhaustion was significantly lower during the telework period, but after the period it returned close to the original level ($F(1,400) = 23,134, p < .001$). Experiences of job influence and clarity of work goals did not change over the time points.

Table 1. about here

The experience of stress was significantly lower during the telework period, and it quite didn't reach the original level after the experiment, either ($F(2) = 3,852, p < .05$). This means that for some participants the decrease in the experienced stress was of a more permanent nature. The experienced work satisfaction also slightly ameliorated on average during the rural retreat working period, but returned afterwards close to the original level ($F(2) = 2,812, p < .10$). There were no significant changes in work engagement.

Table 2. about here

We carried out additional analysis for variables that showed significant changes between the measurement points ($p < .05$) by dividing the informants to three occupational groups: private entrepreneurs ($n=12$), subordinates ($n=12$), and supervisors ($n=15$). The results of this analysis are found in table 3. The test of between-subjects effects shows that the supervisors were generally the most stressed group particularly compared to the group of subordinates ($p = .052$). The result almost reaches the level of statistical significance. However, this result was due to the fact that the experienced stress level of the supervisors did not change much over the time points. On the other hand, the private entrepreneurs were originally the most stressed group, and they experienced the most notable decrease in stress of all three groups in the rural archipelago environment compared to the original situation. Their stress level rose again after the experiment but remained lower than the original level. The subordinates in turn showed a slightly decreasing trend of experienced stress both during and after the experiment. These different trends among the occupational sub-groups produced a statistical tendency for interaction ($p = .052$).

The group of supervisors experienced the most time pressure of the three groups, as is shown by the test of between-subject effects, especially compared to the group of private entrepreneurs ($p = .022$). However, all the groups notably benefited from the flexible work experiment in this regard in relation to their original level of experienced time pressure. Also, the groups of supervisors and private entrepreneurs differed the most from each other in terms of experienced interruptions, the supervisors being the most often interrupted group and the private entrepreneurs the least ($p = .006$). During the experiment the decrease of experienced interruptions was notable for all the groups, but the subordinates and supervisors gained relatively the most. However, the decrease in the

experienced interruptions seemed to be more permanent for the private entrepreneurs and subordinates than for the supervisors, even though the interaction effect is not statistically significant. Experiences of mental exhaustion at work decreased most notably for private entrepreneurs and supervisors, but also subordinates gained in this respect. The effect was not durable, however. Regarding experiences of negative feelings at work and work satisfaction there were no differences between the occupational sub-groups.

Table 3. about here

In the open comments of the questionnaires the change of the environment was experienced as enriching and providing new perspectives on work and other areas of life. It supported the reflection on working styles and methods as well as planning for the future. Other experienced benefits were the sense of community and feeling of synergy with colleagues, personal recuperation and efficiency at work.

“This week gave new perspectives to my whole working life.”

“The experiment was very eye-opening on how to work in future and with what kind of rhythm. The week was surprising as we had -- no preliminary expectations or attitudes.”

“The trial period was very successful regarding my work and also the cooperation and sense of community of the colleagues.”

“The week was very fruitful. In the future we plan to spend at least one working week somewhere else than the main workplace in order to avoid interruptions from meetings or other intervening factors.”

“I believe that my stress level has dropped from the red zone to at least to the yellow zone. -- Personally this week has been extremely beneficial for me -- I am again on my way towards balance!”

The experiment did not proceed completely without shortcomings, which were mostly related to infrastructure. Sometimes the work conditions did not meet expectations: there were occasional problems with internet or mobile phone connections, or complaints about the ergonomics of office furniture or the level of lodging. The development of the infrastructure to answer to the particular needs of knowledge workers regarding connectivity and office ergonomics remains a future challenge to service providers. Sometimes there was hardly any interaction with locals, which was experienced as a deficiency.

“The conditions were pretty modest, and there were hardly any contacts with locals. [Place X] could have presented itself in some way, perhaps through local enterprises. Marketing!”

Some made a conscious decision to work hard and long days, but it paid itself off:

“We consciously put in a lot of work effort, which went very well in a mutually supportive atmosphere. The working days became very long, but it did not matter.”

7. Discussion

This article examined a retreat type telework arrangement, which has received little scientific attention. The goal of this article was to examine, whether a telework period in a new work environment in countryside had any effect on knowledge workers' well-being, more specifically the experienced psychosocial work environment, stress level, work satisfaction and work engagement, and whether the effects would be sustainable. Even though generally promising more intrinsically rewarding job content, knowledge work has been associated with increased work pressure, such as time pressure, discontinuities and disruptions in the work process (Chesley, 2014; Perlow, 1999; Jett and George, 2003; Gonzalez and Mark, 2004). The development of mobile ICT technology has enabled detachment of the work process from a fixed workplace, and the opportunities for telework have been expected to support work-life balance and well-being of the employees. However, the empirical research results regarding the effects of telework have been contradictory, and the practice itself has not spread in a manner it has been expected to. The shortcomings of telework, such as isolation, are primarily associated with home-based telework, which has been the main focus of telework research despite of the opportunities for more varied telework practices (Hislop and Axtell, 2007). An emerging trend may be the development of more social flexible working spaces (cf. Spinuzzi, 2012; Bilandzic and Foth, 2013).

Our results indicate that during a telework period in an alternative work environment, rural and natural settings, the strain experienced by the participants at work decreased notably. The participants of the study experienced less time pressure, negative feelings, mental exhaustion, and interruptions during the rural work period. In addition, there was a decrease in experienced stress and a slight increase in work satisfaction. Regarding experienced interruptions, negative feelings, and time pressure, the improvements were for some participants more permanent than solely the

duration of the work period. Even the experienced stress showed a slight change for a more permanent decrease. However, there were no changes regarding job influence, clarity of work goals or work engagement.

Regarding the differences between the three occupational groups, the private entrepreneurs evidenced the most notable decrease in the experienced stress when moving to rural work settings. The supervisors were the group that experienced originally the most time pressure especially if compared to the private entrepreneurs, so possibly for them the work period brought the most significant relief on this regard. The decrease was notable for all the groups, however. The supervisors were also generally the most interrupted group and the private entrepreneurs the least, but all the groups gained from the experiment in this respect, some private entrepreneurs and subordinates even more permanently. These findings indicate that the experienced benefits of telework are affected by the occupational position. For the private entrepreneurs and supervisors the changes during the experiment were more eminent than for the subordinates. However, on average the changes were more sustainable for the subordinates and private entrepreneurs than for the supervisors. Private entrepreneurs may have been able to sustain the effects of the experiment due to the autonomous nature of their occupation. Supervisors could be assumed to enjoy more work autonomy at least when compared to subordinates and therefore have ability to sustain the effects as well, but perhaps their demanding occupational role challenges their individual influence on their workload. These suggestions would require further examination, however.

The results show that periodical telework in rural retreat settings supports many aspects of well-being at work, given that the necessary work facilities are in order in the telework location. The success of this particular telework arrangement may be partly explained by the background of the participants. The self-applied participants were generally quite familiar with flexible working

patterns and therefore it can be assumed that they possessed such tacit skills (Felstead *et al.*, 2005) that assist in adapting to new situations. Being familiar with flexible working practices they may have been relatively able to assess beforehand the suitability of this working arrangement to their personal work patterns.

The complete change of environment and the tranquillity of the countryside may provide a space where reflection on work styles and life in general becomes convenient, which is what the open comments suggest. Also in light of the previous studies regarding the effects of natural environment on well-being (Korpela *et al.*, 2001; Korpela, 2009; Ulrich *et al.*, 1991) it may well be assumed that the green environment played its part in calming down the work pace of the participants and alleviating feelings of exhaustion and negative emotions. The open comments also suggest that for those working in groups the rural retreat environment was a supportive work environment as it facilitated interaction and provided a protected space to work collaboratively away from disruptive elements.

The results of this study have the following theoretical implications. In telework research the concept of telework should not only be utilized in the sense of employees' liberty to work outside the office, but also taking into account the various work environment solutions occurring in practice. Mobile work and telework research should recognise the appearance of new work environments in addition to the already familiar and traditional ones, like main and branch office, home and transportation vehicles, and study work processes in relation to their immediate environment (cf. Brown and O'Hara, 2003; Hislop and Axtell, 2007). Although the existing studies on telework (cf. Kelliher and Anderson, 2008, 2010; Maruyama and Tietze; 2012) have provided a valuable range of information on the effects of telework on occupational well-being, their results have in many ways been contradictory. This implies that we need increased attention to the more

detailed design and context of various telework practices. We suggest that the particular telework arrangement under this study, retreat type telework, is able to answer particularly well to the challenges regarding time management evident in much knowledge work; time pressure; disruptions and discontinuities (Chesley, 2014; Jett and George, 2003; Gonzalez and Mark, 2004; Perlow, 1999), and therefore support control of the work process. This in turn is helpful in balancing high job demands and alleviating work pressure (Karasek and Theorell, 1990).

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it lacks statistical analysis of work community support which proved difficult with survey data, as a significant part of the self-applied study participants were private entrepreneurs having no work community in a traditional sense. However, most of the study informants did not participate in the telework experiment alone, and those few who did so, did it intentionally. Therefore a complete professional isolation is suspected not to have been an issue with this experiment. Secondly, the number of participants in this study remained too low to make statistical generalizations directly applicable to other groups of workers. On the other hand, the self-application of participants to the telework experiment ensured their genuine interest and commitment with the experiment that took place in remote rural and archipelago region. Therefore, even though the sample is small, it can be assumed to have inner validity.

This study has several implications for human resource management. The results support the development towards a more horizontal organisation, where personal autonomy and influence on the choice of workplace and the arranging of work tasks is allowed. The study provides useful insights on the utilization of flexible workplace solutions for the purposes of occupational well-being. It supports the development of retreat type telework arrangements especially for the needs of employees suffering from an overtly interruptive and intensive work environment. The retreat type telework design may be beneficial after a particularly intensive work period to regain the balance

between work demands and need for recovery. On the other hand, this kind of work arrangement may also be suitable for a creative work phase when time and space are needed to get immersed alone or in groups to the work task, or to build a sense of work community. However, more research is needed about the feasibility of the retreat type telework arrangement for different occupations, different work processes, and both individual and group work. This study lends support to telework arrangements that are sensitive to individual needs of workers. In future, analyses of telework should be further contextualized and also opening up to the varieties of the possible work environments.

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Table 1. Repeated measures ANOVA by measurement point; psychosocial work environment

<i>Psychosocial work environment</i>	Pre measurement (Sd)	During measurement (Sd)	Post measurement (Sd)	ANOVA repeated measures
Mental exhaustiveness of work (n=38)	3,24 (0,82)	2,34 (1,02)	3,29 (0,80)	$F(1,400) = 23,134^{***}$ (1 vs. 2 ^{***} , 1 vs. 3 ns., 2 vs. 3 ^{***})
Time pressure at work (n=39)	3,67 (0,81)	2,08 (1,09)	3,44 (0,85)	$F(1,548) = 58,934^{***}$ (1 vs. 2 ^{***} , 1 vs. 3 ^(*) , 2 vs. 3 ^{***})
Interruptions at work (n=34)	3,94 (0,95)	2,09 (1,11)	3,47 (0,86)	$F(1,390) = 41,977^{***}$ (1 vs. 2 ^{***} , 1 vs. 3 ^{**} , 2 vs. 3 ^{***})
Influence on things at the workplace (n=39)	1,74 (0,91)	1,51 (0,79)	1,56 (0,75)	ns.
Influence on the amount of work (n=39)	2,21 (1,00)	2,03 (1,06)	2,28 (0,97)	ns.
Influence on the work order (n=39)	1,82 (1,00)	1,69 (0,98)	1,87 (0,80)	ns.
Influence on the length of the working day (n=33)	1,92 (0,98)	1,85 (1,14)	1,90 (1,02)	ns.
Clarity of work goals (n=39)	2,08 (0,81)	2,15 (0,87)	2,18 (0,64)	ns.
Negative feelings at work (n=39)	2,64 (0,87)	1,46 (0,72)	2,38 (0,75)	$F(2) = 46,275^{***}$ (1 vs. 2 ^{***} , 1 vs. 3 [*] , 2 vs. 3 ^{***})

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, (*) = $p < .10$

Table 2. Repeated measures ANOVA by measurement point; well-being

<i>Well-being at work</i>	Pre measurement (Sd)	During measurement (Sd)	Post measurement (Sd)	ANOVA repeated measures
Stress (n = 38)	2,89 (0,98)	2,55 (0,80)	2,68 (0,93)	$F(2) = 3,852^*$ (1 vs. 2 [*] , 1 vs. 3 ^(*) , 2 vs. 3 ns.)
Vigor (n=39)	3,88 (0,85)	3,99 (0,86)	3,94 (0,92)	ns.
Dedication (n=39)	4,43 (1,12)	4,53 (0,94)	4,53 (0,99)	ns.
Absorption (n=39)	4,17 (1,10)	4,34 (0,88)	4,27 (0,92)	ns.
Work engagement (n=39)	4,16 (0,93)	4,29 (0,82)	4,25 (0,86)	ns.
Work satisfaction (n=39)	1,85 (0,67)	1,69 (0,61)	1,87 (0,80)	$F(2) = 2,812^{(*)}$ (1 vs. 2 ^(*) , 2 vs. 3 [*] , 1 vs. 3 ns.)

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, (*) = $p < .10$

Table 3. Repeated measures ANOVA by measurement point and occupational position

stress		pre measurement		measurement during		post measurement				Post Hoc
		mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD			
	private entrepreneur	3,25	0,75	2,42	0,67	2,75	0,87	Within-subjects effects	$F=4.426, p=.015$	
	subordinate	2,36	0,81	2,27	0,65	2,09	0,54	Between-subjects effects	$F=3.212, p=.052$	$3>2^*$ $p=0.55$
	supervisor	3,00	1,13	2,87	0,92	3,07	1,03	time*occupational position	$F=2.476, p=.052$	
mental exhaustion		pre measurement		measurement during		post measurement				
		mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD			
	private entrepreneur	3,18	0,98	2,00	0,45	3,36	0,92	Within-subjects effects	$F=23.678, p<.001$	
	subordinate	2,83	0,39	2,42	1,08	2,83	0,58	Between-subjects effects	$F=2.496, p=.097$	ns.
	supervisor	3,60	0,83	2,53	1,25	3,60	0,74	time*occupational position	ns.	
time pressure		pre measurement		measurement during		post measurement				
		mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD			
	private entrepreneur	3,42	0,90	1,67	0,65	3,08	0,79	Within-subjects effects	$F=55.694, p<.001$	
	subordinate	3,42	0,67	2,08	0,90	3,25	0,75	Between-subjects effects	$F=4.275, p=.022$	$3>1$ $p=0.25$
	supervisor	4,07	0,70	2,40	1,40	3,87	0,83	time*occupational position	ns.	
interruptions		pre measurement		measurement during		post measurement				
		mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD			
	private entrepreneur	3,40	1,26	1,90	1,29	2,70	0,67	Within-subjects effects	$F=40.523, p<.001$	
	subordinate	4,08	0,90	2,00	1,04	3,50	0,80	Between-subjects effects	$F=6.181, p=.006$	$3>1$ $p=0.004$
	supervisor	4,25	0,45	2,33	1,07	4,08	0,51	time*occupational position	ns.	

* 1=private entrepreneur, 2=subordinate, 3=supervisor

PUBLICATION
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Experimenting with work practices in a liminal space: A working period in a rural archipelago

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Abstract

Lived experiences in organizational liminal spaces ‘betwixt-and-between’ have begun to attract scholarly attention, but the full potential of liminal spaces in contemporary mobile and fluid working life has remained unexamined. This article contributes to theory by showing how a liminal experience in an alternative work environment is created via three dimensions: the aesthetic experience of a different environment, situated practices, and changes to work and life rhythms. Interview material was gathered from creative professionals working temporarily in a rural archipelago environment. The results suggest that the contrast of working in a calm natural environment supported experimentation with work practices, nurtured the formation of a *communitas*, and spurred imagination and reflection. The arrangement’s temporary nature heightened the intensity of participants’ experiences. However, this intensity varied depending on work community configurations and participants’ personal needs for change. This study deepens the current understanding of liminal spaces by showing how the nuances of physical and social spaces contribute to liminality and how liminality alters work rhythms. Future research should focus on how liminal workspaces can be created for individuals seeking a change in routine and increased community support.

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Introduction

Boundaries in contemporary work are being blurred, including boundaries between work and leisure (Bloom, 2016; Lewis, 2003), between work and home (Andersson Cederholm, 2015) and between separate organizations (Tempest and Starkey, 2004). Globalization processes and changing technologies have placed emphasis on networking, change, choice and reflexivity in lifestyle choices (Cohen et al., 2015). Workers using mobile information and communication technology (ICT) can choose practically any space that suits their work tasks and fancy, be it cafes, transitory spaces during travel or co-working spaces (Cohen et al., 2015; Felstead et al., 2005; Spinuzzi, 2012). Some withdraw to isolated environments to conduct tasks that are special or necessitate deep concentration (Newport, 2016). These developments imply that the significance of liminal spaces is increasing. Liminal spaces are described as 'betwixt and between' dominant spaces (Turner, 1974a) and, therefore, as devoid of any clear sets of rules and norms about their use and purpose (Shortt, 2015). A significant dimension of these undefined spaces is their association with individual and collective transition (Turner, 1974a; Van Gennep, 1960 [1909]).

The work environment and its various tools and rules have traditionally been considered self-evident elements of routine (D'Adderio, 2011). However, when work environments become fluid and changing, they gain new visibility. Changing work environments can create very concrete, practical concerns regarding how to accomplish work tasks (Brown and O'Hara, 2003). However, it has also been suggested that they can facilitate affective and aesthetic experiences important to creative work (Liegl, 2014) and new ways to experience social engagement (Daskalaki, 2014). Currently, there is not enough knowledge about the roles that different and, particularly, more alternative liminal spaces at the margins of the dominant spaces play at work.

It has been customary in organizational research to rely on the assumption of organizational actors relating to their work with mainly abstract, rational attitudes (George, 2009; see also Gagliardi, 2007; Pentland and Feldman, 2008). However, the Cartesian notion of a human being as a rationally self-sufficient unit independent from his concrete environment has become outdated in many strands of contemporary organizational research, such as within the so-called practice perspective (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Gherardi, 2006) and through the 'spatial turn' of organization studies (e.g. Carlile et al., 2013; Taylor and Spicer, 2007). It is increasingly acknowledged that work takes place in spaces that are not merely abstract but also socially appropriated, bodily sensed and lived by their users (Lefebvre, 1991).

This article sets out to examine: (i) how an alternative and rural work environment is experienced; and (ii) how such an environment can affect the processes of work. The research questions are examined by analysing interview data collected from 32 creative professionals (Florida, 2002) from small or micro-sized companies who spent a work period in the archipelago environment of south-western Finland and Åland. The

archipelago is a rural, geographically relatively isolated region situated between the mainland and the sea.

This study discovered that the experienced contrasts of the archipelago environment, in comparison to the normal work environment, triggered imagination, reflection and experimentation characteristic of liminal spaces. However, the liminal experience was not formed only by the environment, but also by the social configurations of the work groups during the archipelago period and personal needs for transition regarding work or life in general. The nuances in the individual liminal experiences showed that a liminal working space can support creativity, balanced work rhythms and realizing needs in professional development.

Literature

In this literature review, we first discuss how the workplace as it is bodily lived and experienced can be a source of emotional connectedness and control, and how the freedom of liminal spaces may enhance mindful perception. Second, we examine the interconnections of creativity, liminal workspaces and variations in work rhythms. Third, this section discusses natural environments as potentially liminal and therapeutic work environments.

From spatially embedded work to ‘dropping tools’ in a liminal space

Recent action-oriented organizational research and spatial research focusing on the lived experience of a space have emphasized that individuals’ relationships with their immediate work environment are not merely rational as has been traditionally assumed. These relationships are instead mutually reproductive, involving a sensual, affective and corporeal dimension (Gagliardi, 2007; Gherardi, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991; Strati, 1999). The so-called ‘communities of practice’ perspective (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991; see also Schön, 1991) has suggested that successful conduct of work activity relies on knowledge that is developed locally and bodily by means of hands-on experience and bricolage, using all available resources. Corporeal participation in the situation, along with the sensible knowledge received from such participation, is a way of relating with oneself and the world (Gherardi et al., 2007: 322). For example, Richard Sennett (2008: 53–80) has described how the social space of pre-industrial workshop enabled the development of communal craftsmanship traditions, such as mentoring practices, in ways that still resonate in the work practices of many contemporary professionals.

However, it can be claimed that this connectedness to the work environment is not only about a sense of personal fulfilment but also about control. Proponents of the actor-network theory have argued that cognition is constrained by the surrounding network of both humans and artefacts: tools, software, rules, codes of conduct, and so forth (D’Adderio, 2011; Hutchins, 1995; Latour, 2005). These routine artefacts and the scripts they involve may hinder creative work activity (D’Adderio, 2011: 214–215).

A liminal space resides ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner, 1974a) and is characterized by the absence of normative scripts. It exists either between two dominant spaces or between the Goffmanian front stage and back stage (Shortt, 2015), in the border between

two worlds, where no one set of norms and regulations applies. The concept was originally created and developed within the field of anthropology (Turner, 1974a; Van Gennep, 1960 [1909]). There it served to identify the distinctiveness of a phase within a rite of passage, typically constituting a withdrawal to an isolated space devoid of social structure and roles to reflect deeply about the values of one's society and find a personal connection to the greater 'cosmos'. The rites followed a cyclical order, where a liminal phase was preceded by a phase of separation from everyday life, and followed by incorporation to the social structural order. The purpose of the liminal space was to prepare individuals for a transition in social status, but because of the temporary absence of norms it could also be a threatening and unsettling space (Turner, 1974a). The intensity of the liminal space emerged from the shock of inverting normal cultural order into bizarre shapes, which was meant to trigger reflection among initiands (Turner, 1974b: 73). The founding characteristic of liminality was 'to replace the outside chaos with an order from the inside' (Thomassen, 2014: 118). Those sharing the liminal space would usually become a close, egalitarian and familial community, which Turner (1974a) termed 'communitas'.

In organizational research, the concept of liminality has been used in analyses of identity construction (Beech, 2011; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016), as well as temporary organizational roles (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003; Garsten, 1999; Tempest and Starkey, 2004) and organizational processes or characteristics (Howard-Grenville et al., 2011; Lindsay, 2010). These studies relate liminality to a void or gap in the organizational structure. Recently, and importantly for the purposes of this study, the concept of liminality has also been applied in examining the ways workers use undefined spaces for unconstrained communication and the creation of subjective meanings. The enactment of underused or abandoned areas within working facilities is one example of such activity (Iedema et al., 2010; Shortt, 2015). Special, non-routine events spent outside organizational domains, such as strategy workshops (Johnson et al., 2010), strategy away days (Concannon and Nordberg, 2017) and business consultancy dinners (Sturdy et al., 2006), have also been found to involve liminal qualities. These studies have viewed liminality less as a structural characteristic and more as a fluid, momentary experience and a situational achievement.

Another discussion in organizational studies that relates to the significance of undefined spaces concerns 'tool dropping' – an act of putting the ordinary physical or conceptual 'tools' aside in order to increase sensemaking (Weick, 1996). Weick has recommended tool dropping at work to reach a concept-free state of mind, or mental void (Weick, 1996, 2006). Although potentially unsettling, this void could enable the development of work practices, as when in it 'more is seen and more is seen about seeing itself' (Weick, 2006: 1727). It could be said that tool dropping is one way to approach liminality. A connection between tool dropping and liminality has been suggested in Sturdy et al.'s study of management consultancy business dinners, where participants resisted the display of physical work documents to avoid the intervention of rationalistic work logic into the liminal, unconstrained space of the dinners (Sturdy et al., 2006: 949–950). In conclusion, it seems that situationally achieved liminal spaces can be identified at various levels in the organization, from planned special events to one individual's momentary choice to use or 'drop' a particular tool.

Creativity, liminal workspaces and rhythmic variation

Victor Turner, one of the early developers of the liminality concept, saw creative potential in the liminal spaces of traditional community rites; however, he believed that modern society afforded opportunity for even freer individual expression in liminal situations, such as in contemporary carnivalistic events (Thomassen, 2014; Turner, 1982). It has been found that liminal workspaces of modern organizations may also foster creativity, particularly the more unnoticeable kind that is nevertheless necessary for the operation of the work community: the informal exchange of tacit knowledge and exploration and playing with emergent ideas (Concannon and Nordberg, 2017; Johnson et al., 2010; Shortt, 2015; Sturdy et al., 2006).

It has been argued that creative work activity can be paradoxical in that it does not necessarily fit with the normative idea of work being conscious, rational and goal-oriented. It has been suggested that creative activity is dependent on phases of mental passivity (Gomart and Hennion, 1999). When using existing knowledge and skills to solve a problem or derive creative ideas and solutions, it may not be useful to push conscious mental effort to its limits. Instead, leaving room for the unconscious mind to incubate ideas may be a deeper way of using one's mental resources (George, 2007, 2009). In practice, a work rhythm supporting incubation could be achieved by, for example, alternating between work tasks that involve different cognitive demands (Elsbach and Hargadon, 2006). Sennett (2008: 295–296) has described how traditional craftsmanship practices have embraced a similar kind of rhythm – slow ‘craftsman time’ – which originated from the inner rhythms of engaged working and involved reflection and imagination.

Liminal spaces identified in contemporary work situations have been shown to be associated with a reflexive, internally emerging work rhythm. In Shortt's study (2015), the hairdressers withdrew to the marginal and liminal spaces of the workplace to rest and allow themselves time for peaceful reflection without the expectations of normative workspaces. Liminal spaces (Concannon and Nordberg, 2017; Johnson et al., 2010; Shortt, 2015; Sturdy et al., 2006) and ‘resisting spaces’ (which are closely linked to the idea of liminality; see Courpasson et al., 2017) have also been found to enable free, creative discussions among work colleagues. These findings suggest that liminal workspaces offer a relief from externally defined, rule-bound work rhythms.

Some workers have been found to intentionally use the change in work environment to produce rhythmic variation in their work (Henriksen and Tjora, 2016; Liegl, 2014). Liegl (2014) found creative urban nomadic workers to have developed a way of rhythmically moving between work locations, such as cafés, co-working spaces or their homes. Moving between spaces kept ‘things fluid and moving’ and enabled creativity to spontaneously ‘arrive’ (Liegl, 2014: 178–179). The practice involved momentary passivity in expecting the novel space to act as a mediator in inducing aesthetic and creative experiences. Liegl's findings suggest that reacting sensually to novelty in the environment may create a liminal moment where routinized orientation disappears and a person has to create the present with heightened intensity of both thought and activity (Thomassen, 2014). The passivity of letting a novel environment influence a sensual reaction may assist in dropping one's conscious thinking tools (Weick, 1996, 2006) and thereby intensify unconscious incubation processes conducive to creativity.

Natural environments – therapeutic and liminal spaces for work?

Recently, there has been increasing interest in choosing unlikely environments, such as rural dwellings, for periodic isolated working (e.g. Newport, 2016). However, systematic research about work experiences in such spaces is scarce. Contemporary discussion of creative environments has focused on the amenities of the urban milieu, yet there is emerging evidence of a parallel counter-urban movement, motivated by the search for a 'good life' (Burnett and Stalker, 2016; Herslund, 2012).

Research into the psychological effects of natural environments on humans has been of growing interest for some time. Studies in environmental psychology have found pleasant natural environments to foster stress recovery, a decrease in negative emotions (Ulrich et al., 1991), recovery of the capacity to direct attention (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), support for positive emotions, reflection on personal matters and help in forgetting worries (Korpela and Ylén, 2007; Korpela et al., 2001). Even in urban environments, people have claimed a particular attachment to the green spaces found within (Korpela and Ylén, 2007). Literature on therapeutic landscapes has found natural pleasant landscapes also to support learning, personal self-expression and community-building (Conradson, 2005; Hale et al., 2011). These kinds of findings have increased interest in incorporating natural and green elements in workplaces to benefit from these positive effects (Loder, 2014; Lottrup et al., 2013).

Apart from the direct psychological and physiological effects, phenomenologically oriented scholars have emphasized that natural environments may involve richness of emotional and imaginative experiences (Bachelard, 1994 [1958]; Tuan, 1989). Bachelard (1994 [1958]) has claimed that the power of imagination is enabled by the space in which we dwell. We do not only inhabit places; the places also inhabit us. Places can trigger imagination, particularly when contradictions accumulate, such as in an isolated environment where the human dwelling directly confronts the forces of nature (Bachelard, 1994 [1958]: 39, 42–48).

A natural place that has become almost an archetypical image of liminality is the beach, as it creates the contrast of being between land and sea. The liminality of the beach experience is considered to originate from awareness of the vastness of nature and the sea (Preston-Whyte, 2004). According to Bachelard (1994 [1958]: 185–190), for an imaginative mind an experience of vast nature can become a 'psychological transcendent' deepening one's inner experience and imagination. It has been shown that for some poets the beach has become such an experience. The shore poets (Dietrich, 2007) saw themselves as liminal characters who could offer a special perspective on the structures of society. At the same time, the liminality of the shore offered the possibility of an alternative dream-life – the imagining of possible worlds (Dietrich, 2007).

Ultimately, liminality of a geographical and physical space depends on the social relations operating in relation to that space (Andrews and Roberts, 2012). It has been suggested that there exist nuances (Shortt, 2015) or degrees (Thomassen, 2015) in a liminal experience and that the intensity of the personal liminal experience depends on the amount of different processes of liminality – at the personal, group or even societal level – overlapping in a space (Thomassen, 2015). Our approach to liminality acknowledges that spatial characteristics can signal liminality and contribute to a liminal experience.

However, this study considers a liminal experience as a result of multilevel processes, including both material and social dimensions, operating simultaneously.

Data and methods

Context and preparation for the work period in the archipelago

An archipelago formation refers to an area where a collection of multiple rocks, shoals and islands lie in close proximity to each other. On one side, the archipelago of south-western Finland is contoured by the mainland, and on the other it changes gradually to open sea. Part of it belongs to UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme. The region is characterized by remoteness from the mainland, rurality and the large presence of the sea, which has provided the region with its main means of livelihood for centuries. The isolation of the archipelago is further associated with the need to cope with the forces of nature, which gives the lifestyle a sense of particular beauty and freedom (Siivonen, 2008). The archipelago has traditionally been inhabited by Finland's Swedish speaking minority (5% of the total population), along with the Finnish speaking majority. The Swedish speaking minority in particular has made efforts to preserve the cultural traditions of the area, and as a result has become closely identified with the region (Siivonen, 2008). Being slightly distant, both geographically and culturally, from the mainland and mainstream Finland, the archipelago region can be considered a liminal area, particularly for the tourists from mainland Finland and abroad who visit, mostly during the summer.

This article utilizes interview data that were collected during 2010–2011 for an earlier study within which an experiment on flexible telework was conducted in the rural archipelago environment. In that study, the participating workers spent one work week in the south-western Finnish archipelago. The participants had applied to participate in the experiment, typically in response to an advertisement, and they could apply in self-chosen groups or alone. As background information, it was explained that the purposes of the experiment were to examine the added value and challenges associated with working outside of a formal workplace and to develop a new service concept. The work periods took place outside the primary Finnish holiday season.

The participants of this study represented a variety of creative professions, including journalists, graphic designers, researchers, well-being coaches, textile designers, advertising professionals, consultants and engineers. All of the participants worked in small or micro-level enterprises (less than 50 employees). They spent the week-long working period mostly in small groups of colleagues (2–4 persons) or, in two cases, alone. There were 17 female and 15 male participants, and all working age groups were represented. Four groups of participants consisted of colleagues from the same workplace or couples sharing a household and in some cases a business, and eight groups consisted of networks of private entrepreneurs or colleagues from different offices.

The participants could use a work space with ordinary office equipment and accommodation at the work location at no cost. The spaces for work and lodging were provided by six municipalities, as well as by local associations and entrepreneurs who considered developing telework services to boost the local economy. The work spaces differed in style depending on what each municipality had to offer, ranging from modern office



Figure 1. A meeting room in an archipelago work location.

hotels to traditional archipelago homesteads. Some facilities were run privately. Others were municipal buildings, such as a former town hall – a historic building looking for a new purpose. Figures 1 and 2 show examples of the spaces. The facilities had been modestly used, and they were fairly easy to adjust to function as work spaces. In general, participants could use the spaces freely, and in case of restrictions, such as opening hours, there was room for negotiation. The participants brought along the mobile ICT equipment that they considered necessary for their work, such as phones and laptops. They chose to conduct tasks that were estimated to be particularly suitable for the archipelago work environment – an adaptation practice typical to mobile workers (Brown and O’Hara, 2003; Felstead et al., 2005).

Data collection

The participants were interviewed in groups at the end of their archipelago work period, and those who participated alone were interviewed individually. As the study was explorative in nature, group interviews were chosen as a method to facilitate conversation and sensemaking (Frey and Fontana, 1991). The interviews were carried out by two different interviewers. The data consist of 12 group or pair interviews and two individual interviews, with 32 interviewees in total. The lengths of the interviews varied from 45 to 93 minutes. Portions of the interviews were conducted face to face, whereas other parts were carried out by phone owing to the long distances in the archipelago region. The interviews were based on a thematic structure encouraging conversation. Interview questions included the following: ‘What tasks have you carried out during the period?’ ‘Have your



Figure 2. A historical town hall functioning as an archipelago work facility.

work practices differed somehow to how you normally conduct your work?’ and ‘What has been most significant to you about this period?’ All interviews were transcribed.

Analysis

The original research design studied the archipelago experiment from the framework of flexible telework. The interview questions applied the ordinary precondition of work as a rational pursuit – an act of carrying out a task purposively (Gagliardi, 2007; George, 2009). However, of particular interest to us as researchers was how the interviewees also brought to the discussion more personal, emotional experiences of the archipelago period, such as how enriched and encouraged they had felt in their temporary work community, how they had reflected upon their personal career choices and direction in life, and how they had enjoyed small moments and discoveries in the archipelago environment. The conversations could become deep, from memories of small moments in the archipelago to reflection on personal values concerning work and life in general. The meaning of work as a rational and purpose-oriented activity, as it is commonly understood, seemed to blur and merge with other processes. This discovery made us realize that we would have to avoid applying an overly narrow definition for work activities in our interpretation of the data. The concept of liminality (Van Gennep 1960 [1909]) enabled us to examine carefully this blurring of boundaries, to consider whether working for a week in such an environment as the rural archipelago could become a liminal experience and what kinds of processes had led to such an experience.

To make sense of both the cognitive and bodily dimensions of this process, we used an analytical method underpinned by phenomenological philosophy, combined with pragmatist

Table 1. Sensitizing concepts with associated codes.

Aesthetic and emotional experiences	Practices	Rhythm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentary mental pictures of the environment • Contrasts to the everyday environment • Poetic and metaphoric expressions • Calm and emptiness, reflection • Professional imagination inspired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of a community • Ad hoc work arrangements • Trying different working spaces, times and co-working arrangements • Work merging with leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The period as a rhythmic change • Inner rhythm of work • Minor rhythmic variations of work and life • Incubation

understanding of the primacy of the practical situation (Jensen, 2016). This study relies on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962), which underlines how our sensual as well as cognitive approaches to making sense of the surrounding environment are mediated by our bodily position in it. Secondly, this study is also indebted to Heidegger's (1978 [1927]) existential phenomenology, particularly the idea of 'dasein' – being in this world and becoming aware of one's being through practical engagement with the world. Gaston Bachelard's (1994 [1958]) analysis of the imaginary and poetic dimensions of dwelling in places and experiencing the dynamics of inside and outside places provided tools for conceptualizing the imaginary and emotional dimensions of the archipelago experience.

The analytic process advanced inductively at first. We conducted open coding, marking out distinctive phrases, actions, attitudes and other things that stood out from the data as possibly significant. The initial coding revealed not only rational, but also emotional and reflective modes of talking about work. To make sense of the overall experience, we considered it important to analyse the material with as few presuppositions as possible (Husserl, 1970 [1936]). We iterated between theories and data, constantly comparing different analytical lenses to find the most valid interpretation model possible (Alvesson, 2003). This process simultaneously enabled distancing from and questioning of our pre-existing presuppositions. The iteration process produced three sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954) that became heuristic devices in organizing the data: aesthetic and emotional experiences, practices and rhythm. At this point, we deductively analysed the interview material again by means of these three sensitizing concepts. Results of this deductive coding phase can be found in Table 1. Finally, we compared our findings with the original data to ensure the coherence of our analysis and the balance between parts and the whole.

Findings

The imaginary, aesthetic and liminal experience of the archipelago environment

When asked to describe work activities in the archipelago environment, the participants did not talk about work simply as an objective and purpose-oriented activity. They also

offered informal personal impressions and reflections, describing how the environment had made them imagine, feel and dream. Many shared mental pictures of small moments that captured what for them was essential about working and dwelling in the archipelago. These pictures were anchored in momentary, bodily experiences. The descriptions often involved a humorous or ironic contrast between the normal work environment and the archipelago:

Q: What do you think you will mainly remember about this past week?

A: Well, there is this one small detail. When you wake up in the morning to a sheep baaing under your window, it is [laughing], it is kind of a funny experience which somehow gives a good start for the day. (Female, marketing manager)

When you walk along this path 300 meters to your dwelling, I'd say it is pretty good. That is, compared to the time we usually sit in cars in traffic jams, so ... (Female, director, researcher)

This environment is absolutely lovely, I mean, oh my god, at home I live on the fifth floor and see blocks, and here you could see nature and the sea from the window. So it was a tremendous change to my everyday life. (Female, graphic designer)

... and even though I can't help occasionally observing those great crested grebes, there are father, mother and two babies buzzing around. Still, I think it is kind of a positive break and not like you were left staring at a stone wall like in my normal working place. (Male, toy designer)

Some participants described working in the archipelago environment with imaginative and even poetic language:

Here the normal daily rhythm is lacking, and my thoughts have been able to fly toward tomorrow ... of course this stay by the sea is quite peaceful, it makes a whole lot of difference in your thinking. (Male, designer in catering services)

This stay here is kind of a mental adventure for me. (Male, manager in an advertising agency)

Our interpretation is that in experiencing the oddness and peculiarity of the contrasts between everyday work environments and the archipelago environment, the liminal experience of the space began to take form. The prevalence of dreaming, imagination, humour and irony in the interviews suggests an experience of space that was extraordinary, even carnivalistic, as participants revelled in turning 'normal' work-related practices on their head. Resorting to metaphoric expressions also implies an experience of a space that escapes objective, definite categories.

The participants also described the archipelago environment as calm, silent, peaceful and empty, again contrasting this experience to the stress of the everyday environment. The calmness of the environment was mostly experienced as relaxing and soothing. It enabled concentration, full presence in the moment and room for personal reflection. It therefore supported the archipelago working period in its development as a liminal space:

I have felt the atmosphere to be very relaxing compared to the bustle of the capital. It has been very relaxing to see the sea from the window, and the waves sloshing and boats gliding. You don't have here that background noise of the capital, like the sounds of cars and all that. Here you can feel an echo of emptiness. (Male, manager in sports services)

The archipelago enables me to withdraw for a week from an energetic and kind of an over-excited atmosphere ... Here I can be completely with my own thoughts ... I can calm down for a while, that is the thing. For me, calming down means that I can be quiet, I can be however I want. (Male, manager in an advertising agency)

The experience of emptiness also triggered a creative initiative to fill the space with activities. The participants ventured independently into the environment and invented free-time activities. This enabled unique personal discoveries, which further stimulated the imagination. Some participants developed a flowing, inspired relationship with the environment, paying attention to its smallest details. The inspiration gained by these discoveries also impacted the work conducted in the archipelago. The following exchange took place between two women of the same work group:

Here you have culture in many meanings of the word. This is completely different, like all the hundreds and hundreds of fishermen's cabins, and a house on a cliff just hanging on top of a couple of rocks, it's just ... (Female, illustrator)

... and the neighbour's cats. (Female, electrician, creative writer)

The neighbour's cats, exactly! There you really have something to wonder about. I think we are going to have so much to process regarding both work and this environment during the coming weeks. Really, I cannot even begin to think yet how much this opened doors for us. (Female, illustrator)

Some participants started spontaneously noticing potential work opportunities and imagining ways they could put their professional experience to use in the local community. Such talk mostly remained at the level of playing with ideas, but in some cases these plans advanced to preliminary inquiries with locals. Others saw in the archipelago environment a material resource for their creative work in terms of scenery for taking photographs or local histories and narratives to be used in textual work. On the other hand, some participants found new creative resources within themselves:

The kinds of drawings that I did in the beginning of the 90s I have not done ever since, but during this week I have experienced a new renaissance. More than a dozen pieces of this kind of work and sketches have come into being during this past week. (Male, designer in catering services)

However, not all participants experienced the emptiness of the environment as a particularly creative starting point. Some participants described the archipelago village as rather boring, without much to do in the evenings. These participants also experienced difficulties in orienting themselves for the work week, wondering whether they should consider themselves primarily as at work or on holiday and worrying about how the local inhabitants would

categorize them outside of the tourist season. These concerns did not characterize the overall experience of any participant, but were voiced only during passing moments. Yet, this shows that a liminal state is also fragile and that anxiety caused by the absence of recognizable roles can sweep into even the archipelago's outwardly peaceful and calm dwellings.

Practicing reflectively; reflecting on practices

The participants came to the archipelago differently prepared for novelty, adventure and change. The environment and the physical facilities for working and living were new for everyone. However, some participated with very familiar workmates, such as a spouse from the same family business. In these cases, the patterns of collaboration did not need to change much from everyday routines. Others participated with colleagues with whom they did not normally share physical workspace. Some of these ad hoc groups had planned collaborative work for the period, whereas others had not. These new configurations of workmates in the same physical location created another level of novelty, which intensified the experience of liminality by allowing the formation of a *communitas* – a close, equal and informal community (Turner, 1974a). The private entrepreneurs, particularly, experienced this immediate community as immensely supportive, much needed and in contrast to their everyday environment in which they often felt lacking in social support and energy. The informal archipelago *communitas* facilitated discussions and exchange of collegial feedback, much as workshops have been found to do (Concannon and Nordberg, 2017; Johnson et al., 2010):

I don't know how you actually make this atmosphere happen ... I just had missed this so much, this kind of activity and excitement, experimenting with everything without a judgmental attitude. I think this group has had a clear positive, active attitude, and we have been building upon each other's thoughts. I almost feel I am getting younger. (Male, ICT consultant)

It is really important to have someone to share your working days with a little bit, because normally there is not really any social environment. (Female, coach and mental trainer)

The undefined liminal space of the archipelago work environment created a free space in terms of enabling experiments with work arrangements. The participants recounted having worked in living spaces, in the yard and other outside spaces, such as the balcony or terrace. The use of space was characterized by playfulness, spontaneity and a search for comfort. The participants' working times could also vary. They could take breaks to walk in the surroundings any time they felt the urge, and then continue working afterward. The arrangements of work and leisure activities were decided in an ad hoc manner, either communally or individually:

As I work by the nature and take a look out the window, I can always have a little break and go walking by the sea ... (Female, well-being coach)

Here things have taken their natural course, we have not had any prearranged timetables, we have just agreed as the day has passed how that day is going to proceed further, what do we still have to accomplish together, and we have rhythmized the day accordingly. (Female, client project manager)

Participants sometimes felt inspired to continue discussing work matters, new ideas and even dream about future business ideas until the late hours of the night. Participants themselves described this kind of activity as 'soft planning'. Soft planning merged with free time spent together, and the participants found it problematic to define this practice as either work or leisure. Therefore, it can be interpreted as a liminal practice. Even if it was not work in the traditional sense, the participants expressed that they had profited professionally from this activity. Soft planning was also characterized by the absence of computers and agendas; these tools had by this point been left aside. By this very concrete 'tool dropping' (Sturdy et al., 2006; Weick, 1996), the participants created an intimate liminal space within the greater space of the archipelago period. Tool dropping supported open discussion and the attainment of a reflective state of mind:

And at the point when we have closed the PCs we have quite naturally moved to this sort of ... I would like to call it 'soft planning'. It is not like going through a certain agenda or creating memos or adding things to calendars, but a bit of another kind of planning and reflection. (Male, toy designer)

Here we continue discussing sometimes quite late in the evening, and we don't take notes or sit by the PC, but we have exchanged a lot of ideas about work, its preconditions, what supports working, and this kind of reflection. (Female, coach and consultant)

A recurrent theme in the interviews was that work practices in everyday life are messy and often do not comply with formal, common definitions of working time and space. For some individuals, the equal and easy-going fellowship in the isolated archipelago 'world' initiated deep introspection of personal life trajectories, careers and healthy values. In particular, the participants reflected on what constitutes 'good work'. This reflection took place because many had realized that their newly invented, situated archipelago practices somehow epitomized for them what was lacking in their everyday environment – what they felt work should be like instead. They emphasized the importance of lived experience of new practices to becoming aware of the need for change:

Earlier I have worked both at home and in the office, and in comparison this is completely different. The work is pretty much the same here, but the change of environment and place, here you can orientate to things in a more relaxed manner, and that gives you a new kind of vision about work also regarding the future. Here you kind of face it, how nice it is to work when you have a good time. And you can, you are able to apply that also in the future ... (Female, illustrator)

Maybe this has helped me to see what this kind of work enables, like, is this good work compared to the everyday toil I carry out. Probably that is the most important thing ... and also, I don't know if one should reflect about the environment more ... here it seems that people have slightly different values, maybe the salary is not the most important thing here, there are other things that go before salary and one's own interest. (Male, manager in food services)

Another participant took a more concrete approach and captured her experience of the period with a metaphor she had invented, 'Korppoo mentality', based on the name of the

island on which she was staying. With this conceptualization, she aimed to create a mental tool that would enable the re-creation of preferred archipelago practices in her normal environment. Developing this unique metaphor also highlights the difficulty of defining the liminal archipelago experience and practices with any previously known concepts:

It is a bit like as you step out of the train in Helsinki [the capital of Finland], everyone is walking at the same pace. And [after the archipelago period] we could consider having occasionally a sort of ‘Korppoo [name of an island] mentality day’, already to begin that day differently and construct it ... I mean we only have the sky as our limit, you just have to realize it. You have to sort of reflect about it and become aware of how we can make use of it in a different way. (Female, coach and consultant)

The experienced rhythms and sense of time

An awareness of the temporariness of the situated working and living community was a constant undertone in the interviews. The fragility of this temporary settlement created an urge to experience fully the time available, together with others:

That we have the whole days’ time from morning till evening and nobody is going to run away ... that has been really good here. I had thought already before this period that here we have a chance for ... we really need time together for discussing and idea creation. (Female, client project manager)

We have worked long days here, on Friday you get to go home to rest [laughing]. This is a crazy input of time for this purpose, and it worked really well like that. We had a goal, and it looks like we will reach it just fine, and afterwards we will return to the normal order. This is how I experience it. (Male, ICT consultant)

This peculiar intensity of experiencing time affected work rhythms. Participants felt that when they were working in the archipelago, their focus was intensely engaged with the task at hand. Many described the calm, peacefulness and silence as facilitating concentration on one task at a time. Others explained this effectiveness by referring to the ‘fullness’ of the archipelago experience as a whole. The ability to share a community with colleagues and to anticipate inspiring adventures in the environment once work was done introduced a different rhythm of life – one arising from social engagement and emotional experience:

May it sound good or bad, but I’ll say that when you leave home or your normal office environment the efficiency of working increases significantly. And as you make up nice activities here for the evening, you can say that the soul is resting, and that way you become more efficient. These kinds of group meetings, they don’t necessarily have to take place in the normal office. And I claim that this is much more efficient than if we gathered in the office back home to do the same things there. (Male, engineer)

Many participants discussed the imperceptible narrowing and loss of rhythmic variation in normal daily routines. They described phases of work and leisure having become a

formless, chaotic mass, without a sense of beginning or fully completing anything. Others described a tendency to bounce restlessly between tasks without the ability to give full attention to any one of them. The archipelago period created the ability to enact clear transitions between different activities, and the period acted itself as a transition within the larger trajectory of participants' lives. Therefore, it can be said that the period facilitated the creation of meaningful, rhythmic cycles that reflected those found in the cyclical structure of liminal ritual (Turner, 1974a):

Knowing myself, I can sit alone and work the whole time I am awake ... Here some things are lacking which could be mind-distracting, and then there is another person with whom you can have a break every now and then, so it doesn't become that kind of 'tunnel work'. (Female, electrician, creative writer)

The biggest thing here is replacing the fractured days with this kind of one long-term effort ... One really ought to have this kind of clear working periods, and then clear holiday periods. (Male, business consultant)

In the archipelago, participants experimented with minor situated rhythmic variations between elements of work, change in environment, leisure and socializing together. For example, some participants applied personal, sensitive ways of rhythmically enacting the natural and built environments. An example of this can be found in the following description from one participant. By changing the environment, the participant was able to relieve herself from conscious thinking processes that got stuck and achieve an empty, liminal moment. Her thinking and idea incubation were stimulated by such rhythmic change (e.g. George, 2007, 2009):

For example, as I was sitting in the office yesterday and I was supposed to develop a new product, it just wouldn't work. Then I went to the balcony, where you could see the sea and the sun was shining. I sat there for a while. Then immediately I started having new ideas ... and this morning I had already decided as I went to the office that I would take the PC and instead go out to work. But then it happened, that as I sat there [in the office], I probably had already processed over the night that stream of thoughts I had yesterday, so I ended up working in the office anyway. (Female, career and life coach)

Another rhythmic discovery that enabled creating fruitful mental contrasts was that of switching between working alone and working together. Then, issues could first be processed individually and then deliberated further through collegial discussion:

In principle one designer has already created these plans. But once they are further reviewed by three pair of eyes, or in this case four, who are all experts, then suddenly you start finding little things that you can still improve. Everybody learns something, everybody has a good time, and the result is certainly going to be better ... We discovered this practice accidentally here, but we are certainly going to use it in the future. (Male, leading engineer)

Some of the participants gravitated towards a 'puzzle-like rhythm', where switching between working alone and working together was complemented with spontaneous excursions in the surrounding nature, even in the middle of the day. The 'puzzle-like

rhythm' was a way of creating a rhythmic cycle that answered to the personal needs of both the meaningful order of things and mental stimulation.

Finally, the present and future merged in participants' experiences in their anticipation that the archipelago experience would yield significant yet undetermined future outcomes. As one participant expressed, the period had 'opened doors' – a metaphoric expression that Van Genneep (1960 [1909]: 192) used in describing liminality.

Discussion

With interest in alternative workspaces increasing (Liegl, 2014; Newport, 2016), there is a need to understand the lived experiences of work carried out in non-dominant spaces. The participants in this study reacted powerfully to the aesthetic beauty and calm of the archipelago environment. However, they were surprised by the contrast of carrying out their work in this unique environment. The sudden shift to working in a rural environment with natural and animal-filled landscapes (Conradson, 2005; Hale et al., 2011) became humorous at times. Bodily living this contrast between the everyday and the archipelago work environment introduced a feeling of play. A liminal space was formed, which was reflected in the participants' accounts of emptiness, reflection, perception of altered rhythm, and experimentation with work and leisure arrangements.

The calm rhythm of the archipelago environment fostered mindful concentration at work, though participants experienced differing degrees of intensity in their liminal experiences. The liminal experiences were characterized for some as work blurring with holiday, whereas for others liminality facilitated co-creative community and deep reflection. For those in the former category, the period could be characterized as an odd and exceptional, yet fun and thought-provoking working experience. Work activities could be coupled with enjoyable free-time activities, while many obligations associated with normal social roles were absent. For those in the latter category, liminality went further, assuming a dimension of intense collective sharing and reflection. Their experience could resemble the intense liminality of initiation rites characterized by close and equal communal bonds of *communitas*, as described by Turner (1974a). This community-formation process was most evident in the case of those who participated with colleague(s) who were not generally present in the physical working space. It seems that this was another novelty factor that contributed to the liminality of the experience. Those participating with a familiar partner could rely on existing communication and collaboration patterns; although the physical environment, facilities and rhythms of the archipelago community were new, at least the social configuration remained familiar and safe. The period was thus more adventurous for participants with novel partners.

The interviews showed that many participants – particularly those forming a situated *communitas* (Turner, 1974a) – reflected intensively upon their working habits, career, life values and well-being. Both alone and in groups, they reflected critically on their existing routines and experimented with new ones. The archipelago environment offered an experimentation field which fuelled reflection processes that participants felt needed to take place. This study adds to our understanding of nuanced experiences of liminal spaces by showing that the ways in which the opportunities of this open space are utilized, and the resulting intensity of personal liminal experiences, depend on (i) the levels

of novelty and contrast of the environment as compared to the everyday environment, either in physical or social terms, and (ii) individual needs for personal transition.

In contemporary working life, where boundaries between different domains have become blurred, it might be fruitful to concentrate on the enabling qualities of liminal phases instead of the threatening ones. Liminal, undefined phases are becoming familiar to nearly everyone, but Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) claim that many are unable to reap the benefits of these phases. Liminal phases allow one to play with different possibilities for work and possible futures. But rather than utilizing this opportunity for experimentation, there is a common tendency to cut these reflection processes short and rush too quickly to reach solid ground. The frustration with everyday environments that was revealed in the interviews shows that there existed a genuine need for such a liminal period – a playground for experimenting with new possibilities – to re-evaluate work practices.

Sennett (2008: 53–80) has described how communities and whole cultures of craftsmanship were formed by craftsmen working in the presence of colleagues in workshops, with concentrated working occasionally interspersed with mentoring and social rituals. Over time, craftsmanship evolved from communal endeavours to individual artistry. As a consequence, the workshop transformed from the working home of a community into an individual creator's sole refuge from the world. It could be said that the rural archipelago period bore traces of both kinds of workshops. Although the support of the community was emphasized, the period also triggered individual creative processes and re-establishing the sense of the professional 'I'. However, the archipelago period was also liminal play for a temporary contingent of workers used to the contemporary multitude of virtual and physical spaces (Felstead et al., 2005; Liegl, 2014). Yet for these workers this settlement in the calm, natural archipelago environment provided welcome respite and breathing space – an occasion to listen to one's body, feelings and thoughts. The participants seized the opportunity for a work period in the archipelago after seeing an advertisement, without prior knowledge and experience of the conditions. This could be called 'accidental liminality' – an effect produced when separate processes happened to converge. Yet mobile and fluid work may feed such processes where different individual movements occasionally come together and produce spaces that can become liminal experiences (Daskalaki, 2014).

Most workplaces encourage searching for work–life balance, but the underlying norm of maintaining a productive image may override this ideal, and finding balance may paradoxically become yet another 'task' – one that is practically impossible to accomplish (Bloom, 2016). During the archipelago period, many participants, surprising even themselves, found ways to re-create this balance after realizing through environmental contrast the problematic nature of practices that had been building, slowly and unnoticed, in their everyday environments. When both work and leisure time were satisfactory and offered mental stimulation (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), balanced and meaningful rhythmic daily structures could be created without effort (Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Liegl, 2014). Moreover, when work is deeply meaningful, as it is for many creative professionals, it can itself feel like leisure (Lewis, 2003). Work and leisure could at times playfully blur, as in the case of 'soft planning', but the participants also found they could use the stimulation of the novel environment to detach from work when needed. Rhythmic variations facilitated fluid transitions between purposive and more liminal, passive and

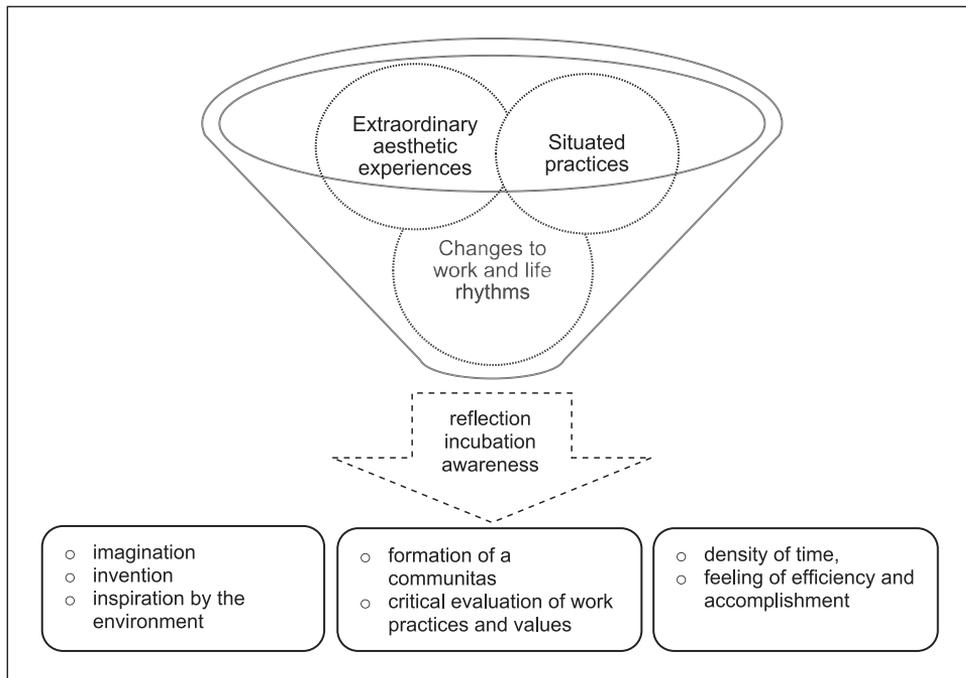


Figure 3. The interplay of dimensions of liminality during the archipelago work period.

reflective orientations characterized by openness to experience (Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Liegl, 2014). Perhaps this rhythm was a contemporary version of slow ‘craftsman-time’ (Sennett, 2008), with room for incubation – the unconscious mental processing necessary for personal development and the ability to work in a creative and reflective manner. The interplay of the dimensions of liminality during the archipelago work period is depicted in Figure 3.

Conclusions

In organizational research on liminality, the focus has been expanding from liminal aspects inherent to the structure of the organization to personal experiences of liminal spaces (Concannon and Nordberg, 2017; Iedema et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2010; Shortt, 2015; Sturdy et al., 2006). This study adds to the literature by showing the nuanced liminality of a work period in an unconventional and contrasting work environment. It shows how such environments can initiate not only small moments of creativity and relief from normative constraints, but also critical reflection on work processes and personal values of work and life. We also connect the liminality concept with discussions on work rhythm (George 2007, 2009; Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Liegl, 2014) and suggest that liminal spaces entail a different kind of rhythm to that of normative spaces – a rhythm originating from inner personal needs. Liminal spaces can bring rhythmic changes to work processes, and in this way enable dropping thinking patterns that are no longer effective – and the discovery of fresh ones.

We acknowledge that the archipelago experiment analysed here had some unique characteristics, but using alternative environments is increasing, both in convenience, owing to the development of ICT, and social acceptance. Rural areas are found to be welcoming of creative knowledge professionals (Burnett and Stalker, 2016; Herslund, 2012), and the archipelago municipalities were eager to develop telework services that would answer to the needs of the visiting professionals. Perhaps it is a question of finding service models and practices that would be both relevant for workers and possible for locals to offer. However, if a complete change of environment seems inconvenient, even little moments of ‘tool dropping’ can provide a new perspective (Weick, 1996, 2006). Our findings also lend support to the occasional use of pleasant outdoor spaces while working to provide opportunities for rhythmic variation.

A liminal workshop such as the archipelago period might particularly benefit those working independently, such as freelancers and entrepreneurs, as these spaces could provide the warmth of community and collegial feedback and mentoring. As entrepreneurial, nomadic and other non-standard ways of working become more common (Cohen et al., 2015; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016), the number of workers in need of such experiences may in fact be growing. More research is needed about how a place can support community-building and restore a healthy work rhythm, as well as about the interrelations between place, rhythm and personally meaningful and productive work practices.

This study analysed creative professionals working in small companies. It is possible that their professional backgrounds facilitated the experimental and flexible work orientation found in this study. It is further possible that workers other than creative professionals would orientate themselves differently in such an environment. Therefore, more research is needed on the experiences of alternative spaces among different kinds of professionals. Collegial work periods in a novel, pleasant and comforting environment could particularly serve individuals who work independently, those in a transition period in their working lives and those who feel deprived of personal resources needed at work.

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**A temporary liminal space counteracting the permanent ‘in between’ in
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A Temporary Liminal Space Counteracting the Permanent ‘in between’ in Working Life¹

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ABSTRACT

Ambiguous liminality used to exist ‘in between’, in a transition to a new social-structural order, but recently, it has gained a more permanent and normalized presence in working life, where existing boundaries are becoming blurred. However, liminality as a continuous state can be individually demanding. This paper elaborates upon a theoretical understanding of permanent and temporary liminality in working life and examines possible measures to tame excessive liminality. To illustrate the theoretical development, forms of permanent and temporary liminality in the lives of three professionals are analyzed. We found that dealing with multiple and complex work roles independently could be conducive to fracturing work routines, which we identify as habitualized, permanent liminality. Withdrawal to an alternative work environment – a rural Finnish archipelago – formed a liminal space in its original sense, a creative and reflective phase that illuminated work-related challenges. It is suggested that such spaces are designed to achieve simplicity.

KEYWORDS

bodily change / creativity / liminality / reflection / space

Introduction

With ‘anytime, anywhere’ work, outsourcing, enterprising, freelancing, and project-based work gaining ground, work is increasingly surpassing organizational and work/life boundaries (Garsten 1999; Koslowski et al. 2017; Moen et al. 2013; Tempest & Starkey 2004). The notions of fluid, mobile, and resilient work suggest that it has somehow become inherently contradictory to associate work with bounded categories such as place, hours, and clearly predefined duties. As a result, it has been argued that liminality, an ambiguous state ‘betwixt and between’, has become a common condition and experience in contemporary work (Ibarra & Obodaru 2016; Johnsen & Sørensen 2015).

Liminality is a concept that originated from studies on the ritual behavior of traditional small-scale communities. Anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960 [1909]) discovered that rites accompanying transition to a new social status included a phase

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characterized by the physical separation of the ritual subjects from the rest of the society, the destruction of their previous social status, and a dramatic, extraordinary, and playful recombination of cultural elements, the aim of which was to transmit the society's deep knowledge about its values and cosmologies to the initiands (Turner 1974a, p. 239, 1974b). Van Gennep (1960 [1909]) defined this ambiguous, even dangerous phase as liminal, after the Latin term *limen*, denoting a threshold.

In organization and working life studies, the concept of liminality has sparked increasing interest. Liminality has been examined in relation to 'in-between' organizational spaces (Iedema et al. 2010; Shortt 2015) and events (Concannon & Nordberg 2018; Johnson et al. 2010; Sturdy et al. 2006). Certain organizational positions have also been identified as liminal, such as temporary employees and consultants (Czarniawska & Mazza 2003; Garsten 1999; Tempest & Starkey 2004; Winkler & Mahmood 2015) as well as managers of interorganizational relationships (Ellis & Ybema 2010). However, it has been found that for such individuals, the liminal 'in between' may also become a continuous state of affairs (Czarniawska & Mazza 2003; Ellis & Ybema 2010; Garsten 1999). Likewise, it has also been shown that liminality has characterized organizational strategies (Lindsay 2010), cultures (Howard-Grenville et al. 2011), and management practices (Swan et al. 2016). These findings indicate that in some cases, the liminal 'in-between' condition has reached a state of relative permanence. These studies have characterized the liminal experience in working life as ambiguous yet potentially creative, but many have paid less attention to how liminality can foster change and transition.

As the understanding of liminality has shifted from that of a ritual and extraordinary phase to an increasingly mundane and permanent phenomenon in the working life context, limitations in the original concept have begun to seem evident (Ibarra & Obodaru 2016; Johnsen & Sørensen 2015). Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) have argued that some professionals thrive in and even seek out liminal work experiences, such as knowledge workers in the new economy, high technology, and media. Simultaneously, however, responsibility for navigating liminal situations falls more heavily on the individuals themselves and may involve a risk of losing sight of how boundaries could be meaningfully restored in work and private lives (Johnsen & Sørensen 2015). According to Thomassen (2014), a prolonged liminality without transition stands in contrast to the original logic of liminality. Yet, these kinds of situations are typical to modern society (Szakolczai 2000; Thomassen 2014). It is even possible to identify multiple levels of liminality, structural and of the more personal kind, affecting the individual simultaneously (Thomassen 2015; Winkler & Mahmood 2015).

This article investigates the potential interplay of permanent and temporary liminality in contemporary working life by analyzing the experiences and reflections of three professionals during an experiment that involved a change of work environment to an unfamiliar rural Finnish archipelago for a short period of time. The article also examines whether some measures can be taken to tame and control liminality that has become burdensome. The article emphasizes spatiality and bodily experience as important dimensions of liminality, as they originally were (Thomassen 2014, p. 91), and draws theoretical insights from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Unlike some other working-life studies of liminality, this article maintains the original meaning of the concept of liminality as a transitional phase but leaves the context of the transition and its eventual outcome open, suggesting, like Ibarra and Obodaru (2016), that modern-day

transitional situations may be highly individual yet still connected to more general social conditions. In such cases, the phenomena and the transition they stimulate may be interpreted case-by-case using liminality as a heuristic device.

We begin our analysis with a literature review that examines permanent and temporary liminality and explores the relation between liminality, space, and body. Next, we turn to an empirical analysis, which shows how the complete change in environment of three professionals produced a liminal experience comparable to the original idea of liminality as a phase of upheaval, creativity, and reflectivity. This liminal phase also illuminated the ambiguous characteristics of the professionals' ordinary work conditions. In the discussion section, we question to what extent the 'normal' everyday work of our three informants, as it was viewed during the temporary archipelagic period, demonstrates 'permanent liminality' and how a temporary liminal phase helped counteract the tendencies of this permanent liminality. In our conclusion, we suggest that within a permanently liminal and complicated everyday reality, a transformative liminal space may paradoxically be found by embracing simplicity. This may require a physical change in one's working conditions.

Literature

Liminality as the condition of modernity: From a temporary phase to a permanent state?

Van Gennep's (1960 [1909]) main aim was to show that rites of transition possessed a universal pattern, consisting of three phases: separation from the rest of the society, transition (liminality proper), and incorporation back to the normal social order. Victor Turner (1969, 1974a, 1974b) emphasized a close association of liminality with *communitas*, a creation of equal and family-like communal bonds with fellow initiands. Yet, liminal situation was also dangerous both for the initiands and the society because such an undefined state could cause anxiety and threaten the social order (Douglas 2003 [1966]). Turner extended the concept of liminality to account also for individual liminal experiences and liminal situations experienced outside of small-scale traditional societies, such as pilgrimages (Turner 1974a) and engagement with modern art and entertainment (1974b). He recognized plenty of creative potential in liminality, describing it as 'a time of marvels' when one could reflect upon and recreate one's place in the world (Turner 1974a, pp. 238–242), this creativity being facilitated by the individualization of modern society (Turner 1974b).

As liminality has been 'set free' of the ritual framework, it appears to be no longer merely a channel to deal with changes affecting a community but a resource for profit-making and an experience sought for its entertainment value. This is particularly visible in the increased yearning for extreme experiences and immersion in virtual realities in contemporary life (Thomassen 2014). Creative play that subverts the normal rules used to belong to the liminal phase of a ritual (Szakolczai 2000, p. 213) but has become a popular organizational strategy in sectors ranging from creative and new media industries to public organizations (Pors & Andersen 2015; Sørensen & Spoelstra 2012; Walker 2011). Being an 'outsider' – a typical liminal character – used to be exceptional but is now a normalized organizational role, as in the case of consultants and temporary



workers (Czarniawska & Mazza 2003; Garsten 1999; Tempest & Starkey 2004; Winkler & Mahmood 2015).

Addressing this change, Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) have argued that, unlike its traditional counterpart, contemporary liminality is typically under-institutionalized, individualized, and open-ended – and thus fertile for ‘identity play’, the divergent exploration of possible work identities. On the other hand, studying the case of a consultant, Johnsen and Sørensen (2015) have found that the overagitated lifestyle of overworked professionals may lead to a situation where work absorbs life, and norms separating work and ‘life’ become altogether unintelligible, leading to permanent liminality. Liminality may also be addictive. Finding a way out from such a situation may be difficult if one experiences it as being constantly in a ‘fast-moving train’ (Johnsen & Sørensen 2015). A frustration caused by the simultaneous impossibility and unavoidability of finding a solution may feel like schizophrenic *aporia* (Czarniawska & Mazza 2003) or limbo (Bamber et al. 2017). Facing this situation alone increases its difficulty (Johnsen & Sørensen 2015). In sum, systemic, permanent liminality may be not only empowering but also involve difficulties with finding back to structured ways of working and living, as if one remained stuck in the third phase of the rite of transition: incorporation (Szakolczai 2000, p. 214).

Temporary liminal spaces in organizations: Liminality as a bodily experience

There may yet be other, more fleeting kinds of liminality in organizations: moments that are situationally achieved, emergent, possibly orchestrated, or that simply happen as a result of individuals ‘dwelling’ in space (Bachelard 1994 [1958]; Lefebvre 1991; Shortt 2015). This kind of liminality has been identified in workshops (Johnson et al. 2010), strategy away-days (Concannon & Nordberg 2018), and work dinners (Sturdy et al. 2006), as well as in the everyday uses of leftover, abandoned space within organizational facilities (Iedema et al. 2010; Shortt 2015).

Where accounts of systemic and structural liminality highlight the contradictory and often tension-ridden and demanding nature of the in-between position for the individuals concerned (Beech 2011; Czarniawska & Mazza 2003; Garsten 1999; Winkler & Mahmood 2015), findings of situational, momentary liminality, on the other hand, emphasize characteristics more clearly on the emancipatory side of liminality: the exchange of tacit knowledge, creative discussion, retreat from the constraints of normative roles, introspection, and reflection. They also involve a separation from and return to normative spaces and roles and the use of an alternative space in between – resembling traditional liminal rites. For example, Shortt (2015) found that in the temporary liminal spaces of leftover organizational facilities, employees felt in contact with their inner feelings, which were suppressed in normative work situations. Consequently, in those spaces, they could interact with colleagues more authentically and creatively.

It must be added that individuals in a long-term liminal position may also experience their situation more intensively during particular events, but these are moments when they are suddenly reminded of the adversities of their ambiguous position (Winkler & Mahmood 2015). Our focus here, however, is on the liminal characteristics of certain momentary organizational spaces as compared to dominant organizational spaces. Yet,

Winkler and Mahmood's (2015) insight that there may be an interplay between liminal moments and long-term liminal situations is important for the purposes of this article.

Van Gennep began his classic book *Rites of Passage* with a chapter on territorial passage immediately after the initial classification of rites. He clearly meant this chapter as a framework for his subsequent examination of liminality, because space played an important role in organizing many liminal rites (Thomassen 2014, p. 91). We now examine further the significance of body and space in liminality in the context of contemporary working life by grounding our study to the bodily phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

According to Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]), our perceptive capabilities fundamentally begin with the body: how our body is situated in the world. In perception, we are immersed in the surrounding world and our perception is solicited by this world, we thus escape our conscious selves. This makes perception a holistic and bodily experience rather than a purely intellectual one, a stance that is advanced also by emerging strands of organization research such as spatial organization studies (e.g., Dale & Burrell 2008; Taylor & Spicer 2007) and the practice perspective (e.g., Gherardi 2006; Strati 2007). The primary role of body in perception invests it with practical, nontransparent knowledge about the world, a 'body schema' that is built upon the sedimentation of previous perceptions and comes forth situationally (Kozyreva 2018; Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945]).

Merleau-Ponty stated that the 'sense' that the perception of our environment provides us has both an anthropological and a nonpersonal component. We have a 'natural', pre-personal attitude within our bodily, sensory functions that ensures there exists a certain organic unity or style in our experience beneath the ruptures of a personal and historical life (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], p. 345, see also Heinämaa 2015). However, our ability to function in the world also builds upon a personal history and familiar habitual practices that connect to another side in us, that of a cultural being. This invests every perception with an existential dimension. Says Merleau-Ponty:

For man, everything is constructed and everything is natural, in the sense that there is no single word or behavior that does not owe something to mere biological being – and, at the same time, there is no word or behavior that does not break free from animal life, that does not deflect vital behaviors from their direction [sens] through a sort of escape and a genius for ambiguity that might well serve to define man. Already the mere presence of a living being transforms the physical world, makes 'food' appear over here and a 'hiding place' over there, and gives to 'stimuli' a sense that they did not have. (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], p. 195)

Sensing is this living communication with the world that makes it present to us as the familiar place of our life. (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], p. 53)

From this perspective, workspace, as any space in which we dwell, is not merely about functionality but also the framework of our existential belonging. Workspace solicits a certain routine behavior through its artifacts, including rules, regulations, workplace architecture, and software (D'Adderio 2011). Although these artifacts posit constraints to individual freedom and creativity, which has been a concern to recent routine literature (Howard-Grenville et al. 2016), spatial routines also contribute to developing the



practical body schema (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945]), a familiar way of moving about in this world.

The significance of this affective, bodily experience of space in the formation of the individual has been an important theme in the work of many social theorists, although it has not necessarily been examined in phenomenological detail. Foucault (1977) emphasized the role of spatial design, such as that modeled after the panopticon, in producing docile and obedient bodies. Lefebvre (1991) discussed how homogeneous, rationalized, and urban spatial planning curtail expressions of social and individual life.

As we develop a habitualized way of moving around in our familiar spaces, we cease to perceive how this spatial activity as a system of exchanges comes in to being (Merleau-Ponty 1964a). According to Merleau-Ponty (1964a), this ‘becoming’ was something that modern painters like Cézanne and Matisse sought to capture by abandoning the then conventional and ideal forms of expression in an attempt to return to bodily perception, that is, to the vision as it comes into being in a bodily experience. Merleau-Ponty (1964a, p. 180) characterized this artistic vision as a ‘deflagration of being’. However, it was an estranged position: ‘Only one emotion is possible for this painter – the feeling of strangeness – and only one lyricism – that of the continual rebirth of existence’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, p. 18). We argue that this kind of perception is also characteristic of liminal experience, and it is by such estrangement from the ordinary norms that the existential and emotional signification tied to everyday spatial practices may be opened up and questioned. As the abovementioned studies of the liminality of work dinners, workshops, away-days, and uses of marginal spaces within work facilities indicate, a change of workspace may push normative, ordinary perception aside and enable a vision of new practices and significations.

The question we examine next is how permanent liminality and momentary liminal spaces might interplay in the lives of individual professionals. We describe the move of three such individuals to work in an unconventional work environment, a natural rural archipelago, and examine how this move evoked reflection on work practices, career, and values.

Data and methods

The aim of this study was to further elaborate the constructs of permanent and temporary liminality in the context of contemporary working life. We illustrate this theoretical development using interviews with three Finnish individuals as case examples (Siggelkow 2007). These were professionals who detached themselves from urban environments and experimented with carrying out their work in an isolated and unfamiliar rural environment for a short period of time. This experimentation was done within a research project that examined flexible work in the rural archipelagos of the Baltic Sea region. The research project was carried out in cooperation of Finnish, Swedish, and Estonian research institutes, in partnership with local municipalities and entrepreneurs. The cases presented in this paper are from interview data collected in southwestern Finland and Åland. This archipelago area holds a special place both culturally and naturally in the Finnish context. Traditional life in the archipelago was hard, but one was elated by the forcefulness of its nature, both arid and fragile. Currently, this mainly rural area is a popular holiday destination. The beach, in between land and sea, has been found to signal liminality (Preston-Whyte 2004). The same can be considered of the archipelago.

The study participants conducted their work in the archipelago over the course of a week; they were offered free lodging and office space for this purpose. The purpose of the original research project was to analyze the experience and well-being effects of working remotely in an isolated rural environment and develop telework service concepts for rural areas. Study participants were recruited through an advertisement that proposed the opportunity to try flexible work in the archipelago area in exchange for participation in the study. Before the experiment, the participants were informed in detail about the purpose and design of the experiment and study. Participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any moment if willed. The participants could decide all their own activities during the experiment. Participation was possible for small groups of colleagues and lone individuals, depending on preference.

Although this research setting could be considered atypical, flexible work arrangements are a common practice and increasingly mainstream in organizational thinking in Finland and other Nordic countries. According to a Finnish survey, every fifth employee in Finland conducts telework (Sutela & Lehto 2014). Daily working hours are less likely to be fixed among Finnish wage earners (44% of whom work fixed hours) than those in other EU countries (Eurofound 2015). Conducting work in multiple locations is most common in Finland (45%) among EU countries, with other Nordic countries reaching almost equal shares (Eurofound 2015). Given these statistics, expanding the normative idea of telework fits with general trends in Finnish working life. In addition, Finland has vast rural areas that are suffering from migration to urban areas, and the idea of rural telework as a way to re-enliven these areas reoccurs in political debate. Despite increasing migration to cities, many Finns do not want to sever their ties to the countryside entirely. In fact, Finland has one of the highest ratios of number of leisure apartments to per-capita population in the EU (Adamiak et al. 2015). There is research which indicates that these apartments are also used for teleworking (Komulainen 2007).

The study participants were interviewed thematically in groups at the end of archipelagic work periods to encourage sense-making and discussion of the nascent phenomenon (Frey & Fontana 1991). The interviews dealt with the professional backgrounds and overall work situations of the participants prior to advancing to the experiment itself, how work was carried out during the experiment, and how the period was experienced as a whole. The participants were able to themselves introduce additional themes of importance relating to what they had discovered during the experiment.

Walsh and Bartunek (2015) suggest cycles of inductive and deductive inquiry for studies of unexplored phenomena. An inductive and preliminary analysis of the data collected during the project revealed that the change of environment affected not only the practical ways in which participants carried out their work tasks but also their view on deeper topics: their professional development, dreams, pasts, and futures. As this new situation was characterized by openness and a sense of discovery, we adopted liminality as a key concept to make sense of this phenomenon.

We used theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007) to examine more closely three participants, Eeva, Mia, and Lasse (pseudonyms), whose stories are presented in this paper. These stories illustrate temporary and permanent liminality with different emphases. Together, they enable us to sketch a pattern that shows how the change of work environment affected perception and reflection, which were simultaneously directed by personal histories, situations, and concerns. Depending on personal



background, the environment could trigger intense sensations and reflection. Eeva's story is particularly rich in nuanced description of how she perceived the new environment and how it created for her an alternative world with dreamy undertones. Lasse's focus was more on his concern for his overall work situation, which was characterized by dispersion. Yet, in Lasse's interview, too, this reflection connects to his archipelago experience, where he found a contrast to his everyday routines. In Mia's story, we find complicated and fractured everyday routines, as particularly in Lasse's case, and a fascination with the current environment, as in Eeva's case but with fewer existential undertones.

We can assume that the professional backgrounds and personalities of the participants affected their orientation in the archipelago and how they expressed their experiences. Mia seemed to be more satisfied with her general work situation than Eeva and Lasse, who were each concerned in their own fashion about their work situations. The three stories shed light on the interplay between such individual background factors and the space affecting how work effort was reconstructed, experimented with, and reflected in this new space. Alvesson (2003) recommends viewing interviews as contextual accounts, a methodological perspective compatible with Merleau-Ponty's bodily and situated theory of perception, presented earlier. The liminal context of these interviews can be traced with an air of straightforwardness and in the way the existential theme of good, personally rewarding, and meaningful work was opened up, not specifically enquired into by the interviewers.

As this analysis relies on only three cases, we do not aim to make far-reaching empirical generalizations. Our main aims are to examine the interrelations between permanent and momentary liminality in professional lives and how momentary liminality can disrupt permanent liminality.

Analysis

Case I: Eeva

Eeva was a private entrepreneur in electrical installation, working also as a freelance journalist and writer whenever her primary job allowed. Her duties included a variety of tasks, ranging from actual installation to administrative duties, such as billing and bookkeeping. Her home was also her office. Eeva was experienced in her work, with several decades of work history as an electrician. She had also been a keen writer all her life. However, she currently struggled to find time for writing, as the breaks her main work allowed were not ideal for writing efficiently. For a year, Eeva had been planning to write a storybook with an illustrator friend, but it had been difficult to find time for this among her everyday routines. The archipelago experiment was an opportunity for the two to finally concentrate on their book project together.

The duo chose not to make detailed plans beforehand regarding the work process in the archipelago. When in place, they became fascinated by the local environment and let this sensation influence their emergent work rhythm. This is how Eeva described the process of settling in the archipelago:

Of course, we said that we would conduct our writing project here. But we couldn't define more precise goals, because we did not know anything about the conditions and

the rhythm. (...) We have carried out real working days here, it has not been like mere relaxation, although this is such a lovely place, like, can you bear to sit still and write at all ... but it just somehow, let's say it became rhythmized by itself, and it is pretty exciting to notice, like how, it just happened.

Eeva described the formation of their daily rhythm as a 'puzzle'. The duo would wake up in the morning, each according to their natural rhythm, start work, and then go for a walk together. After lunch, they again did an excursion and then worked during the afternoon. After dinner, the pair went outdoors but could again return to work until they felt it was time to go to sleep. This was the pair's rhythm during the whole week. During the period, the duo managed to lay the groundwork for the book project, crafting its basic ideas and establishing their collaboration practices.

The archipelago environment was a source of inspiration and relaxation for Eeva. She became fascinated by things both large and small, such as landscapes, overall spaciousness, and cats in the neighborhood. The excursions in the environment enabled her to transit 'from one atmosphere to another' and forget work matters, which was an unusual experience to her:

Somehow it has been wonderful here. Of course it is due to being in a new environment, that once we have been working and then gone to walk, and then when we are walking, there are so many new and wondrous things, that you forget work (...) it has been like this, you go from one ambiance to another. Somehow you can focus on where you are and not where you were a moment ago ... that is what has happened here. Of course, it would probably be different, if you would go like every year, or many times a year, to the same place. So, it is probably also the novelty which has created this.

For Eeva, the archipelago working period created an immense contrast to her daily routines. She pointed to a tendency to become completely absorbed in the work routines of her everyday life. As she worked alone, she could spend her whole days from dawn to dusk conducting work matters. However, her attention would often be dispersed to other things such as the Internet. This made Eeva's work and life merge together, leading to something she described as 'tunnel work'. Working with a colleague in the archipelago had enabled her to break this trajectory:

Knowing myself, I can sit alone and work the whole time I am awake. First, I do the assembling, then I do the billing, then bookkeeping, and then the next thing is like going to bed. I cannot interrupt it at all. Here I don't have that, I don't have a car, I can't go on the Internet. Here some things are lacking which could be mind-distracting, and then there is another person with whom you can have a break every now and then, so it doesn't become that kind of 'tunnel work'.

The archipelago also affected Eeva on a deeply personal level, evoking old memories. Doing creative work in an idyllic rural environment meant for her revisiting a childhood dream:

Well, I will mostly remember pictures of the rocks and the sky, it is spacious here, and then of something like a completely new kind of life. Because this is a dream come true to me,



that I could write and live like this, it is something else. Although I cannot say I don't like my electrician work too, sometimes I like it really a lot, but this is my little girl's dream in a way, which lives here.

In the interview, Eeva anticipated that she would perhaps no longer be motivated to carry on her electrician work. A couple of weeks after the archipelagic period, we received a message from Eeva saying that it had initiated in her a reflection process about a career change. Now, she was considering quitting or significantly decreasing her electrician work to focus on something entirely different.

Case 2: Mia

Mia was a client project manager in a small firm producing process management tools for health care services. The firm had high scientific expertise and its personnel had academic affiliations. Mia herself was a PhD student with a dissertation topic related to her work. She was allowed to work on her PhD during part of her working hours. At her job, Mia oversaw customer relations, including training, advice, and support. She also participated in product development. The employer did not have office space, so Mia usually worked from home or in an office room she rented herself. Communication with colleagues took place via e-mail, and occasionally, the firm would have get-togethers at the CEO's home or other locations.

The firm had a flexible approach to working arrangements, and consequently, Mia hardly ever followed normal office hours. Need for Mia's input fluctuated depending on the firm's productivity, and she was prepared to work extra hours when needed and take corresponding time off later. This is how she described her normal, rather complicated working days:

My normal everyday working day means that I live [in a town in the larger Helsinki metropolitan area] and mostly telework from there (...) And I have personally rented a little office room in my neighborhood. I work there part time, and part time at home. It depends a little on the schedule of the rest of the family and other affairs. But mainly I start working in the morning with my computer (...) I may go to the gym in the middle of the day or run some personal affairs. But then in the evenings I work at home, and sometimes in the weekends too. I try to calm down at weekends, but it depends on what is going on. If we have a project with a deadline, then I work harder, and when it is quieter I can balance it with extra free time. (...) My weekly working hours vary quite a lot. It would be challenging to balance the hours during a week. But it is not necessary, I think this system is really good.

Mia's colleagues were busy professionals and meetings of the firm's personnel would typically be hectic, with colleagues coming and going at different times. In Mia's view, there were not enough opportunities for the co-creation and exchange of views needed for product development. The CEO and three employees participated as a group in the archipelago experiment to find a tranquil space for collaboration. Furthermore, Mia and the other employees had made a suggestion that Mia considered to be a kind of joke: to work during office hours in the archipelago. This would be completely contrary to the

firm's normal working culture. Still, in the archipelago, the group managed to follow this plan quite successfully by means of a spatial arrangement: leaving work to the office space and not opening computers in the living space.

As in Eeva's case, the daily rhythm evolved, in Mia's words, 'naturally' in the archipelago, with the group periodically checking what they needed to accomplish together and how they should proceed. Mia found that her working days were less fractured than they normally were:

Normally my days are quite fractured because there are plenty of client calls and e-mail. I have tried to put that aside a bit and focus here more on bigger tasks that require concentration, like product development and things like that. That I have been better able to do here.

In the tranquil atmosphere, Mia enjoyed being able to share more than just the most acute work matters with her colleagues. The combination of working, doing simple leisure activities, and enjoying the environment together with colleagues enforced the sense of community within the firm:

The matters that needed negotiation and reflection together, we have taken plenty of time for that here. It has been really useful regarding how we are going to proceed next. Absolutely, this being together with the firm has been a really good thing, to spend time together. It has also been nice to go to the sauna and cook together, to go out a little and things like that.

From Mia's perspective, the rare opportunity for a communal time and space enhanced the collective product development process. Often the colleagues would have to conduct such processes through e-mail where there was no flow of immediate communication and, consequently, the process was fractured and slowed down. In contrast, in the archipelago, Mia was able to see such development processes in a holistic manner. The natural environment supported the creation of a positive atmosphere:

Regarding work matters, I will mostly remember that this kind of time together and solving and planning certain things together is absolutely important and positive. (...) In this kind of get-together, we are able to do one thing properly (...) with all the experts at once, so that we can move on to the next stage, we can give feedback to each other and find perspectives together. Another thing I will remember is this nature, the scenery and the archipelago as an environment, these little villages (...) All this is really very nice, to be able to enjoy such wonderful nature alongside working.

Case 3: Lasse

Lasse was a consultant who combined private entrepreneurship with network-based work activity. Besides running his own company, he was a partner in two other companies that were operated by partners who, like Lasse, similarly ran their own enterprises. He also had affiliations to other networks. None of his companies had an office, so Lasse worked from home.



Lasse's job involved consulting to companies on network-based business practices. He also provided facilitation services and training for networks. However, he felt that his own network of colleagues needed to boost their business concept, and this was why he and his three partners had decided to participate in the archipelago experiment.

In the interview, Lasse was preoccupied with reflecting on his everyday work conditions. Many times, he expressed concern about the fractured nature of his work activities. He divided his work into 'real work', which was about client orders, and other not-so-real work that he associated with tasks such as marketing and stakeholder communication. He also took care of the financial administration of the three companies he was involved in. In addition to this functional dispersion of his work, Lasse traveled extensively for work meetings, spending time in his home office only occasionally. All this work effort and mobility required relatively long working hours compared to the Finnish average. Lasse felt he was involved in too many things at the expense of his family life, which prompted a question as to whether he did anything 'reasonable':

My working hours are really a question of definition. There is too little of such work that is based on client orders, real work, that is. (...) It is terribly scattered. (...) I really ask, just like my wife has done many times, do I do anything reasonable. It is quite difficult to answer that question as I spend my evenings managing the e-mail. When you act in networks, it involves so many of these little strange things. Like first thing this morning, there was this one offer which I passed on to my network. I hope something comes out of it but it is all terribly scattered (...) For a long time I had missed this kind of a long period [such as the archipelago] when you feel that you even get to proceed somewhere.

The fluctuating profitability of the firms had driven Lasse to widen his entrepreneurial activities to their current extent. Lasse reminisced warmly about an earlier stage in his career when he was in stable employment with a smaller but regular salary. Now, Lasse was approaching pension phase, which he envisioned providing more opportunities for family time. However, Lasse felt that he still needed to earn more before he could at least partially quit work.

Lasse's relationship to his work was somewhat contradictory. He described himself as work-oriented and work as his 'hobby', but his mind often turned to home chores while he was working. These contrasting attractions added to the experienced fracturedness of his work. Lasse's work orientation had become reactionary, in that he would simply adapt to situations as they emerged. This he described as characteristic of his whole lifestyle. Lasse approached family holidays with a similar 'hurry' as he did his work. He would not spend time planning trips beforehand but just obtain a map and try to find his way around. Sarcastically, Lasse hoped this would not show too much on the outside. This was also how he had come to the archipelago:

I have a lifestyle that I have been following also in my private life (...) I didn't have time to make any preparations, I come and see where I can put my bag and where to get electricity and what is around here, and then I kind of force myself to adapt to the situation. It is part of this overall fracturedness and moving around a lot that when you wake up in some hotel, you basically ask what is this country, what is the currency, and even what are we doing here.

What Lasse commended most about the archipelagic period was the feeling of accomplishment and moving ahead with work tasks. The group worked from morning until evening and managed to accomplish, in Lasse's words, twice the usual amount of work during the week, although they also found time for recreational activities. As Lasse saw himself as a work-oriented person, this was enjoyable to him:

I am pretty work-oriented, so it was clear to me that we would work like from morning till evening and from evening till morning, and take a walk every once in a while. (...) This is pretty staid activity if you look at it from outside, but extremely nice here inside when you get to be doing it.

For Lasse, the archipelagic period represented a 'clear' working period as opposed to his everyday work. He felt that taking time off from the hectic everyday routines was beneficial for his efficiency. Lasse had realized that one needs clear working periods, such as the archipelagic period, and then clear holiday periods, a statement echoing the themes that he was pondering in relation to his everyday working life:

The biggest thing here is replacing the fractured days with this kind of one long-term effort, and the fracturedness is connected to having a family and a dog and you have to do all kinds of stuff, just like [a colleague in the archipelago] said that when working at home he is tempted to go to the yard and chop wood. One really ought to have this kind of clear working periods, and then clear holiday periods.

In all three cases, normal order was inverted into unusual shapes (Turner 1974b, p. 73), as is typical of liminality, but this has to be seen in relation to the individual professional situations. Eeva found a creative collective in contrast to her everyday lonesome 'tunnel work'. For Mia, experimenting with conventional working hours was initially so strange as to be a joke. Shared space and time with colleagues was also extraordinary to Mia. Lasse experienced a 'clear' working period as a contrast to his fractured everyday life.

Liminality is also about creating meaning in a world gone chaotic (Thomassen 2014, p. 118). Eeva found a way to reinvigorate her true calling. The unanticipated opportunity to spend a working period in the archipelago let Eeva play with another kind of work and identity (Ibarra & Obodaru 2016), and this led to a reflection process about a career change. In Lasse's case, the archipelagic experience prompted serious, critical reflection on the sense of his ways of working. For Mia, spending time with her colleagues increased her sense of community and involvement in 'bigger tasks', such as collective product development. Typical to liminal space, the archipelagic work period was characterized by informal and creative social relations as well as existential reflection (Turner 1969, 1974a, 1974b).

The physical change of place played an important role in creating this liminal space. The spatial change brought along a bodily sensation of a different rhythm, both in the environment and in the work carried out there, which conditioned the emerging work practices (see Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945]). Eeva particularly allowed herself to be immersed in the sensations of the new environment and created an alternative, situated work practice. Although Mia's group had planned to deliberately change their everyday routines, in practice, they also situatedly developed a rhythm within these frames



according to what felt collectively meaningful at the time. The tranquil rhythm of the environment also enabled in-depth discussions and getting better acquainted personally with colleagues. For Lasse, a clear time frame for working toward a clear goal was a change of rhythm that created an experience where work again made sense to him.

Discussion: Taming permanent liminality by a withdrawal to a temporary liminal space?

This study found that a change in working place can become a liminal experience in the original sense of the concept (Thomassen 2014; van Gennep 1960 [1909]): a temporary, communal, and playful phase detached from many of the everyday toils and sources of frustration. Yet, liminality may also be threatening, just as ‘matter out of place’ can call into question the existential meaning of order and disorder; structure and chaos (Douglas 2003 [1966]). The unconventional work experiment made some of the everyday work arrangements of our informants seem fragmented and lacking meaning. We thus found forms of permanent liminality, as identified by Johnsen and Sørensen (2015), in the stories of the three informants we examined.

In Lasse’s case, the parallels to Johnsen and Sørensen’s (2015) case were most evident. Lasse’s network-based consultant work was functionally dispersed and fractured. He was involved in several companies and there were plenty of administrative tasks and work travel. As a consequence, Lasse was working long hours and struggled to find time for family life. Although Lasse generally characterized himself as work-oriented, when working in his home office he was often attracted by home chores. Like Johnsen and Sørensen’s (2015) consultant living and working in ‘a fast-moving train’, Lasse felt he was being pulled in too many directions and had begun to question the reasonability of it all.

Somewhat resembling Lasse’s case, Mia’s daily routines were also highly irregular – she had two work stations from where she teleworked, home and a rented office; two lines of work, as she was conducting her PhD thesis alongside main work; a lot of personal choice as to when to work, but the need to yield to the fluctuating needs of her family and employer, who could request her input in the evenings and on weekends. Being the contact point for customers added to the fractured nature of Mia’s routines. Although Mia appreciated the flexible working culture of her employer, during the archipelago period, she deliberately wished to work according to conventional office hours.

Eeva’s everyday routines presented similar but unique challenges. Having worked for decades mainly as an entrepreneur in electrical installation, she had waited for an opportunity to express more her creative side through writing. Similar to Lasse, when Eeva worked alone in her home office, she tended to become distracted by other chores as well as by the Internet. Eeva remained at least partially connected to work-related matters during all waking hours but struggled to find an opportunity to concentrate on her passion, writing. Eeva’s work and private life had started to blur into one and the same thing which she experienced as ‘tunnel work’, with the ‘tunnel’ perhaps referring to a space where vision is narrow and limited. This blurring of work and life resembles Lasse’s case, but as Lasse’s concerns mainly related to the amount of work and his multiple work roles, Eeva was also missing new vision for her career.

These three cases show a form of permanent liminality that has emerged, as work routines have become fractured and blurred with other areas of life. Lasse and Eeva suffered from this situation, while Mia, although viewing the archipelago period as an opportunity for a respite from the fragmentation, still seemed to be in control of and handling her situation. Like the consultant in Johnsen and Sørensen's (2015) case, Lasse's liminal situation was due to extensive amount of work but also to functional fragmentation. In Mia's case, we find both functional and temporal fragmentation. Eeva too was trying to combine two jobs, but she was also lacking work community that could provide support and framework for her activities. In the archipelago, Mia also realized her need for such a supportive work community.

These findings raise questions about the extent to which the increasingly common independent, multirole, and virtual ways of working can imperceptibly cause permanent liminality. Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]) states that even our most minor, everyday, practical activities have existential repercussions. On the basis of our findings, particularly in the cases of Lasse and Eeva, it seems that blurred everyday routines may lead to blurring of one's general life goals. Both Lasse and Eeva had drifted to a way of life that was habitual and familiar but contradictory to some of their wishes for life. On the other hand, while Mia's routines were also fluid and difficult to keep track of, they were still meaningful to her. Then again, Mia was studying, which implies that she was living a phase of life that would eventually change, while Eeva and Lasse already had long careers behind them. However, Mia's working habits were also supported by the flexible working culture of her employer. How Mia's habits continued to evolve and whether she would remain adaptive to their fragmentation is beyond the scope of this study. These findings suggest that the intensity of permanently liminal work situations depends not only on objective work conditions but also on how these conditions interweave with personal histories, career situations, and habits formed through time (see Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945]).

Our findings add to the literature of organizational and working life liminality in the following ways. First, applying Merleau-Ponty's (2012 [1945]) thinking, this study expands our understanding of the formation of temporary liminal workspaces: they may be formed when a change of environment and rhythm disrupts our body schema, our habitual way of reaching toward the world. The system of exchanges that has been formed between ourselves, work, and the environment ceases to follow the familiar course. This estrangement may create an alternative way of seeing and perceiving, one that is freer from norms and rules and thus allows bodily experience to come to the fore (Merleau-Ponty 1964a). The liminality of the archipelagic work experiment emerges as a phase of enlivened becoming of new working and living practices as they were solicited by awakened bodily sensations.

Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945], p. 309) states that if we hold back every cultural affirmation, 'stand in wonder before the world and cease to be complicit with it', we are able to reveal the motivations that carry us there, awaken our life and 'make it entirely explicit'. Existential reflection was stimulated in the archipelago by allowing activities spontaneously organize themselves as they were perceived (Merleau-Ponty 1964b). Particularly, Eeva and Lasse saw their work histories and futures as a continuum. Adapting practically to a novel environment may trigger surprising dimensions in personal memory, as we can see particularly in Eeva's case. The liminal experience of changing the work environment allows us to reflect on how we perceive our 'normal' work and lifestyle and illuminates their ambiguous characteristics.



Second, our findings show that dealing with complex and multiple work roles independently may be conducive to the development of fractured and liminal work habits, which in turn may blur the sense of one's work. As a consequence, permanent liminality can become a state of mind characterized by mental dispersion, visible particularly in Lasse's and Eeva's accounts. Yet, such a development is also conditioned by the long-term personal career trajectory and career prospects, not merely the objective work conditions. Third, work activity and sense-making in the temporary liminal space are influenced by the tensions of the individual professional and life situations. In Merleau-Ponty's thinking (2012 [1945]), we carry previous experiences sedimented in the body schema, as in a latent disposition, and these sedimentations condition our coming perceptions. In the three cases, fragmented ways of working formed this sedimented background, to which the calm and simple work arrangements of the archipelago produced a strange and revealing contrast. There is an interplay between liminal events and one's long-term liminal condition, as Winkler and Mahmood (2015) have suggested, and we have elaborated on this insight by showing how it can go two ways.

This paper considers useful the initiatives to extend the traditional concept of liminality to encompass permanent liminality (Johnsen & Sørensen 2015) and under-institutionalized liminality (Ibarra & Obodaru 2016). However, we simultaneously consider it important not to dismiss some of the concept's original characteristics, which were essential in defining liminality. In our understanding, the traditional idea of liminality was essentially about meaning-making. The purpose of liminal rites was to dig into the (collective) unconscious through ritual performance to reinvigorate fundamental values, which could be swept aside by everyday toil, worries, and conflicts (Szakolczai 2000; Turner 1974b). The liminal space was a spiritual space designed to foster a sense of community and individual belonging. This kind of liminal space may still be important for inducing creativity in contemporary work, not only in the instrumental sense of improving work results but also in a deeper, perhaps ethical sense (Bigo 2018), in that it may enable more transparent relations with others and with oneself.

Conclusion

This article has examined the notion of permanent liminality (Johnsen & Sørensen 2015) along with the more traditional idea of transitional, temporary liminality (van Gennep 1960 [1909]) in contemporary working life. We have discussed how certain contemporary ways of working, such as independent, multirole, and virtual work, may be conducive to the development of fractured work routines, leading to permanent liminality as a habitualized mindset. This may eventually blur the experienced sense of one's work activities. However, an alternative work environment may produce a temporary liminal space that can illuminate ambiguous aspects of everyday work practices and one's career.

We suggest that (transitional) liminal space could acquire a novel meaning in contemporary working life as a space of simplicity, in much the same vein as Bigo (2018, p. 127) suggested that silence could be viewed as a resource and creative power 'in a contemporary world of quasi-incessant noise'. Simplicity could be achieved by substituting mediated communication practices with direct social contact and collaboration

in a shared concrete environment (see also Schutz 1967, pp. 163–172). In tandem with van Genep (1960 [1909]), who realized the significance of the physical separation of liminal initiands, we want to highlight the bodily change in work conditions as a way to support the formation of this liminal space. Merleau-Ponty saw the sensing and moving bodily system, which typically remains marginal and silent within our overall existence, as the basis for all perception (Heinämaa 2015). By means of replacing everyday surroundings with a simplified and natural work environment in both social and physical sense, new perceptive registers may be activated and a transitional liminal experience triggered.

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4

Mobile work, space and processes of transition

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12 Mobile work, space and processes of transition

Hanne Vesala and Seppo Tuomivaara

Introduction

Work has traditionally been bound by space, which ideally meant having one stable work location for which other locations would present exceptions. This ideal has been supported by the industrial work logic that is characterised by stability, predictability, planning and bureaucratic organisation (Kellogg *et al.*, 2006; Kalleberg, 2009; Ellström, 2010). For some time now, this order has been challenged by developments such as network-based organisations, atypical employment relations and disappearing boundaries between work and leisure (Garsten, 1999; Bechky, 2006; Kellogg *et al.*, 2006; Koslowski *et al.*, 2017). Work is understood as becoming increasingly fluid and individualised (Garsten, 1999; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016).

Working life has also become increasingly mobile, particularly in knowledge-intensive types of work. At the most elementary physical level, employees are moving away from individual offices to work in open offices, ‘hot desks’ or co-working spaces (Brown and O’Hara, 2003; Felstead *et al.*, 2005; Hirst, 2011; Spinuzzi, 2012). At the more functional level, workers operate in different networks as salaried employees or individual subcontractors. An entrepreneurial attitude is strongly encouraged. Although official telework frequency has not shown as remarkable an increase as may have been expected (Bergum, 2007; Pyöriä, 2011), ‘unofficial’ telework outside the boundaries of the working day has become a common phenomenon (Moen *et al.*, 2013; Cavazotte *et al.*, 2014).

There is an ongoing search for an alternative concept of work space which underlines mobility and aesthetic experience. While workers are opting for more mobile and fluid work practices and strategies, their sense of presence and absence, both physically and mentally, could be altering (Hetherington, 2004; Urry, 2004). This could further change what they perceive as relevant for both their work and life in general.

This chapter examines different approaches to mobile work in current literature and, in particular, an emerging approach that views mobile work as a transitional process. In previous studies, mobile work has typically been approached as a practical accomplishment and even as a potential burden (Brown and O’Hara, 2003; Laurier and Philo, 2003; Mark and Su, 2010;

Humphry, 2014). This chapter investigates the lived experience of mobility beneath the practical labour of finding one's way between different environments.

The chapter takes a Heideggerian phenomenological and existential approach in asking whether mobile work can become a transitional and 'authentic' experience that could disclose the workers' habitual practices and their inscribed values, which become taken for granted in a stable work environment. Furthermore, the chapter reflects on the space characteristics of this transition and on what role such space could have in contemporary working life, which demands increasing individual deliberation and decision-making. This chapter approaches these questions by analysing interview data collected from 32 creative professionals who were working in small- or micro-sized companies and who spent a short period of time working in the rural archipelago environment of southwestern Finland and Åland. The study finds that natural and 'lived' spaces (Lefebvre, 1991) can form a reflective space in which the experience of time becomes authentic (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]). To achieve such a reflective state, however, these spaces should be sufficiently different from the everyday environment to introduce a rupture to everyday habits.

This chapter begins by discussing the definition of mobile work and proceeds to examine how mobility may affect the personal–spatial experience. Next, three prevalent perspectives on mobile work in current literature are examined, with the third perspective being further elaborated on, i.e. mobile work as a transitional process, using Heidegger's idea of authentic temporality to assist the analysis. The chapter then continues by taking a look at the notion of 'lived space', theorised by Lefebvre, before moving on to describe the method and context of the study's empirical case. This is followed by an empirical analysis of the embodied temporal and spatial experiences arising during the rural archipelagic work period. The chapter closes by discussing the findings in the context of the changing contemporary (working) life.

Definitions of 'mobile work'

The term 'mobile work' originally referred to work that involves the physical movement of workers between various work locations such as main offices, side offices and clients' places (Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010). This movement can also occur within a singular workplace, as in the case of 'hot-desking', for example, where a worker has no fixed work site within the working environment but can occupy any desk that is available at the workplace location (Hirst, 2011). Recent trends in facility planning indicate an expansion of such mobility, together with an increase in open- and multi-space offices – a move that seeks to increase 'co-creation' and the exchange of ideas among workers in addition to lowering office rental costs (Dale and Burrell, 2008; Hirst, 2011).

'Telework' is a term that indicates a specific kind of mobility – work that is conducted outside the main workplace. In telework research, a consensus on one common definition of telework has not been achieved. Disagreements exist on

whether it should be delimited to information and communications technology (ICT)-supported work, as the inclusion of the prefix 'tele' would indicate, or whether it should remain indifferent to the ICT involvement, as well as on whether it should cover both 'official' and 'unofficial' telework, and on whether telework refers solely to work at a fixed site or can include work that is conducted while one is, for instance, travelling (Sullivan, 2003; Haddon and Brynin, 2005). If understood in the broadest sense possible, telework could include a wide range of different work practices, many of them questioning the boundary between work and leisure. However, in telework research, empirical examples usually derive from home-based work (Hislop and Axtell, 2007). In fact, the two terms are commonly used interchangeably. Yet, due to the increase in mobile ICT tools and mobile working practices, the assumption that telework is work at a fixed site has grown increasingly outdated. In many ways, mobile work and telework overlap, with the former covering the latter, as some studies have indicated (Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012).

One more term that captures a particular dimension of mobile work practices is worth presenting here. Some researchers have opted to use the term 'flexible work', aiming to thus underline how working remotely can be just one among several tools used to adapt regular work to individual needs (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008, 2010; Peters *et al.*, 2014; Putnam *et al.*, 2014). These researchers have associated home-based work with other flexible work practices such as reduced working hours and job autonomy. This perspective does not concentrate extensively on the interrelation between new technology and work but rather on how the flexibility provided by working remotely can become a tool to support the workers' well-being, work-family balance and other individual needs.

These approaches show that mobile work is not only associated with ICT technology developments but also with the various processes related to the changing organisation of work. Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen (2010) suggest, following Kakihara and Sørensen (2004), that mobility in working life can be identified on at least three levels: (i) physical, (ii) virtual and (iii) operational mobility. While physical mobility refers to heightened spatial movement, virtually mobile workers can remain physically stationary but use diverse virtual work spaces. Operational mobility, on the other hand, refers to work that is based on diverse sources of income, such as freelancing and other independent work. It could be assumed that these dimensions further enforce one another, particularly in many of today's individualised, atypical careers (Kakihara and Sørensen, 2004).

These various ways of understanding work-related mobility indicate that this phenomenon already pervades much of contemporary working life – if not yet concretely, then at least as an emerging horizon of opportunity. For the present study, mobile work is understood broadly – as potentially involving intermittent periods of temporary stability for various reasons as well as a dynamic between movement and stability. It could even be constructive not to understand work-related mobility through external calculation of movement(s) but rather as a mental state that results from a situation in which the spatial arrangement of work has become fluid, contingent and open to change.

Mobility and the unbounded work space

Simultaneous with workplaces becoming physically unbounded, organisations have increasingly begun to appeal to workers as aesthetic consumers of different spatial atmospheres (Dale and Burrell, 2008). Consequently, this brings up the notion of distinctive mobile aesthetics, where the aesthetic sensitivity of workers is not expected to be cultivated in a personalised ‘home’ spot but through movement and serendipitous encounters in different spaces.

Mobility may involve virtual and imaginary travel, as much as the corporeal kind (Urry, 2004; Sheller and Urry, 2006), and current corporate design increasingly appeals to imaginary sensitivities (Dale and Burrell, 2008). The new, leisure-like and aestheticised organisational spaces invite workers to mentally travel away from toil and routine. Such multi-dimensional mobility emphasises individual, embodied experiences that are no longer systematically connected to any ‘precise “here and now” of work and organisation’ (de Vaujany *et al.*, 2018, p. 1).

Latour (1999, cited in Urry, 2004) wisely reminds us that no space has ever been local as such, because its existence depends on a network of more distant connections. However, the development of ICT technology has potentially transformed the experience of presence/‘real’ and absence/‘imaginary’ as technology has diversified and enriched the ways in which virtual and imaginary worlds are inhabited. As a result, virtual ties to distant others may emotionally feel even closer than those in the physical proximity (Urry, 2004). What people perceive as ‘present’ or ‘absent’ may not be the same in their physical and mental existences, respectively.

The dynamics of presence and absence can also involve a more general way of managing the relations with others in terms of memories, traditions, past and future (Hetherington, 2004). What we hold as present is something that is considered to be culturally and socially relevant, whereas that which is absent and disposed of becomes marginalised. As Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]) emphasises, human perception is directed by how we are bodily situated in the world, in other words, by that which is ‘present’ to us. However, that which is put aside or is disposed of has never vanished completely but has the potential to renew its relevance as, for example, in the case of ruins becoming cultural heritage or trash being transformed into antiques (Hetherington, 2004). It could be said that what was made absent in these cases has constantly been growing a kind of latent meaning in the margins.

In movement, one may come across something normally absent that may feel surprising to one’s habitualised perception, leading one to question the normalised social order (Douglas, 2003 [1966]). It is dubious whether mobility can diminish the distance between the margins and the centre completely, as has been suggested (e.g. see Cairncross, 1997). However, mobility may question and re-arrange this distance through a solicitation of encounters with new things which potentially merit the status of presence in one’s perception, thus challenging what is valued as relevant in one’s (working) life.

Three perspectives on mobile work

This chapter identifies three distinct approaches found in the scholarly studies of mobile work: (i) the practical perspective, (ii) the aesthetic and social perspective and (iii) an emerging transitional perspective, which is further elaborated on here. The most prevalent of the three perspectives has been the practical approach (Liegl, 2014). Studies on mobile work from this perspective have shed light on how work that does not have the support of a permanent physical environment becomes challenging and even burdensome to conduct (Brown and O'Hara, 2003; Laurier and Philo, 2003; Mark and Su, 2010; Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010; Humphry, 2014). The infrastructure is no longer invisible, as it would be in a habitual context, but becomes a practical concern for workers. When on the move, workers need to figure out which work activities they are able to perform in particular places with context-specific affordances (Brown and O'Hara, 2003). This perspective aims to describe the special dynamics between work, space and technology for those working on the move and how such work often escapes official work descriptions because things may not go as planned. The perspective further highlights how the flow of such work is always fragile and easily interrupted. However, mobile workers also develop special skills for adapting work activities to different and contingent environments (Felstead *et al.*, 2005; Büscher, 2014).

Recently, a radically different perspective on mobile work has emerged. Liegl (2014) has shown that urban creative freelancers consider mobility not to be a burden but a resource and a useful tool for arranging their work. The creative freelancers he studied would have felt stuck in one work environment and be restlessly looking for new environments that would enable beautiful experiences, which, in turn, would inspire their work. What was found to be essential in this search for experiences is the variety of potential work spaces – the novelty of space, in particular, was the factor that enabled a strong experience. These workers also remarked that different spaces supported different types of work, and thus they used mobility to arrange their work tasks. From this perspective, work-related mobility does not appear as a mere necessity any longer but as a lifestyle choice (Czarniawska, 2014; Pigg, 2014; Henriksen and Tjora, 2018).

However, mobility may also be disruptive to existing cultural ideals about the organisation of work. Work has commonly been perceived as an everyday thing and industrial work logic has been associated with stability, hierarchy, rational planning and impersonality (Kellogg *et al.*, 2006; Ellström, 2010). The successful accomplishment of work has depended on it being routinised. In the industrial work logic, individual, exceptional needs of workers would threaten the planned order of things.

The 'officiality' and impersonality of the workplace are signs of what type of behaviour is expected there (e.g. see Baldry, 1999). D'Adderio (2011) remarks that we read these signs from all kinds of artefacts in the workplace, which may not only be physical, such as furniture, office design and equipment, but also cognitive, including formal rules, regulations, software, codes of conduct and

rules of thumb. Artefacts provide us with a certain way of looking at things and support a certain kind of habitual activity.

This habitual world becomes visible when it is interrupted (Large, 2008, p. 44) and it is this possibility that mobility entails. According to Heidegger (1962 [1927]), the familiarity with which we relate to our everyday environment hinders our ability to observe it from an outside point of view, unless the ordinary flow of events becomes broken. On the other hand, the ability to feel 'at home' is an ontological condition necessary for experiencing meaningfulness and significance in everyday activities. The way in which the everyday environment matters to us affects how we relate to the space around us, making it a necessary condition for any sensible activity (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]; Large, 2008). However, since we do not pay much conscious attention to the external characteristics of this space, being absorbed with whatever we are concerned about, we might lose sight of any other possibilities of existence that could feel authentically more as our own (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]). Paradoxically, to become aware of such possibilities may require entering a 'void', emptying one's life of everyday concerns (Ibid.).

Working outside the office signifies traversing through spaces that may not be specifically assigned to work, at least not with the specific rules and norms that the 'official' workplace involves. Working in a new environment has the potential to become a lived experience (Lefebvre, 1991) that enables the use of individual capabilities and experiences on a range that is wider than the normal 'official' environment allows. Simultaneously, those norms and rules that have become taken for granted in the everyday environment may be uncovered.

If mobile work initiates such a transitional process, it may be characterised as taking place in a liminal space, which is an ambiguous space in-between any known social positions and roles (van Gennep, 1960 [1909]; Turner, 1974). In organisation studies, liminality has often been viewed as a sort of anomaly in the organisational structure, although some studies have shown that liminality can also be a fluid, situational and momentary – one might say a phenomenological – achievement, enabling situated creativity and reflection (Sturdy *et al.*, 2006; Iedema *et al.*, 2010; Shortt, 2015). Daskalaki *et al.* (2016) have recognised liminal characteristics in work-related mobility. They found that translocal patterns of work challenged the dichotomies between place and non-place, oneself and others, as well as mobility and fixity, thus questioning the stability of identity and spurring situational identity reflection (Ibid.).

Heidegger (1962 [1927]) reminds that in one's everyday experience of time and place one does not simply calculate the moments or changes of place as they follow one another. Phenomenologically understood, each significant assignment of time and place represents a particular, meaningful 'then' and 'there', embedded in the general way we inhabit our familiar world. However, sometimes we experience a need for re-clarification of these meanings. According to Heidegger, there is a difference between drifting along in general habits and practices following clock time that is determined by the 'Others' and a more authentic sense of time – the 'moment of vision' (*Augenblick*) – which occurs

when one becomes anxious about losing oneself in the generality of the public 'Others'. In a moment of vision, one recognises that things could be done otherwise and has the potential to make an individual 'decision' (*Entschluss*) about one's own life. This is when the succession of barely distinguishable events and occurrences is transformed into a 'situation' (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]; Large, 2008). Mobility at work, as a practical challenge, makes the time and place of work increasingly visible. Can it transform work from an everyday routine to a 'situation' and, if so, what could this mean?

Working in a 'lived space'

Before presenting the empirical case, the idea of a lived space versus an abstract space is discussed. According to Lefebvre's (1991) spatial theory, dominant places within the sphere of production and consumption, such as bureaucratic offices, are abstract and formal by their physical and symbolic design. These spaces seek to subsume any distinctions, the body and the sensual. However, even such spaces do not remain mere abstractions when their users appropriate them and reconstruct them in their everyday lived encounters. Thus, the contradiction between the abstract and the lived remains a constant (Lefebvre, 1991; Wilson, 2013).

Lefebvre (1991) associates lived spaces with the spheres of home, natural and historical spaces. These are all spaces that are distant from production and consumption as well as from abstract bureaucratic control; they are spaces in which people can experience social connectedness with others and with their cultural roots. Lived spaces are zones 'where people could spread out in comfort and enjoy those essential luxuries, time and space, to the full' (Ibid., p. 317). Working at home is an option that many prefer precisely because one can feel less external control there and can arrange one's own work more independently (Tremblay, 2003; Kelliher and Anderson, 2008). Yet, with the increasing power of rational, homogenised planning that is characteristic of abstract spaces and also prevalent in many urban residential areas, the authenticity with which people exhibit their social relations in lived spaces is, itself, at risk (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 314; Stanek, 2008).

We find lived spaces affective because they can reflect our inner states and memories (Bachelard, 1994 [1958]). These kinds of spaces are experienced as protective of one's inner world and enable it to grow. We often search for such comforting spaces in various forms of dwellings but research has shown that a pleasant natural environment can also provide comfort in the form of, for instance, stress recovery (Ulrich *et al.*, 1991), increased ability to focus attention (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), unburdening the mind from troubling issues (Korpela *et al.*, 2001; Korpela and Ylén, 2007) and learning as well as personal self-expression and community formation (Hale *et al.*, 2011). The natural environment has been shown to be a therapeutic environment for patients (Ulrich, 1984) and older people (Milligan *et al.*, 2004). Could it also be therapeutic for workers, and what kind of therapy would they need? This chapter now

turns towards an examination of these questions through an analysis of the experiences of creative professionals during a working period in a Finnish rural archipelago environment.

The empirical context and the method

The empirical analysis of this chapter uses interview data collected in 2010–2011 from 32 creative professionals during a one-week experiment of flexible work in the south-western Finnish rural archipelago. The experiments were part of a study project that aimed to examine the benefits and challenges of working periodically in a rural environment and to learn about the experiences of the workers in order to develop rural service infrastructure for their specific needs. The archipelago area is geographically relatively isolated and has distinct characteristics both naturally and culturally. Its arid nature is, in parts, protected by UNESCO. The archipelago is a traditional residential area of the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland and a currently popular tourist destination. It is featured in many popular songs, novels and other cultural products in which the ‘archipelago lifestyle’ is typically depicted with an air of mysticism and romanticism as corresponding to a place where humans can experience the forces of nature. Being situated between the land and the sea, the archipelago could be seen as having liminal characteristics (Preston-Whyte, 2004).

The participating flexible workers were offered free working and lodging facilities by six municipalities during the work period. Voluntary participants, either in groups or as lone individuals, were recruited using advertisements. The participants spent the period in small groups of colleagues (2–4 persons) or alone (two cases). As participation was voluntary, it could be terminated at any moment if the participants thus chose. The participants themselves decided on the activities that they wished to carry out in the location, while the research project merely offered the use of facilities. They worked in small- or micro-level enterprises (less than 50 employees) and represented different creative professions, including journalism, design, research, mentoring and coaching, advertising, consulting and engineering. There were 17 female and 15 male participants, and all working-age groups were represented.

The facilities that the participants used bore distinct local characteristics, depending on the resources and personnel that were available in their municipality area to create the conditions necessary for this work experiment. Modern office hotels were used, along with traditional archipelago villas and homesteads that could serve as workspaces. In a rural community, the use of these workspaces was informal and the service providers were willing to accommodate any additional needs of the participating workers. The participants brought the mobile tools they needed for their work themselves.

The group participants were interviewed in groups at the end of the work period, while the lone participants were interviewed individually. Some of the interviews were carried out face-to-face and some by phone due to geographical distances. A thematic group interview was chosen as a method to encourage

discussion and sense-making. In addition to their experiences during the experiment, the interviews dealt with the backgrounds of the participants, their work situations and reasons for participating in the experiment. After initial open coding, the analysis of the interviews was guided by Heidegger's (1962 [1927]) idea of authentic time and with an emphasis on a contextual and practical understanding of the 'body-in-place' (Jensen, 2016, p. 589).

Working time as authentic or forced upon

The interviews showed a distinctive contrast in the participants' use and experience of time during their stay in the archipelago in comparison to their everyday environment. The everyday environment was depicted as a hectic and potentially chaotic place in which concentration was often interrupted by external elements, such as demands from clients and colleagues, office noise, a tightly packed schedule, or, if working at home, by family needs. Furthermore, the participants noticed that interruptions were not only of external origin but that this restlessness had also in many cases become internalised – they had themselves developed a tendency to worry about other things while conducting their work tasks and to restlessly bounce between different work tasks. Such habits could lead to personal confusion about the order of work tasks, as this example depicts:

I have felt this strange burden and worry that I am always doing the wrong thing, like when I am doing one thing, I realise that no, actually I should be marketing this, and when will I try to create new ideas as now I am carrying out this toil?

(Male, ICT consultant)

Sometimes this lack of concentration and focus had made the workers feel exceedingly stressed and apathetic and unmotivated at other times. Viewed from the archipelago context, the everyday work environment emerged as a place in which the rhythm of work was not for the workers to decide. These descriptions resemble the Heideggerian notion of inauthentic temporality, which is dictated by the fluctuating interests of the 'Others' and which never delves deeply into any particular issue (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]).

This somewhat sombre picture of the everyday work environment needs to be contextualised through the contrasting experience of the archipelago location. In the calm rural environment, some participants remarked how time seemed to go by faster and, sometimes, the passing of time was even forgotten. This experience was influenced not only by the rhythm of life in the rural environment itself but also by the way this dislocation transformed the connections to others, both near and distant. The participants had emptied their calendars of tasks that required contact with the 'outside world' as much as possible, partly for practical reasons and partly because they were orientated for the archipelagic work week to become something extraordinary:

I have had to empty my calendar from all the small stuff because of this [period]. So there has not been pressure from other work tasks; I have been able to concentrate, in peace, for once, on one thing at a time.

(Female, director and researcher)

Different degrees of the sense of isolation were experienced during the archipelagic period. Some participants decided to turn off their phones, others had instructed their colleagues not to try to reach them unless absolutely necessary, securing an uninterrupted work space for themselves in the archipelago. Other participants had given no such instructions but remarked, with satisfaction, about how the change in location had filtered away the less necessary interruptions. This is how one participant reflected on the changed pattern of communication with colleagues:

It would be kind of weird, too, if one withdraws, teleworks, to conduct some long-span work task, and this is precisely the reason for wanting a peaceful environment, then wouldn't it be odd if the phone would ring all the time? That wouldn't be ... well, it would, but really, some happy medium. Like you don't have to apologise for calling.

(Female, journalist)

Thus, in the archipelago there were fewer external interruptions and demands on time. During the period, the participants favoured deciding flexibly and on an ad hoc basis about their use of time, negotiating within the archipelago work group when needed. This increased personal control of time affected their work orientation. The participants noticed that, unlike in their everyday environment in which work tended to be 'always on' at least mentally, in the archipelago they were better able to put work matters aside when they wanted and move on to other activities. Consider this example provided by a participant:

At the time you dip into the sea after the working day, you really ... [laughter], your mind gets refreshed considerably there. ... You forget work and the free time gets started in a pretty nice way.

(Female, marketing manager)

When the use of time could be locally decided upon, the participants adopted a playful and experimentative attitude towards their working arrangements (see also Vesala and Tuomivaara, 2018). They enjoyed the experience of having novel scenery viewable from the window and allowed themselves to have spontaneous breaks when their attention was attracted by the natural environment. Consequently, the participants became sensitised to their internal, bodily and mental, states and rhythms. In the words of a participant:

You are in the middle of a different landscape, different rhythm; here the pulse is much slower than in the metropolitan area. Here you have nature and I am a visual person, I am very much affected by what I see ...

(Female, coach and consultant)

The calm, natural environment signified entering the realm of a more personal, inward-oriented rhythm, which could serve as a creative and exciting opening:

Here you can break from routines and maybe discover new things, as you don't do things in the same way in the same place, but you go somewhere else. Then your inner clock starts ticking in a different way maybe. It is about giving yourself time and releasing your creativity.

(Male, market researcher)

The participants were surprised by how they could conduct one task from beginning to end without any breaks, something that people tend to take as obvious in everyday life but which actually constituted a special experience for many of these workers, as it does for so many other knowledge professionals in the present day and age. The participants felt that they recovered the ability to mindfully concentrate on what they were carrying out in each moment.

Through this experience of the contrasts between the normal and the new environment, the participants began to reflect on how some elements of the everyday environment – schedules, office and city noise, phone calls and e-mails – thwarted taking hold of time. The normal environment encouraged staying busy, although the substance and meaning of this hastiness were sometimes lacking. Through such reflections, the participants became aware of these habitualised connections and began to envision different ways in which to construct their daily routines. For example, one participant found that the everyday environment resembled a world where 'everyone is walking at the same pace' but at the end of the week she had an emerging intuition of how to 'make use of it in a different way'.

The experiment also prompted the participants to reflect on their physical and social needs and on how their general work and lifestyles affected their well-being. These realisations could be connected to particular moments and places:

I believe that here you realise, when you are sitting on a rock and taking a drag from a cigarette and then that cigarette gets thrown away halfway once you realise again that maybe you really shouldn't be smoking like that. For me, it is probably going to be like that, that I will realise many things here.

(Male, manager in an advertising agency)

Novel workmates could also prompt insights and foster reflection. In many cases, the participants used the work period as an opportunity to spend time together with their colleagues from different offices or networks. The participants who worked in office hotels also met with local workers, who might represent very different occupations and working practices in comparison to their own. Such encounters could also be mind-opening as the following interview excerpt reveals:

I have gained various things here, not necessarily all those that I anticipated but more like what these different people have given to me.

(Female, coach and mental trainer)

The results suggest that the experience of time during the archipelago work period had characteristics of Heideggerian authentic temporality. First, the period, as a whole, had both importance and meaning for the participating individuals because they decided, of their own free will and as a result of their own interest, to break away from their everyday routines in order to participate in the experiment. By abandoning everyday routines, they chose to be open to a new environment and anything it might bring. During the archipelago period, the work rhythm was not experienced by the participants as if it was forced upon them or as restless and out of control – as it would be in the case of inauthentic temporality. Thus, time was allowed to orient inwards. In the archipelago environment, the participants could ‘own’ the time and apply situated creativity and resoluteness in their use of it. Second, time in the archipelago was personal and reflective. As a consequence of reviewing their own working and living habits in light of the new situation, the workers described having reflected about their future, which was something that their everyday hectic life rhythm did not support so well. This added a new, deeper dimension to working, as described by a participant:

Here, work involves much more reflection and a kind of planning of things but, on the other hand, there is action too. It surely is much fuller [than in the everyday environment].

(Female, toy designer)

Heideggerian future-oriented authentic temporality reaches towards the future through reviewing past experiences. Authentic temporality, as opposed to scientific clock time, is not preoccupied by the present moment. Rather, it is always oriented forward, to the future, simultaneously recognising its past and the potentialities that lie in the past and can be actualised in the future. In the authentic experience of time, the past, present and future become connected in their continuity. This convergence also resembles how time has been experienced in liminal spaces as being ‘beyond or outside the time which measures secular processes and routines’ (Turner, 1974, p. 57).

For some participants, past memories began to surface in a particularly vivid way and could also become a source of inspiration to them. For example, one participant described having experienced exceptional creativity in his work during the time in the archipelago, spurred by a re-emergence of old sources of inspiration from decades back:

The kinds of drawings that I did in the beginning of the Nineties I have not done ever since, but during this week I have experienced a new renaissance. More than a dozen pieces of this kind of work and sketches have come into being during this past week.

(Male, designer in catering services)

Sometimes, an environmental sensation has the potential to evoke emotional memories from the past, much like Proust depicts in his novel *In Search of Lost*

Time – where simply tasting a Madeleine cake brings the childhood world back to life once more for a character (Fuchs, 2018, p. 55). The change of work location can also engender imaginary travel back in time through personal history.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore whether mobile work could be a transitional experience and what kind of experience it would signify. The empirical study outlined above showed that mobility can, indeed, produce a ‘situation’ – a moment that stands out from the more insignificant everyday occurrences. According to Heidegger (1962 [1927], p. 463), as one loses oneself to the object of concern in everyday existence, one ‘loses’ one’s time as well. In contrast, authentic existence ‘always has time’ because it has the character of a moment of vision: ‘held in that future which is in the process of having-been’ (Ibid.). During the archipelago experiment, the participants had time, in this sense, both for calm, concentrated work activity and for personal reflection about the past and the future. Yet, this experience was distinctively embodied because it was accompanied by sensitively ‘tuning in’ with the environment and following its attractions.

For mobile work to become a transformative experience, we suggest that it needs to be carried out in an environment that is distant from everyday mundane chores. An environment in which a person can feel ‘at home’ is essential for this experience. However, the environment also needs to be different in order to induce a rupture in everyday practices and shed light on their habitual structures. Absence from the everyday environment could enable the emotions that remain latent in the busy and largely reactive everyday life to surface and thus become ‘present’ to one’s perception (e.g. see Hetherington, 2004). A lived space that is natural or historical (Lefebvre, 1991) can be assumed to support the experience of authenticity because such a place enables the feeling of connectedness to others and to one’s personal thoughts. It has the potential to become a therapeutic environment (Hale *et al.*, 2011) that, in the context of current working life, could signify a space in which one could pull oneself ‘together from the dispersion and disconnectedness of the very things that have “come to pass”’ (Heidegger, 1962 [1927], pp. 441–442), i.e. the busy everyday dealings. The character of work conducted in such a space could provide a contrasting experience to that of work in the everyday environment, which may suddenly manifest in a very different and not altogether pleasant light. The reflection that authentic temporality encourages may not emerge without negative feelings. It may resemble the undefined liminal space ‘in-between’, which does not offer any known social roles but supports reflection and experimentation instead, processes that are both creative and potentially threatening (Van Genneep, 1960 [1909]; Turner, 1974; Thomassen, 2014).

Contemporary work is becoming increasingly mobile, which signifies that workers are expected to act in an increasingly self-directed, independent and entrepreneurial manner (Kalleberg, 2009). Furthermore, lifetime careers in a

single organisation are becoming increasingly rare. The increased individual responsibility for working practices and one's career may be experienced not simply as empowering but also as threatening at times. Asking how individuals are able to utilise their personal life histories and experiences in the fullest possible manner when making important decisions, whether these decisions are about particular work problems or choices affecting their entire career, becomes increasingly important. Mobility may, accidentally or in anticipation, provide the resources for this individual deliberation and creativity. It may even engender therapeutic work environments that can serve as a useful resource for those workers who are lost and confused in the everyday struggle of their busy schedules and do not have the time to evaluate the direction of their career or their life. Further research on working in 'lived' and therapeutic spaces is needed, as well as research on how these spaces can support the execution of work tasks, community formation and the search for personal resources when navigating an increasingly complex working life.

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