Exploring essential features of hybrid work in a German corporate and implications for the wider corporate context

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"Endurance pays off sooner or later. Usually later."

Wilhelm Busch

Declaration

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Table of contents

Abstract

The shift towards hybrid work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has triggered significant organisational change. However, there remains limited understanding of what constitutes effective work from home within hybrid patterns and which features influence it. This doctoral study addresses these gaps by exploring how general managers, HR professionals, and employees perceive the essential features of effective hybrid work, and how their perspectives align or diverge. The aim is to develop a practical framework for structuring hybrid work models that balance organisational requirements with employee needs.

A qualitative single case study was conducted within a German bank where hybrid working, initially introduced during the pandemic, was later deliberately maintained. The study is grounded in social constructionism, recognising that hybrid work is interpreted differently by various organisational actors. Eighteen participants from management, HR, and employee groups were selected through purposeful sampling and interviewed using semi-structured methods. Reflexive thematic analysis enabled a detailed, iterative exploration of key themes.

A core contribution is the development of *structured autonomy*, a conceptual framework that captures the balance between organisational imperatives and individual flexibility. The study identifies both commonalities and differences in how the three target groups understand effective hybrid work, highlighting areas of alignment as well as tensions and trade-offs. While all groups broadly support hybrid work for its flexibility, autonomy, and efficiency, challenges remain—particularly around expectations for office presence, collaboration, and visibility.

The study offers practical implications for organisations designing hybrid work models. By integrating the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups, it provides evidence-based recommendations for frameworks that support both strategic alignment and employee expectations. HR professionals are positioned as cross-functional enablers in this process.

Ultimately, the study enriches academic and practical discourse by illustrating the complexity of hybrid work and the need for context-specific, strategically aligned implementation.

Keywords: hybrid work, structured autonomy, case study, organisational effectiveness, HRM strategy, social constructionism, reflexive thematic analysis, German corporates

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At the beginning of my DBA journey, I came across a magazine article that claimed a doctorate is more like running a marathon than completing a sprint. As such, you should pace yourself well and ideally develop a strategy and stamina, rather than running off half-cocked and untrained. Now I look back on this beginning and can hardly believe that the end of the marathon has come. And what can I say? It was a damn hard, but quite exciting, instructive and in large parts also joyful run. I have never regretted it for a moment and, looking back, would do it all over again.

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Abbreviations

ArbStättV	Arbeitsstättenverordnung
BDSG	Bundesdatenschutzgesetz
BetrVG	Betriebsverfassungsgesetz
CAQDAS	Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GDPR	General data protection regulations
HR	Human resources
HRM	Human resource management
IAB	Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung
IT	Information technology
JD-R	Job-Demands-Resources
LAG	Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft
OP	Organisational performance
RBV	Resource-based view
RTA	Reflexive thematic analysis
SLAs	Service Level Agreements

List of tables

List of figures

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and context

The world of work has changed radically during the COVID-19 pandemic years: Many companies in Germany switched from completely office-based, where possible in terms of activity and competence, to utterly digital due to the virus and partially mandatory isolation (Alipour et al., 2020). This "big bang", often referred to in the literature in this context, resulted in the fastest possible introduction of technology and tech-driven working methods (Boch, 2021; Schaffelhofer, 2022). But it is not only on the technological side that the pandemic is often described as a catalyst for change and transformation.

In terms of an individual's day-to-day working life, for many, the move to work within their own homes initially only meant a shift in their place of work (Becker et al., 2022). According to most studies on working from home during the pandemic, a shift or flexibilisation of working hours has also developed, which many employees no longer want to do without (Boch, 2021; Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022). The elimination of commuting time or shifting asynchronous activities to a time when productivity is at its highest is often cited as a positive side effect (Gneuss, 2021; Kreuzer et al., 2022). Ultimately, the work-life balance expectations have evolved, showing that flexibility means something different for everybody.

Furthermore, in Germany, working from home has been regulated in the so-called "home office offer obligation", which according to § 28b paras. 4 IfSG, from 24 November 2021 to 19 March 2022, established the legal obligation of employers to send white-collar employees to the home office if there are no compelling operational reasons to the contrary (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2021). For the first 1.5 years of the pandemic, both employees and employers were allowed to experience how working outside the familiar office environment works (Kreuzer et al., 2022). Now that the pandemic is no longer acute and the home office regulations in Germany have been abolished since 20 March 2022, the following change was and, in some organisations, still is imminent (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2021): A fusion of different perspectives and both forms of work (office and home office), which resulted in a concept called "hybrid work".

The concept of hybrid work is rooted in a variety of flexible work arrangements, each offering distinct approaches to how, when, and where work is performed. Over the years, various terms and concepts have become established, some of which differ in substance (Bath and Winkler, 2023). In most cases, the terms used in German studies are hybrid work, telework, mobile work, or flexwork. However, the terminology is not consistent, and there is currently no generally valid definition (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Harker Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). Therefore, in the following chapter a definition of terms is developed and a common understanding of the underlying models for the regulation of working

time and place is created. Given company practice and various press releases from (large) corporations based in Germany, many organisations have reacted to the demands of the new working world by adopting company agreements for a new, flexible working time model. This working model regulates location-independent work (TRATON SE, 2022; Wernecke, 2021).

Moreover, the demands on future work design often come from two directions. On the one hand, many organisations want to continue using purely digital work's advantages from the "pandemic world", such as flexibility, self-determination and increased productivity (Sekhar and Patwardhan, 2023). On the other hand, the office-based work also provides advantages not to be despised, such as personal contact and improved communication as well as collaboration on site (Boch, 2021; Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022; Schaffelhofer, 2022). How should these requirements be combined? There is a consensus in the literature that it is not enough to implement hybrid work by combining remote work and on-site in isolation from each other (Kreuzer et al., 2022; Schaffelhofer, 2022). Kreuzer et al. (2022) argue that various elements, such as requirements for collaboration, efficient working, employee satisfaction, adequate information technology (IT) equipment, culture preservation, etc., must be interlinked to create a new, sustainable hybrid work.

The challenges of establishing effective hybrid working across the entire organisation coupled with requirements of designing a sustainable working (time) model, are also particularly relevant in the case study organisation. This is one of Germany's top 20 banks. With over 5,000 employees, 26 sales locations, and 5.4 million customers, the study focuses on its Berlin-based holding company, which oversees core banking operations. This entity, with approximately 2,500 employees, has undergone rapid structural and cultural transformation, significantly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previously, the bank operated almost exclusively in a face-to-face culture, with remote work allowed only under strict teleworking agreements. However, the pandemic forced an immediate shift to remote work, prompting a reassessment of collaboration models, meetings, and processes originally designed for in-office work. While the benefits of remote work became evident, the organisation now faces key questions: How can can hybrid working be organised as effectively and sustainably as possible? What are the essential features influencing effective hybrid work in our organisation? Should there be overarching rules, fixed office days, or full autonomy in choosing work location and hours?

In this study (also referred to as 'this research'), the researcher adopts the role of an insider researcher due to her professional position in HR within the case study organisation. This insider status enables a nuanced understanding of organisational dynamics, cultural norms, and context-specific practices, thereby fostering credibility and trust with participants (Maxwell and Beattie, 2004). While the research problem holds both theoretical and practical significance, the researcher's interest is further shaped by its direct relevance to her HR practice. Positionality in this study is particularly pertinent in

the context of hybrid working, where the researcher's dual role as both an employee and a researcher necessitates a reflexive approach to mitigate potential biases while leveraging her familiarity with organisational structures, informal interactions, and evolving workplace norms. The role of the researcher and reflexivity will be described in more detail in chapter 3.

In addition to the design requirements, there are also labour law requirements, especially in the highly regulated German labour law. The application of a hybrid working model in combination with local labour law in the German context frames this study. German labour law is highly regulated and offers little leeway compared to other countries. Therefore, this research focuses on the German context, i.e. hybrid work for companies that have their local place of work in Germany and consequently apply German labour law. These begin formally with the definition of hybrid or mobile working and end legally with employment contract regulations or collective agreements (Jung and Kraus, 2021). Several ambiguities are noticeable at the beginning of exploring the hybrid working field. These ambiguities relate, on the one hand, to the underlying definition of hybrid working, local labour law, and the design of the respective company. On the other hand, different studies have found different motivations and partly contradictory statements about work performance (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to gain a firm understanding of the terminology and the underlying phenomenon and to strictly adhere to this definition.

The research topic will be approached from the perspective of human resource management (HRM). Furthermore, this work is based on the understanding of Wright and Mcmahan (1992) that strategic HRM is the coordination and congruence of various HRM practices and functions as a management strategy for the Human Resources (HR) sector. HR implements these measures in day-to-day operations and is understood as a cross-sectional function in this study. In recent publications, there seems to be agreement that, despite all the flexibility, it can be helpful both on the part of the employer and on the part of the employees to establish some framework conditions in which these freedoms of the new working model can be realised (Jung and Kraus, 2021; Wernecke, 2021). Suppose one considers the understanding of HR work on an equal footing with the executive board by representing the interests of employers, which has been consolidated both in the literature and the work context. In that case, HR is a significant driver in transformation processes, such as introducing new working models (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004).

Moreover, the pandemic not only accelerated the adoption of hybrid work but also triggered a fundamental shift in HRM towards more employee-centred approaches (Bal and Bulgur, 2023). This transformation underscores a growing recognition that organisations must prioritise employee needs, fostering an environment that supports individual autonomy, work-life balance, and psychological well-being. The traditional employer-driven approach has given way to more inclusive and

participatory HRM strategies that empower employees through greater flexibility, personalised career development opportunities, and a stronger emphasis on mental and physical health. Ultimately, this shift reflects an urgent need to align workplace structures with evolving workforce expectations, reinforcing the role of employee-centric policies in driving organisational resilience and long-term success (Edgar and Geare, 2014).

Current scholarship on hybrid work underscores its potential to reshape organisational dynamics by offering flexibility and fostering employee autonomy (Howe et al., 2021). However, research also highlights challenges, including maintaining cohesion, addressing disparities in access to resources, and managing diverse employee experiences (Hodges, 2024). These challenges have spurred interest in understanding the specific features of hybrid work that influence organisational performance (OP), such as communication, collaboration, and the balance between autonomy and accountability. While much attention has been given to measuring the productivity outcomes of hybrid work (Katou et al., 2022), there remains a gap in understanding the qualitative aspects that underpin its success and challenges (Becker et al., 2022; Boeckler Stiftung, 2021). This doctoral thesis investigates the qualitative dimensions of hybrid work by exploring how individuals perceive performance and identify the essential features that underpin effective hybrid work practices. Rather than attempting to quantitatively measure performance or develop a performance assessment model, the study focuses on uncovering the lived experiences and insights of those engaged in hybrid work settings. By examining what employees consider effective and understanding the broader impact of hybrid work arrangements, this research offers a nuanced perspective on the evolving nature of work in Germany.

Questions about influencing features while working from home in hybrid patterns and individual performance in hybrid work environments are highly relevant in (HR) practice and are even more relevant nowadays as this working model is predicted to be dominant in the new working world (Vyas, 2022). Interestingly those focus topics within the research field of "hybrid work" were approached and answered differently in research. Most of the research projects in the recent past seem to have focused on individual aspects of different target groups. There still seems to be little knowledge about the outcomes for the organisation, and therefore, future research still requires more insights into the effects of extensive hybrid work adaption on an organisational level (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Even though many studies emphasised the importance of overall OP, only a few publications addressed this topic in their research. Interestingly, most publications that purport to address the organisational level were still purely based on individual perceptions of employees (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Harker Martin and MacDonnell, 2012; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Harker and MacDonnell (2012) also point out that in some studies, the perspectives of managers and employees have been placed in the same category, which, according to the authors, prevents the "true picture" of the organisational perspective. They argue for the inclusion and,

simultaneously, the isolated consideration of managers in the form of a qualitative study. Andrei and Militaru (2022) add to this by pointing out that only a few studies conclude an overarching OP. The authors emphasise that future research should tie in here to look at the effects of hybrid work from the organisation's perspective.

Therefore, the following study will follow an integrative approach (see Figure 1) that considers both the top-down perspective of general management and the bottom-up needs of employees.

 HR professionals play a key role in balancing organisational objectives with employee needs, making them essential for understanding the implementation of hybrid work. As enablers of employee-centred approaches and transformations, they provide insights into how hybrid models are structured, communicated, and adapted to support both flexibility and performance. Their cross-functional position allows them to mediate between management and employees, addressing diverse interests while ensuring regulatory compliance. Thus, including HR professionals as a third level in the integrative approach enriches the analysis by capturing their role in shaping hybrid work policies and their impact on workplace dynamics.
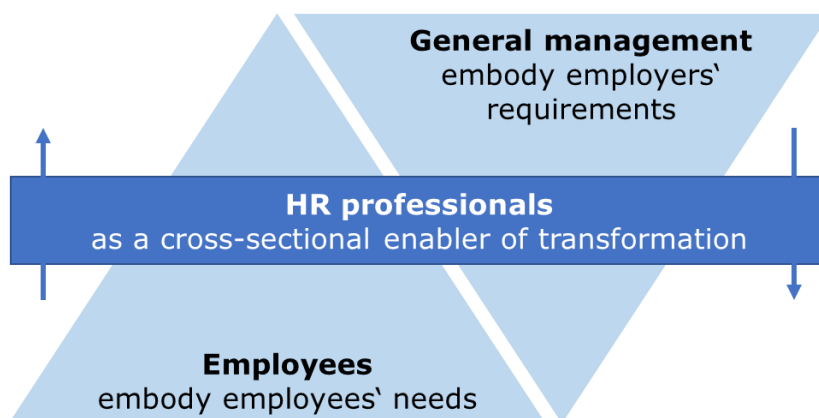
Figure 1: Integrative approach - Three target groups

Source: Own illustration

This integrative approach should furthermore combine different perspectives when exploring the mentioned paradigm shift towards employee-centred HRM approaches as a change in the context of hybrid work. An employee-centred approach might influence the whole organisation, so this study addresses the lived-experiences of general management, HR professionals and employees.

Thereby this study contributes to the growing research on hybrid work by examining how an employee-centred approach can be effectively integrated into organisational contexts. Rather than

measuring specific outcomes, it seeks to understand the key factors that shape organisational success in hybrid work environments. Central to this inquiry is how hybrid work arrangements can be structured to align employee needs with organisational objectives. By identifying the essential elements of successful hybrid models, the study offers insights into enhancing organisational adaptability and effectiveness.

What sets this research apart is its focus on the interaction between hybrid work practices and employee-centred HRM approaches. Through the perspectives of various organisational stakeholders, it explores how organisations can navigate the complexities of hybrid work. The findings aim to provide practical guidance for fostering inclusivity, resilience, and long-term effectiveness in a rapidly evolving workplace.

1.2. Research problem

As the explanations in the previous section have shown, the broad field of hybrid work is complex, flexible in its understanding, and, therefore, not yet clearly defined. Given the recent changes in the working world and the pandemic's catalyst effect, this research project is relevant and offers the potential for further investigations in many areas. As hybrid work is a contemporary phenomenon currently being established as a new working model in groups in Germany and will affect the entire organisation, this research should be located in HRM. The research field of HR is considered with its strategic approach, i.e. the strategic orientation of the organisation - reflected by HR - is the focus.

The available studies illustrate the uncertainties regarding a uniform definition of the term, possible influencing features and the effects of hybrid working at the overall organisational level. Beyond that, many studies take a generalised approach, providing overarching conclusions about the success and challenges of hybrid work (Verma et al., 2023) but often failing to account for the nuanced and context-specific challenges organisations face. In this context, the temporal component should also be considered: Studies from the recent past usually consider pandemic-induced home-based work and its outcomes for different target groups. This study will focus on the new normal and a linkage between the old and new world. The term "new normal" has emerged to describe the significant transformations in workplace structures and practices following global disruptions, notably the COVID-19 pandemic (Vyas, 2022). In the realm of hybrid work, this concept encapsulates the transition from traditional, centralized office environments to more flexible arrangements that integrate both remote and in-person work modalities (Hofmann et al., 2021). This shift has been driven by advancements in information and communication technologies, enabling employees to maintain productivity outside conventional office settings (Choudhury et al., 2022). The "new normal" emphasizes the importance of flexibility,

employee autonomy, and the strategic use of digital tools to foster collaboration and sustain organizational performance in an evolving work landscape.

Despite the growing body of research on hybrid work, significant gaps remain in understanding its practical implementation and long-term impact on organisational effectiveness. Existing studies primarily focus on policy frameworks, technological enablers, and mental health issues (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Bath and Winkler, 2024), often neglecting the organisational complexities that influence hybrid work success. While research highlights the transition towards more employee-centred HRM approaches (Kohl-Boas, 2017), it rarely examines how hybrid work models are managed within organisations or how different stakeholders perceive effective hybrid working. Furthermore, much of the existing literature provides generalised insights, overlooking sector- or role-specific challenges, such as leadership approaches, team coordination, and workplace culture in hybrid settings (Parker et al., 2020). These limitations underscore the need for a deeper exploration of how hybrid work is structured, adapted, and sustained in practice.

Additionally, research on hybrid work emphasises the need to identify which aspects of hybrid work, as part of HRM systems, are essential to organisational success and how these elements should be designed for maximum efficiency (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Boch, 2021; Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022). However, existing studies have yet to comprehensively address these factors, particularly in the context of the German labour market, which operates under a highly regulated legal framework. The absence of research linking hybrid work design to the specific constraints and opportunities within Germany's employment regulations further highlights the gap in current literature.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining hybrid work through an organisational lens, focusing on how key stakeholders – general management, employees, and HR professionals – perceive and experience hybrid work arrangements. By investigating the ways in which hybrid work policies are implemented, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the essential features that contribute to hybrid work success. In doing so, it challenges assumptions suggesting hybrid work is a one-size-fits-all model, instead advocating for a more nuanced approach that considers specific organisational contexts. Given the increasing reliance on hybrid work, understanding these dimensions is crucial for designing sustainable, effective, and inclusive work environments that balance flexibility with operational needs.

Furthermore, the underlying research project investigates the qualitative dimensions of hybrid work by exploring how individuals perceive performance and identify the essential features that underpin effective hybrid work practices. Researching a German company and working with the described integrative approach address those limitations of past publications. Methodologically, the integrative

approach and conducting qualitative work focusing on essential features influencing hybrid work and essential features influencing OP will offer new knowledge in this research field.

The pandemic-initiated hybrid work offers, for the first time, a comprehensive application and, building on this, extensive experience in a wide range of sectors, company sizes, and cultures. At the same time, this situation allows for exploring extensive questions related to hybrid working yet highlights gaps in the literature and the need for further research. Furthermore, the paradigm shift towards employee-centred HRM approaches represents a change whose impact in the context of hybrid work is to be examined in more detail. This dynamic research field and the comprehensive gaps in the specific context of German groups with highly regulated labour law agreements emphasise the value of this research and the demand for theory and practice.

1.3. Significance of the research

Overall, this research aims to identify the essential features for effective hybrid work by reviewing existing literature and analysing the perceptions of HR professionals, general managers, and employees. It examines both commonalities and differences in stakeholder perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of hybrid work dynamics. Based on these insights, the study develops a practical framework for designing effective framework conditions for hybrid work. Hence, the research makes several contributions to both theory and practice.

1.3.1. Significance to theoretical knowledge

This research adds to the theoretical knowledge of effective hybrid work in a German organisation addressing significant gaps in existing research. Many studies adopt a universal approach, offering broad statements about hybrid work success (Verma et al., 2023) while overlooking its contextual complexities. This research challenges such oversimplifications, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches that account for organisational structures, cultural conditions, and stakeholder dynamics.

By employing a qualitative lens (Kitzinger, 1995), this study provides insights into OP in hybrid work settings. Unlike quantitative studies, it explores the lived experiences of employees, uncovering how informal practices interact with formal frameworks to shape hybrid work and it's essential features. This perspective advances theoretical knowledge by highlighting the interplay between these elements and their impact on power dynamics and team interactions.

The research also addresses the multi-level nature of hybrid work addressing organisational, team, and individual needs. It examines the shift from hierarchical, employer-driven models to employee-centred approaches (Howe et al., 2021) that promote autonomy and innovation. This contributes to theories on power distribution and offers guidance for achieving sustainable hybrid work practices. Furthermore, the study emphasises that hybrid working strategies must be customised to specific organisational contexts. This challenges the notion of universal models and enhances theoretical discourse by linking hybrid work practices to organisational culture.

In summary, this research will enriche theoretical knowledge by providing a nuanced, context-driven understanding of hybrid work. It offers a practical framework for sustainable implementation, moving beyond generalised prescriptions to address the complexities of diverse organisational environments.

1.3.2. Significance in practise

This research aims to generate practical framework for the effective implementation of hybrid work strategies, focusing on the need for customised approaches that reflect specific organisational contexts rather than generic, one-size-fits-all models. It will examine how hybrid work structures can be designed to align with an organisation's culture, stakeholder expectations, and operational needs, ensuring both efficiency and employee well-being. Additionally, the study seeks to deepen understanding of the complexities surrounding hybrid work, contributing to the development of flexible and sustainable workplace strategies that support long-term organisational success.

By investigating the interaction between formal policies and informal workplace practices, this study intends to provide actionable guidance on fostering collaboration, adaptability, and engagement in hybrid work environments. The findings will help leaders create inclusive and innovative workspaces that integrate physical and digital interactions seamlessly. Furthermore, the research will analyse power dynamics within hybrid work settings, focusing on how organisations can empower employees through participatory decision-making and flexible policies while maintaining strategic alignment. Through qualitative insights into employee experiences, the study will offer a practical framework that enable organisations to anticipate challenges, refine their hybrid work models, and implement interventions that enhance both productivity and workplace satisfaction. Ultimately, this research is designed to support businesses in navigating the evolving world of work, offering evidence-based strategies that improve hybrid work effectiveness in practice.

In summary, this study equips practitioners with strategies to create adaptive, sustainable hybrid work models that enhance performance and long-term organisational success.

1.4. Research aim, questions and objectives

The theoretical and practical need to fill the identified research gap can be summarised in the following research question, objectives and goals.

The aim of this research is to explore what influences effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level according to HR professionals, general management, and employees. As mentioned, the research will be conducted in a German bank. The purpose of the research is to construct a practical framework based on the accounts of the three target groups on how to design working conditions for a hybrid working organisation. This practical framework will support the target group of this study, the German corporate organisation.

By applying this approach, the following research questions will be explored:

1. What do HR professionals perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

2. What do general managers perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

3. What do employees perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

4. Where do HR professionals, general management, and employees agree and disagree regarding effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

By answering the before mentioned research questions the following main research objectives are to be achieved:

1. To identify, through a critical review of relevant literature, the current state of understanding how working from home (in hybrid patterns) can be effective and what are currently considered the main influences on it.

2. To understand the perceptions of all groups on essential features for effective work from home in hybrid patterns (target group: HR professionals, general managers and employees).

   a) To investigate how perceptions on essential features coincide between the three target groups.

b) To investigate how perceptions on essential features differ between the three target groups.

3. To construct a practical framework – based on the account of the three target groups – on how to design relevant framework conditions for a working model in hybrid patterns.

1.5. Definition of key target groups

In order to ensure a targeted and transparent approach when explaining the needs of individual target groups and when collecting data, for example, the three groups " employees", "general management" and "HR professionals" are defined below and a standardised understanding of the definition of terms used here is created:

Employees

In Germany, it is not possible to define "employees" according to clear criteria. Therefore, the term 'white-collar employee', which is also not clearly defined but can be distinguished in terms of content, will be adopted for the sake of simplicity. White collar employee, however, is defined as far as possible by German labour law and social security law but may differ depending on the area of application. In contrast to the so-called blue-collar worker, the white-collar worker is traditionally regarded as an employee who has to fulfil predominantly intellectual tasks (commercial, higher technical, office-based or predominantly managerial activities) (Wichert, 2018a). In many professions and activities, this attribution is doubtful, so that in practice higher-value, predominantly office-based activities are often carried out by so-called "white collar employees" (Schmidt, 2018). Furthermore, German labour law often makes a distinction between tariff, non-tariff and executive employees (Wichert, 2018a). For the purposes of this research, both tariff and non-tariff employees are in scope, while executive employees are considered under "general management".

General management

The term "general management" is used in this study as a collective definition of various people who, by nature of their employment relationship or function in the company, represent the employer and its interests.

This includes senior executives, managing directors, etc. What these persons have in common is that they are entrusted with the fulfilment of employer functions. As there is no standardised legal

definition, the common perception is decisive. According to case law, someone is a managerial employee if an overall assessment shows that an employee performs sufficiently significant entrepreneurial tasks, is responsible for a considerable scope of decision-making and this also corresponds to their position and employment contract (Schmidt, 2018). As this study focuses on the interests and needs of different target groups, the persons mentioned are summarised as "general management".

The legal representatives (executive bodies) of corporations such as the board members are not included in this definition as they are organ members. In principle, board members are not to be classified as members of staff such as employees and management, as the board exercises the supreme authority of a company. Board members are authorised by law to represent the respective legal entity (§ 78 I AktG, § 35 I GmbHG) (Wichert, 2018b).

HR professionals

HR, also known as personnel management, comprises the area of the company that deals intensively with employees, their needs and their further development. It assumes a diverse and central function in the overall company perspective. In the Gabler Business Dictionary, HR is described as the sum of all HR-related fields and individual measures to support current and future corporate development (business development) and the associated change processes (organisational development) (Bartscher, 2018).

In Germany, HR plays a critical role in aligning employer needs with governance responsibilities. Thus, HR professionals act as intermediaries between management and employees, ensuring that workforce strategies such as recruitment, performance management, and compensation align with organisational goals (Kaehler and Grundei, 2019). They also oversee governance and compliance by ensuring adherence to legal standards, including co-determination laws (Mitbestimmung) and works council (Betriebsrat) regulations (Janetz, 2022). These efforts are crucial for maintaining ethical operations and mitigating risks (Schönenberg, 2010).

While HR prioritises employer goals, it also addresses employee concerns to foster motivation and retention (Hildisch, 2012). By ensuring fairness and equity, HR balances the needs of employers and employees, contributing to a productive and stable work environment (Kaehler and Grundei, 2019). Through these multifaceted functions, HR in Germany not only upholds governance and compliance but also supports ethical and sustainable business practices (Fischer et al., 2019).

1.6. Research design

The details of the research design are explained in Chapter 3, so the following chapter serves as an initial overview.

This study adopts an inductive, qualitative research design within a constructionist paradigm to explore the key factors influencing effective remote work in hybrid settings. Rooted in the belief that meaning is co-constructed through social interactions and organisational practices, this approach enables a deeper understanding of how hybrid work is experienced and managed within a specific organisational context.

To achieve this, the research is conducted as a single case study within a German bank, allowing for a detailed, context-rich investigation of hybrid work implementation. The researcher, acting as an insider-researcher (Saunders et al., 2023), was able to facilitate participation, build trust, and enhance the depth of insights gained. This positionality enabled access to key stakeholders and internal organisational dynamics that may not have been as easily accessible to an external researcher, thus strengthening the study's practical relevance and contextual validity.

For data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted, ensuring a balance between flexibility and comparability across participants. This method allowed the researcher to probe deeper into individual experiences, uncovering rich qualitative data that reflect the complexities of hybrid work. The data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022), a method well-suited to capturing nuanced patterns and diverse perspectives within the dataset. Through iterative coding and thematic development, key themes were identified, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, benefits, and essential features of hybrid work.

The study employs a mono-method qualitative approach, prioritising depth over breadth to facilitate a detailed exploration of hybrid work dynamics. By comparing perspectives across general management, HR professionals, and employees, the research seeks to uncover areas of alignment and divergence, highlighting the organisational, managerial, and individual considerations that shape hybrid work success. The findings contribute to both academic knowledge and practical implications, offering insights that can inform the development of more effective, adaptable, and sustainable hybrid work strategies in regulated environments such as the German banking sector.

1.7. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into six interconnected chapters, each addressing a specific component of the research process.

The first chapter, the *Introduction*, outlines the research problem, research question, and the primary aim and objectives of the study. It also provides a rationale for the chosen research context and includes a brief overview of the research design. The second chapter, the *Literature Review*, critically examines relevant academic sources on hybrid work, HRM, employee-centred approaches and hybrid work's impact on OP. This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for the study by identifying key concepts, frameworks, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge. The third chapter, the *Research Methodology*, describes the philosophical framework underpinning the research, the adopted research strategy, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also discusses ethical considerations, the role of the researcher, and the measures undertaken to ensure research quality. The fourth chapter, the *Findings*, presents the results of the study. Initially, the findings are structured to address the perspectives of each target group separately, followed by a comparative analysis of these groups to identify areas of convergence and divergence (see research questions 1-4). Chapter five, the *Discussion*, critically interprets the study's findings in relation to the existing literature, highlighting key areas of alignment and divergence with previous research. By analysing these insights, the discussion provides a deeper understanding of the essential features that influence the effectiveness of hybrid work, offering theoretical and practical implications for organisations. The final chapter, *Conclusion*, synthesises the study's contributions to both academic knowledge and organisational practice, outlining how the findings enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of hybrid work. In addition to acknowledging the study's limitations and proposing future research directions, this chapter includes a personal and professional reflection, offering insights into the researcher's experience and the implications of their insider perspective.

This structure ensures a coherent and logical presentation of the research process, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the study's context, methodology, findings, and implications.

2. Literature review

In the previous chapter, a brief introduction to the underlying research topic and the research questions was given. This leads to the research needs and purpose of this study. This chapter will now review the literature and provide a framework for the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis.

To provide a structured foundation for this study, the literature review is framed around a conceptual model that integrates key aspects of hybrid work, HRM, employee-centred approaches, and OP. This framework serves as a guiding structure for the subsequent subchapters, each of which will examine a specific component in detail. By presenting this conceptual lens at the outset, the reader gains an overview of the theoretical perspectives that shape the study. In the final chapter, this framework will be revisited to synthesise the key insights from the empirical findings, illustrating how the theoretical dimensions interact with the study's results.
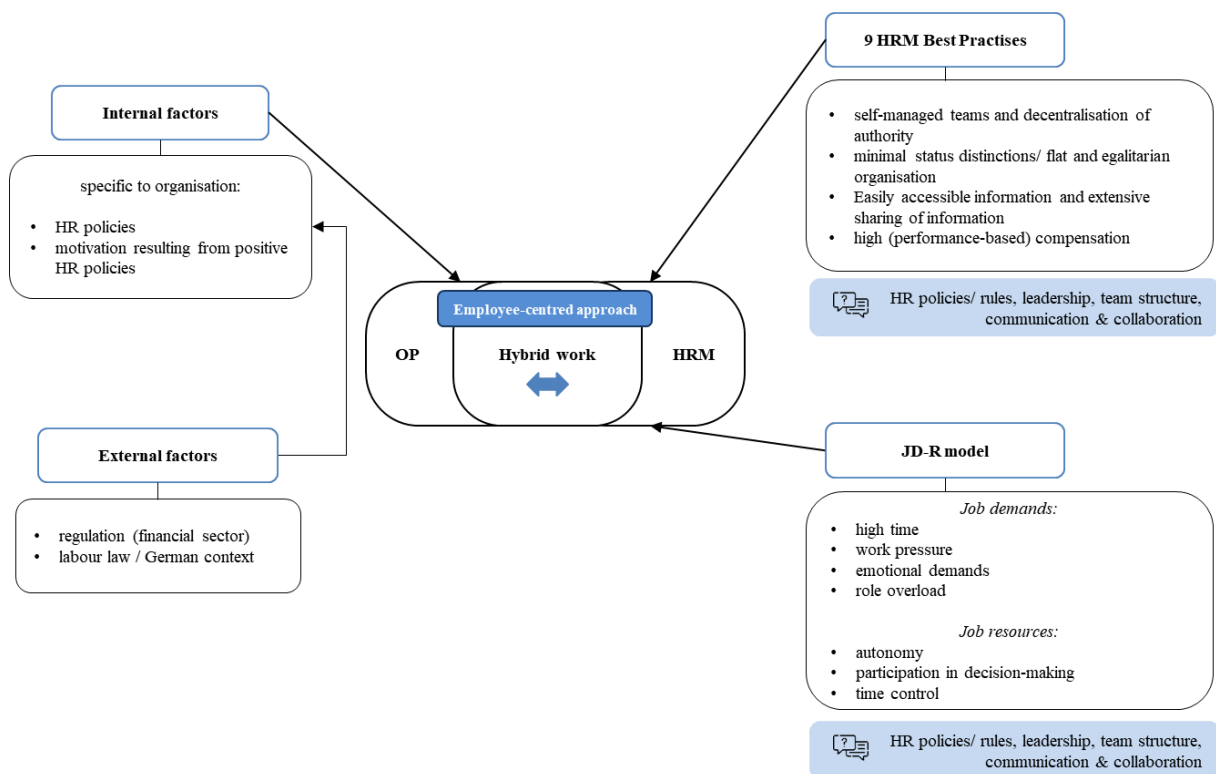
Figure 2: Outset - conceptual framework based on literature review

Source: Own illustration

2.1. Literature search strategy

A narrative literature review was conducted to explore the key themes: hybrid work, the employee-centred approach, and OP. Each topic was examined separately before identifying commonalities and connections. The review highlights key debates on hybrid work, the paradigm shift towards an employee-centred HRM practise, and hybrid works' essential features influencing OP, providing a transparent and structured foundation for this research.

The narrative literature should comply with the search, selection and evaluation procedures of the reviewers and editors. Therefore, the researcher's search method should be transparent and reproducible. Furthermore, the author aims to discuss the validity of the studies considered by means of a comprehensive qualitative and well-reasoned as well as critical evaluation of the studies (Collins and Fauser, 2005; Rhoades, 2011).

In qualitative research, saturation is traditionally associated with data collection, signifying the juncture at which additional data no longer contribute novel information (Guest, 2017). Transposing this concept to narrative literature reviews involves recognising when the inclusion of additional sources fails to uncover new themes or perspectives, thereby suggesting that the literature has been exhaustively explored. Achieving saturation in a narrative literature review therefore requires a systematic and comprehensive approach (Rhoades, 2011). The process begins with defining clear objectives and identifying the focus area, in this case hybrid work, a rapidly evolving and contemporary research topic.

Multiple academic databases, including the university library and a German university library in Berlin were searched, supplemented by Google Scholar for broader coverage. A combination of carefully selected English and German keywords, such as "hybrid work," "telework", "mobile work", "home office", "flexible working arrangements", "employee-centred approach", "soft HRM", "people-centred HRM", "organisational performance", "performance measurement in HR", "link between HR and OP" and "effective hybrid work" ensured that the literature search captured the topic's depth and nuances. Boolean operators and filters, including timeframes and the selection of peer-reviewed studies, refined the results to prioritise relevance and quality. An iterative approach guided the process, revisiting databases and refining search terms to identify overlooked materials. The search continued until no new insights, themes, or patterns emerged, signifying that saturation had been reached.

Saturation was marked by the repetition of core themes and the absence of new findings in subsequent searches. Thematic analysis played a central role in this process, helping to identify recurring patterns and central concepts while highlighting gaps in the literature (Fink, 2014). This comprehensive

exploration provided a stable thematic structure, ensuring that all relevant aspects of hybrid work had been addressed.

Hybrid work is both a current phenomenon and a rapidly expanding area of research, shaped by ongoing technological, organisational, and societal changes. The literature review was initially conducted around spring 2024, aiming for saturation based on the available research at that time. To ensure relevance and comprehensiveness, it was revisited and enriched in January 2025, incorporating newly emerging studies and developments in the field. Given the dynamic nature of the field, new studies and insights are likely to emerge beyond this timeframe, potentially altering the understanding of the topic. This limitation underscores the evolving nature of hybrid work as a subject of inquiry. Recognising this temporal limitation allows for a balanced approach that combines rigorous scholarship with an awareness of the field's dynamic and emergent characteristics.

2.2. Theoretical framework

2.2.1. Hybrid work

The subsequent subchapters provide a critical examination of the literature on hybrid work, the employee-centred approach and relevant aspects of OP. These perspectives collectively informed the foundation for an integrated conceptual framework, which approaches the research questions.

2.2.1.1. Definition of key terms

Telework

Wernecke (2021) suggests that the term and concept of telework is already several years old. In international literature, the term "telework" is often used when employees carry out their work entirely from home with the help of information technology instead of at the employer's premises (Alipour et al., 2020). If employees also have a workplace in the company in addition to their workplace at home and they work alternately at these workplaces, this is so-called "alternating telework" (Wernecke, 2021). For the German (labour law) context, there has also been a legal definition since November 2016 that formalises the form of work. Thus, in the so-called Workplace Ordinance (ArbStättV), telework is legally defined according to § 2 para. 7 ArbStättV as a form of work in which employees perform part of their work with the help of a computer workstation permanently set up by the employer outside the company. These workplaces are connected to the employer's premises via

information and communication equipment (Deutscher Bundestag, 2017). Accordingly, there is a significant difference between Wernecke's definition of permanent work from home and the German legal definition according to the Workplace Ordinance: The German definition speaks of partial performance of work from a permanently installed workplace and therefore already reflects elements of hybrid working in terms of frequency and locations. In line with the definition in the Workplace Ordinance (ArbStättV), the term telework is often used colloquially as a generic term for all forms of location-independent activities using telecommunications. In this arrangement of terms, "mobile working" and "home office" then represent sub-forms (Bertram et al., 2021).

Mobile work

With mobile working, employees do have a workplace at the company that they can use. However, they are also equipped with a laptop, tablet or smartphone so that they can work flexibly wherever they happen to be (for example, at home, on public transport or at a customer's premises) (Wernecke, 2021). The working form of mobile working has not yet been legally defined (Deutscher Bundestag, 2017). Like teleworking, mobile working is based on a connection to the company via information and communication technology.

Home Office

In general, the term home office is understood to explain that employees carry out their contractual work wholly or partly from home. In terms of content, the terms "telework" and "home office" can therefore be congruent (Bertram et al., 2021; Wernecke, 2021). Alternatively, "home office" can be understood as a sub-form of telework as outlined above. It is clear that authors like Betram et. al (2021) and Wernecke (2021), among others, think the term is often used inconsistently, sometimes as a synonym for telework, sometimes for mobile work.

Flexwork

Flexwork, in turn, describes the company-specific differentiation of the organisation of working time and place and is often referred to by German companies (Schwuchow and Gutmann, 2020). For example, TRATON, the holding company for the commercial vehicle brands in the VW Group, published a new company agreement in May 2022 that regulates flexible, location-independent working - including other European countries - in consultation with the works council. The aim is to achieve maximum flexibility in consultation with the manager (TRATON SE, 2022). Within Germany, flexwork is therefore not limited in time per se, but can be restricted by operational concerns, e.g. if

attendance is indispensable due to project specifics. Employee appraisals should also be conducted in the company and in person, according to Bernd Osterloh (former HR Director of TRATON SE).

In the context of this work, these forms of work are differentiated by means of generic terms and sub-terms: Telework is understood as a superordinate concept with a corresponding legal definition in German labour law, which creates the basis for more flexible working in terms of place and time - compared to the provision of services in the employer's company. Mobile working and working from home ("home office") are used as sub-concepts that essentially refer to the place of work. Flexwork, on the other hand, refers to the company-specific adaptation of working time and location arrangements, a term frequently used by German companies to describe their tailored approach to flexible work structures.
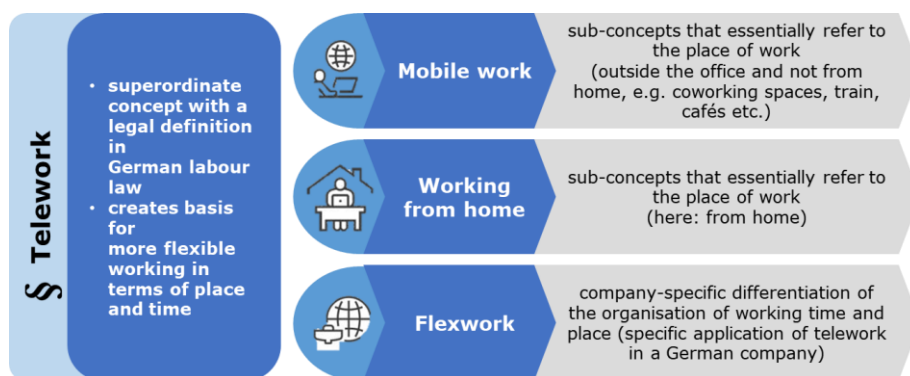
Figure 3: Telework and common definitions in Germany

Source: Own illustration

Hybrid work

The term "hybrid work" began gaining prominence in discussions about work shortly after the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2020. Since then, the concept has been explored, defined, and developed, with much of the focus centred on the post-pandemic era and the anticipated changes in workplaces and working life (Schwuchow and Gutmann, 2020). Early discussions tended to approach hybridity through a limited lens, often describing it as flexibility in terms of time and location (Bath and Winkler, 2024). This understanding frames hybrid work as a model where employees split their tasks between the employer's premises and remote locations, such as home or other spaces, leveraging digital tools for communication and collaboration (Schaffers, 2020; Schwuchow and Gutmann, 2020). This interpretation closely parallels the traditional German concept of telework as described above where part of the work can be performed from home.

For this study the term "hybrid work" is understood as a superordinate concept analogous to teleworking according to the Workplace Ordinance (ArbStättV) in terms of a location-flexible concept between working from home and on-site. For the author of this study, the difference between the two terms lies in the German legal definition, which today literally refers to "teleworking" and refers directly to a workstation installed by the employer at the employee's home. Therefore, in this study in terms of concept hybrid work is understood to be identical to telework with the difference that the provision is not limited to a fixed, installed teleworkstation. Therefore, as described, various literature sources that focus on telework, mobile work, flexwork and hybrid working are considered.

2.2.1.2.   Historical and theoretical development

Historically, telework emerged in the mid-1970s in the US state of California as a substitute for daily commuting through telecommunications technology (Nilles, 1994). Companies created suitable alternatives in response to the 1973 energy crisis, which meant that employees could no longer commute to work frequently (Torten et al., 2016). The concept of telework at that time involved working via landline telephones, fax machines and huge stationary computers - outside the local workplace (Makimoto and Manners, 1997). This first description of telework by scholars is outdated by today's standards. More recent publications classified telework with other forms of work organisation and tried not to relate their understanding of telework to its historical roots.

The research topic of "telework" and, more recently, "hybrid working" can be historically divided into two phases. While initial studies from 1970 to around 2016 focused on contractual telework and its advantages and disadvantages, more recent research projects have focused on topics such as employer attractiveness, mental health, work-life balance, corporate culture, knowledge transfer, technological adaptation and performance measurement (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Boch, 2021).

A few studies also compare the past years' sporadically perceived optional working from home with mandatory, pandemic-related teleworking (Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022; Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2007). Pre-pandemic studies have in common that telework adaptation was rare; thus, the experiential values were limited, and the sample sizes were reduced. With the beginning of the pandemic, there is now a comprehensive and, above all, already two-year period of observation for findings on pandemic-initiated telework.

(Pre-) pandemic telework & hybrid work

Even well before the pandemic, there were already insightful and interesting results in research on the topic of work flexibility and teleworking. For example, as early as 2007, Martínez-Sánchez et al. investigated the relationship between telework adoption, change management and company performance. They found a positive relationship between telework and the satisfaction perceived by workers when they have the opportunity to adapt their tasks to their needs and desires, thus supporting the workforce flexibility literature. According to this, telework allows for a greater match between individual needs and opportunities to meet those needs, which in turn leads to higher job satisfaction. Interestingly, the results also suggest that telework in particular is positively related to OP (Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2007). Thus, the results are in line with other studies from i.e. Harker Martin and MacDonnell (2012) that find a positive relationship between telework and the perceptions of organisational outcomes. In terms of content, the mentioned pre-pandemic studies refer to teleworking, whereby teleworking already includes hybrid elements (analogous to the German legal definition above) and is described as not fully remote work.

The situation is different in studies on the pandemic peak - here, pure remote work is dealt with due to the pandemic-related distancing regulations and complete working from home. Looking at studies on teleworking during the pandemic, many studies like Schmoll and Süß (2021) report mainly positive experiences regarding work-life balance aspects, the handling of the COVID-19 infection figures but also the establishment of the hybrid working model and the desire of many employees to maintain a partial remote part even after the pandemic. These findings are also supported by recent survey results on the continuation of flexible working. Although some researchers suggest that the prevalence of flexible work may decline somewhat, it is not expected to return to pre-crisis levels (Becker et al., 2022). In the study 'Companies in the COVID-19 Crisis' conducted by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB), managers from around 2,000 companies in several sectors of the economy in which at least one employee subject to social security contributions works were surveyed on how the company is dealing with the pandemic. The economic sectors 'public administration, defence, social security', 'private households' and 'territorial organisations and corporations' were excluded. Furthermore, only companies that stated that home office was possible for them were included. According to this survey two thirds (67 %) of the companies, in which there are basically home office options, stated that they want to enable the same extent as in the pandemic. 21% even want to expand this further. The proportion of companies that want to expand the offer increases significantly with the size of the company. However, Brenscheidt et al. (2022) suggest that there are also many activities for which local flexibility is difficult to guarantee.

Alongside the positive reports, Donath and Engelmann (2023), for example, elaborate on mixed experiences in terms of health protection and consider the views of interest representation like works

councils in large companies during the pandemic. In the literature, the autonomy and sovereignty gained in determining time and place as well as flexible working environments are often mentioned as positive aspects, especially with regard to childcare or leisure activities (Boeckler Stiftung, 2021; Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022). On the other hand, exactly these points are also cited for a blurring of work and private life as well as necessary recreational phases. In Donath and Engelmanns research published in 2023, which focuses on the pandemic years, there are indications of potential for optimisation for occupational health and safety in Germany, which should be worked out in the case of a nationwide, permanent use of hybrid working. This double perspective also exists on the employer side: On the one hand, the decentralised provision of work in the employee sector is seen as a cost saving and efficiency gain, but on the other hand it is also associated with a loss of control and management (Donath and Engelmann, 2023; Schmoll and Süß, 2021).

In addition, there are interpersonal and cultural issues. In studies conducted during the pandemic, there is increased criticism from employees that there is too little trust on the part of employers and that many feel micromanaged (Parker et al., 2020). On the other hand, many managers fear a loss of productivity and employee performance if employees work remotely (Ahmad et al., 2022). Interestingly, senior managers shared other perceptions: They perceived consistent and sometimes increasing productivity among employees who worked from home (Hajal, 2022). Ultimately, researchers like Bérastégui (2021) conclude that the successful implementation of telework depends significantly on the degree of autonomy granted to employees and on a presumed culture of trust and compassion that organisational leaders can create.

However, many authors actively point to the consideration of external circumstances of a global pandemic in their studies to assess the results. Thus, it is also important to consider the extreme working and living conditions caused by the crisis (Donath and Engelmann, 2023): Even though flexible working in times of the COVID-19 pandemic may be associated with negative effects, Zhang et al. show that people who did not work at all during the pandemic had comparatively worse mental and physical health, more stress and less life satisfaction than those who did their work in a home office (Zhang et al., 2020).

Parallel to this, the development on the labour market is also interesting to observe. Here, the shortage of skilled workers coupled with a dynamic, increasingly international environment (especially in the highly sought-after IT sector) is leading to location- and time-independent work increasing employer attractiveness and, depending on the sector, is sometimes even seen as indispensable (Hofmann et al., 2021; Kreuzer et al., 2022). Interestingly, with a view to different employee generations, a tendency and preference for mobile-flexible work was already predicted in 2015 for the younger generation on the labour market (Otto and Remdisch, 2015). Here, the pandemic is understood in some studies as a catalyst for the introduction of hybrid working, and it remains questionable whether such a

widespread, rapid shift to home-based work would ever have been possible without pandemic-related influence (Bianchi-Weinand and Wannöffel, 2022; Klaffke, 2022).

Post pandemic telework & hybrid work

The pandemic brought about a significant transformation in the world of work, prompting many companies to shift from a predominantly office-based model to fully digital operations wherever job roles and competencies permitted. This sudden transition, widely discussed in the literature, accelerated the adoption of technology and digital work practices at an unprecedented rate (Boch, 2021; Schaffelhofer, 2022). However, the impact was not limited to technological advancements, as the pandemic also served as a catalyst for broader changes in workplace dynamics. Initially, for many employees, remote work was merely a relocation of tasks to their homes. However, research on telework during this period suggests that, beyond the shift in location, working hours also became more flexible – an adjustment that many employees have come to appreciate and wish to retain (Boch, 2021; Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022).The elimination of commuting time or shifting asynchronous activities to a time when productivity is at its highest is often cited as a positive side effect (Gneuss, 2021; Kreuzer et al., 2022). Ultimately, the work-life balance expectations have gained in importance and different trends and individual flexibility preferences have emerged (Kreuzer et al., 2022).

According to Kreuzer et al. (2022) the first 1.5 years of the pandemic served as an opportunity for both, employees and employers, to experience working outside the traditional office setting. The literature indicates a broad consensus in both German research and industry that the world of work has undergone a lasting transformation due to the pandemic (Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes, 2022). Hofman et al. (2021) supports this theory, as they state that the discussion is no longer about whether hybrid work will persist but rather how it should be structured to meet future demands.

One key factor shaping the post-pandemic workplace is the realisation that hybrid work arrangements can be both efficient and productive. Furthermore, employee expectations regarding their employers have evolved significantly, particularly in light of growing labour shortages, necessitating a stronger focus on workplace flexibility and employee well-being (Hofmann et al., 2021). Both in Germany and the United States, a substantial wave of resignations emerged during the pandemic (Kreuzer et al., 2022). Among the primary reasons for this shift were changing employee priorities, including the demand for greater flexibility in terms of time and location, increased autonomy in work organisation, and a heightened emphasis on mental health support from employers (Stich, 2021).

Considering the current trends in the labour market coupled with the increasing shortage of skilled workers, the question of whether to introduce flexible working no longer arises for many companies (Bergmann, 2020). Studies like Stich (2021) found a positive relationship between flexible working models and job satisfaction as well as the employee motivation to work for a certain organisation. Interestingly, the pandemic has had an impact on the role of employees, and in particular their needs and involvement in business decisions, among many other aspects of the world of work (Taapken and Heinen, 2021). A shift in the prioritisation and consideration of employee needs can be observed in research as well as in practice (Volini et al., 2021). Some publications also speak of a paradigm shift caused by the pandemic and COVID-19 related research (Howe et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, compared to the pre-pandemic era, this far-reaching development of the world of work brings with it very fundamental questions of office management, workplace equipment, work culture, technological equipment, the design of management and communication relationships, and HR work practise (Hofmann et al., 2021). Organisations like the Bavarian State Bank have reacted to this and are downsizing or redesigning their office spaces to meet future demands and working conditions (Radomsky, 2022).

However, according to some authors like Amerland (2022) and von Bergen et al. (2019), among others, the increased work from home does not only bring positive effects for organisations and employees. The sense of identity towards the employer can decline and a new balance between work and life is needed (Burkhart, 2023). Moreover, the traditional nine-to-five job, which is often common practice in the white-collar sector, has changed dramatically in a high-tech age where workers can work from anywhere and at any time through various electronic platforms (Amerland et al., 2022). While in the past, work was done at the physical workplace and it was closed on holidays, weekends, evenings, or nights, this has changed according to Amerland (2022). Today, depending on the work culture, employees can and should access their work remotely and respond to requests regardless of the day or time (Von Bergen et al., 2019). As the authors state, this leads for many workers to a work-life imbalance and a higher and sometimes more permanent workload.

Accordingly, there are various aspects to consider in the introduction as well as post-pandemic continuation and, if necessary, redesign of hybrid work.

Looking at the European labour market, before the pandemic 85% of workers had never teleworked or considered that their work could be done (partly) remote (Milasi et al., 2021). In the pandemic-induced introduction of largely exclusive home-based work, there was no preparation time on either the employer or employee side (Donath and Engelmann, 2023). Correspondingly, the transition from a well-defined to a very fluid structure was also associated with stress and anxiety. Moreover, authors

such as Parker et al. (2020), for example, question the relationship of different workspaces on individuals' efficiency and satisfaction while hybrid working (Oygür et al., 2022).

2.2.1.3. German context

This section addresses telework and hybrid work in the German context, focusing on labour law and practical considerations. As previously mentioned, the "home office offer obligation" (§ 28b para. 4 IfSG) mandated employers, from 24 November 2021 to 19 March 2022, to enable employees to work remotely unless compelling operational reasons precluded this. White-collar employees defined as those engaged in mental rather than physical work, were the primary focus of this regulation, reflecting their relevance to the study.

Historically, teleworking has been a long-discussed concept but was underutilised in Germany, with studies (Eurostat, ifo, and Randstad) showing that fewer than half of employers offered home office options pre-pandemic. Germany trailed the European average in this regard, with many employees not utilising available opportunities (Alipour et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, however, shifted workplace dynamics, reducing resistance to remote work and accelerating its adoption (Bertram et al., 2021).

Legally, the determination of the workplace typically falls under the employer's right of direction (§ 106 sentence 1 GewO), broadly interpreted by case law. Employment contracts or collective agreements often specify eligible workplaces, but employers cannot unilaterally mandate work-from-home or other remote arrangements without employee consent (LAG Berlin-Brandenburg, 2018). Mobile work and telework must be explicitly agreed upon in contracts or other arrangements, as these fall outside the employer's default directive rights (Pieper, 2017).

In larger companies, works councils play a crucial role in workplace organisation, particularly for decentralised or remote work setups (Janetz, 2022). Although introducing home office arrangements is an entrepreneurial decision, their implementation requires consultation and co-determination by the works council on personnel, social, and economic matters (§ 90 BetrVG). This includes reviewing workplace design, equipment, and mental health considerations (Donath and Engelmann, 2023).

Many German corporations have responded to the new demands of hybrid work by introducing flexible working models like "flexwork," which facilitate location-independent work. These agreements reflect broader organisational shifts towards accommodating employee flexibility and thereby the implementation of hybrid working models.

Data protection is a key consideration, governed by General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG). Employers must implement robust technical and organisational measures to protect both personal and corporate data. Before implementing telework or mobile work, each task must be evaluated to ensure it complies with data protection laws. Ultimately, employers bear responsibility for safeguarding sensitive information (Taeger and Gabel, 2022).

2.2.2. Paradigm shift because of COVID-19 pandemic

As previously mentioned, another drastic change can be observed in research regarding hybrid work and the prevailing HRM practice: a paradigm shift. According to Howe et al. (2021), a paradigm shift is a fundamental change in the underlying assumptions of a phenomenon. In research, these are rare but drastic changes that radically alter our understanding of phenomena by changing the fundamental assumptions on which our understanding is based (Howe et al., 2021).

Howe et al. (2021), among others, suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic had the potential to bring about several paradigm shifts in organisations that could not be fully anticipated by society and in general in advance. In terms of companies, it was observed at the beginning and during the peak of the pandemic that many organisations generally reacted in a compassionate and employee-friendly manner (Holzapfel, 2021). For many employers and employees, how and where they work changed radically due to the pandemic (Bollinger, 2021). While such measures may seem prudent and sensible, authors like Howe et. al (2021) emphasise that the challenge lies in assessing such paradigm shifts and the long-term impact of the pandemic.

Subsequently, the paradigm shift towards employee-centred HR work and organisational orientation in response to the pandemic is examined and the aspects associated with this approach are explained.

2.2.2.1. Historical and theoretical development

The term "employee-centred approach" does not have a universal definition in the literature. It is often used interchangeably with related terms such as "soft HRM", "people-centred HRM", and "human-centred approach." Despite slight variations in terminology, these concepts share a common focus on prioritising employee needs, well-being, and development within organisational strategies (Edgar and Geare, 2014; Richards, 2022). For the purposes of this study, the term "employee-centred approach" is adopted to encompass these shared principles. Thus, as explained at the beginning, publications

containing the keywords "human-centred approach", "people-centred HRM" or "soft HRM" were also included in the literature review.

The employee-centred approach is underpinned by a philosophy that places significant emphasis on recognising and valuing the needs, aspirations, and contributions of employees as integral to organisational success (Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Lepak and Snell (1999) state that this approach acknowledges employees as individuals with distinct skills, perspectives, and experiences. Hence, it transcends the traditional view of employees as mere organisational resources, instead highlighting their intrinsic worth and the diverse value they contribute to the workplace (Lepak and Snell, 1999).

This approach has evolved over time, shaped by various theoretical developments and practical insights into workplace dynamics (Edgar and Geare, 2014). The origins of the employee-centred approach can be traced to the Human Relations Movement, which emerged as a response to the limitations of scientific management. Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Studies from 1993 demonstrated that social relationships, employee satisfaction, and a sense of belonging were critical to productivity. This marked a shift from viewing employees as tools of production to recognising their psychological and social needs to improve them (Franke and Kaul, 1978).

Moreover, Abraham Maslow's theory of Human Motivation (1943) introduced the idea that individuals are driven by a hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation. That was when organisations began to consider how workplace conditions and practices could address these needs to motivate employees effectively (Ghosh et al., 2022). Moreover, Douglas McGregor's Theory Y (1960) proposed that employees are naturally motivated, seek responsibility, and thrive under participative leadership. This challenged traditional, authoritarian management styles and laid the foundation for employee-centred HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2014; Truss et al., 1997).

Another approach, the resource-based view (RBV), highlighted the strategic importance of HR as a source of competitive advantage (Barney and Arikan, 2005). Thus, organisations increasingly recognised that investing in employee development, engagement, and well-being could yield significant benefits in performance and innovation. Modern developments in organisational psychology, such as positive organisational behaviour and psychological capital, further reinforced the importance of focusing on employee well-being, strengths, and engagement (Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

A significant focus within this approach is on the well-being of employees, encompassing their physical, mental, and emotional health. Organisations committed to this principle strive to create environments where individuals can thrive holistically. Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job Demands-

Resources (JD-R) model highlights the critical role of supportive work environments in reducing stress and increasing motivation. By prioritising well-being, employers not only support healthier employees but also enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and retention rates (Guest, 2017).

Another crucial aspect of the employee-centred approach is the empowerment of employees. Creating environments where individuals feel encouraged to take initiative and contribute meaningfully fosters engagement and allows employees to realise their full potential (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Empowerment aligns with self-determination theory, which emphasises the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation (Gagné and Deci, 2005). When employees are empowered, they are more likely to exhibit commitment, creativity, and proactive behaviours that benefit the organisation (Luthans and Youssef, 2007; Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

Participation and employee voice also form integral elements of this approach (Edgar and Geare, 2014). Actively involving employees in decision-making processes demonstrates respect for their perspectives and insights, cultivating a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect (Morrison, 2011). Such practices ensure that employees feel valued and heard, which strengthens their commitment to the organisation and enhances the quality of organisational decisions. Research has shown that employee involvement increases engagement and organisational effectiveness (Jha et al., 2019).

Overall, these principles collectively demonstrate a philosophy that seeks to balance organisational priorities with the holistic needs of employees, creating a mutually beneficial dynamic that drives sustainable success. By embedding these values into their practices, organisations cultivate a workforce that is engaged, empowered, and dedicated to shared goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly intensified discussions around employee-centred HRM practices, prompting organisations to reconsider the role of people within the workplace. As businesses faced unprecedented human and social challenges, such as supporting employees with caregiving responsibilities, grieving lost colleagues, and facilitating remote work, a renewed emphasis on employee well-being emerged (Kaushik and Guleria, 2020; Peuter et al., 2023). This shift extended to leadership behaviours, with managers increasingly adopting more empathetic and relational approaches (Townsend and Romme, 2024).

As the employee-centred approach emphasises creating supportive work environments that align employee satisfaction with organisational goals, making it a key consideration in the context of hybrid work.

Alignment with HRM theories and strategies

The employee-centred approach in HRM is a philosophy, not a standalone HRM strategy or a concept derived directly from one specific theory, but an overarching orientation that aligns with multiple HRM strategies and theories (Edgar and Geare, 2014). This approach emphasises that engaged, satisfied, and empowered employees significantly contribute to organisational success and sustainability.

While the employee-centred approach does not originate from a single theory, it aligns with multiple HRM strategies and theoretical frameworks:

- Soft HRM: This approach treats employees as valuable assets rather than costs to be minimised. Soft HRM focuses on employee well-being, training, and engagement to foster commitment and loyalty (Legge, 1995).
- High-Commitment HRM: High-commitment HRM strategies aim to strengthen the psychological contract between employees and employers by fostering trust, involvement, and shared values (Walton, 1985).
- High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS): HPWS integrate practices such as team-based work, job enrichment, and flexible work arrangements to empower employees and enhance performance (Boxall and Macky, 2009).
- Employee Engagement Theories: Building on Kahn's theory of engagement, these approaches focus on creating environments where employees feel psychologically safe and motivated to invest in their work roles (Kahn, 1990).
- Well-Being-Oriented HRM: Modern HRM frameworks increasingly incorporate well-being as a strategic priority, recognising its impact on productivity, retention, and organisational culture (Guest, 2011).

Accordingly, the employee-centred approach in HRM is not a distinct strategy or theory but rather an overarching orientation that informs the design and implementation of various HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2014). By aligning with multiple theories and strategies, such as soft HRM, high-commitment HRM, and well-being-oriented HRM, the employee-centred approach continues to influence both research and practice in HRM (Guest, 2017; Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Its evolution demonstrates a growing recognition of the reciprocal relationship between organisational goals and employee needs, making it a cornerstone of effective HRM in contemporary workplaces (Edgar and Geare, 2014; Howe et al., 2021).

For some organisations, the pandemic reinforced an employee-centred approach,while for others, it was initially imposed but later intentionally maintained during the transition to the 'new normal'

(García-Álvarez and López-Fernández, 2023). The following section examines the implications of this approach, particularly in the context of hybrid work and its key aspects.

2.2.2.2. Impact for organisations and HRM practise

Beyond these immediate responses to the pandemic, an employee-centred HRM approach carries strategic implications for organisational practices. By placing employee needs, well-being, and development at the forefront, this approach has consequences for power dynamics, stakeholder relationships, decision-making processes, and the formalisation of organisational rules (Edgar and Geare, 2014; Järlström et al., 2018; Ogbonnaya and Aryee, 2020).

The following section examines these implications within the context of hybrid work, focusing on their impact on organisations. While embedded in broader theoretical and strategic frameworks, these topics are considered through the lens of the employee-centred approach, aligning with the study's overarching research questions.

Power dynamics

Power within organisations has been a subject of extensive study, with diverse theories elucidating its nature and distribution. French and Raven identified five bases of power: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent, underscoring that power derives not only from formal authority but also from individual expertise and interpersonal relationships (French and Raven, 1959; Kovach, 2020). Foucault further argued that power is pervasive, embedded within organisational structures, norms, and discourses, thereby shaping and being shaped by organisational practices (Gordon and Foucault, 1980).

HRM practices play a pivotal role in influencing organisational power dynamics. The design and implementation of HR policies can either reinforce existing power structures or act as catalysts for change (Guest, 2011). For example, empowerment initiatives in HRM, aim to decentralise decision-making, challenge traditional hierarchies and promote employee autonomy (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). However, the success of these initiatives often hinges on organisational culture and leadership's genuine commitment to sharing power (Wilkinson, 1998).

It is clear from the literature that an employee-centred approach further reconfigures power dynamics by decentralising authority and fostering greater participation. Collaborative structures, replacing traditional top-down hierarchies, enable employees to engage in decision-making and problem-

solving, thereby redistributing power (Assian, 2019). Practices such as open-door policies, participatory budgeting, and inclusive goal-setting encourage employee input and have been linked to improved job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and enhanced organisational commitment (Ogbonnaya and Aryee, 2020). Nonetheless, balancing empowerment with managerial accountability requires careful planning to ensure decision-making efficiency and alignment with organisational goals (Richards, 2022).

Critically, employee empowerment can also expose underlying power imbalances, highlighting the complexity of implementing such initiatives effectively.

Stakeholder – power dynamics and participation in decision-making

Power dynamics extend beyond internal hierarchies to include relationships among employees, management, shareholders, and external partners. Stakeholder theory emphasises the need to balance the interests and power of diverse groups to achieve sustainable success (Freeman and McVea, 2001). Moreover, HRM practices play a critical role in managing these relationships by mediating between organisational objectives and employee interests (Hildisch, 2012). Transparent communication and participatory decision-making can enhance trust and collaboration, fostering a positive organisational climate and balancing power dynamics (Nielsen, 2013). Conversely, neglecting employee voices risks disengagement and conflict, undermining organisational effectiveness (Kovach, 2020).

An employee-centred HRM approach aligns with stakeholder theory by recognising employees as core stakeholders whose interests are integral to organisational success. The author's reasoning is confirmed in the literature, among others by Järlström et al. (2018), who assume that sustainable HRM practices, such as equitable treatment and transparent communication, build trust and loyalty among employees while strengthening relationships with external stakeholders. These practices often intersect with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, where prioritising employee well-being enhances public perception and strengthens connections with customers, investors, and the community. For instance, flexible working arrangements and mental health support demonstrate ethical HR practices, attracting socially conscious consumers and investors (Amerland et al., 2022).

Challenges arise when shareholder interests in profit maximisation conflict with employee-centred goals, emphasising the need for a balanced, integrative approach to stakeholder management (Ogbonnaya and Aryee, 2020). Practices such as collaborative planning, cross-functional team meetings, and employee advisory councils, not only improve decision-making but also foster employee ownership and accountability (Fischer et al., 2019).

However, inclusivity requires careful management. It can delay decisions and complicate consensus-building due to conflicting viewpoints (Edgar and Geare, 2014). Thus, organisations must establish mechanisms to integrate employee feedback into decisions genuinely, ensuring inclusivity strengthens rather than diminishes organisational cohesion.

After examining stakeholders and decision-making processes in HRM practices, the degree of formalisation should also be considered as it directly shapes how decisions are structured, communicated, and implemented (Tanner et al., 2014). Formalisation influences the clarity, consistency, and adaptability of HRM strategies, making it a critical factor in understanding organisational dynamics and their impact on outcomes.

Organisational formalisation

Formalisation refers to the standardisation and documentation of organisational rules, procedures, and communications. Hence, it plays a key role in shaping HRM practices and influencing efficiency, employee behaviour, and overall performance (Skorková, 2020). As a central element formalisation defines roles, implements procedures, and coordinates activities (Tanner et al., 2014). High formalisation reduces ambiguity and enhances predictability through documented rules, while low formalisation allows flexibility, fostering innovation but increasing variability in performance (Nolan and Harney, 2023). In highly formalised organisations, HRM practices such as recruitment, performance appraisal, and training are standardised, promoting fairness and efficiency. However, this can limit creativity and adaptability, particularly in dynamic environments. Low formalisation, on the other hand, supports customised practices, encouraging innovation and employee empowerment but potentially leading to inconsistencies and perceived inequity if poorly managed (Li and Rees, 2021; Nolan and Harney, 2023). Striking a balance between formalisation and flexibility is essential to maintain clarity, consistency, and responsiveness to change (Tanner et al., 2014).

HRM strategies also influence the level of formalisation. Cost leadership strategies often require higher formalisation to enhance efficiency through standardisation, while innovation-driven strategies favour lower formalisation to promote creativity and adaptability (Thomaschewski and Völker, 2017). Organisational factors such as size, sector, and the presence of an HR department are strongly associated with greater formalisation, as these entities are more likely to establish formal HR policies and procedures (Li and Rees, 2021; Singh and Vohra, 2009).

Employee-centred HRM practices may influence formalisation, particularly in policies, procedures, and rules. An employee-centred approach balances formalisation with flexibility (Mariappanadar, 2024). For instance, hybrid work models require clear policies to manage expectations while

accommodating diverse preferences (Tanner et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the authors point out that, despite the need for a formal policy, there are different views on how this should be designed in terms of the level of detail. Mariappanadar (2024) highlights that sustainable HRM practices integrate flexibility within a framework of accountability and trust.

Reducing formalisation also presents risks, as ambiguities in rules may lead to inconsistencies and perceptions of unfairness. Clear communication, ongoing training, and adaptive leadership are essential to implementing flexible policies effectively, ensuring coherence and equity (Järlström et al., 2018).

To sum up, HRM strategies significantly influence organisational power dynamics by aligning HR practices with broader goals. Depending on the HRM strategy adopted some organisations centralise decision-making, reinforcing hierarchical structures (Wright and Mcmahan, 1992), while others focusing on high-commitment practices, such as employee involvement and internal promotion, aim to empower employees and distribute power more equitably (Walton, 1985). However, critics argue that empowerment initiatives may serve as managerial tools for control rather than genuine redistribution of power (Legge, 1995).

An employee-centred HRM approach challenges traditional power hierarchies by promoting collaboration, inclusivity, and shared governance. This approach redistributes decision-making authority, engages employees in policy development, and prioritises adaptability to modern workforce needs, such as hybrid work models (Järlström et al., 2018; Jha et al., 2019). Germany's co-determination system has long facilitated employee participation in organizational decision-making, inherently supporting employee-centered HRM practices (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2002). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards hybrid work models, prompting a reevaluation of traditional HRM approaches. This transition has highlighted the need for more flexible, employee-focused strategies that address the complexities of remote and hybrid work environments (Kohl-Boas, 2017). Studies have shown that hybrid working can enhance job satisfaction and reduce work-related stress, underscoring the importance of adaptable HRM policies in this new context (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to examine how employee-centered approaches can be effectively integrated into hybrid work models to promote organizational resilience and employee well-being.

2.2.2.3.   HRM practise in German-speaking countries

Despite the developments towards an employee-centred approach, the literature on the extent of the paradigm shift towards employee-centered HRM in Germany remains limited. While organisational

practices are evolving to incorporate more flexible and employee-friendly policies, comprehensive studies quantifying the degree of this shift are scarce (Edgar and Geare, 2014).

The following section therefore looks at the HRM practices in German-speaking countries that are affected by an employee-centred approach, as explained above.

Power dynamics

Since the amendment of the German Works Constitution Act (BetrVG) in 1972, employee co-determination has been a cornerstone of industrial relations in Germany (Schnabel, 2020). Institutionalised through works councils and employee representation on supervisory boards, co-determination ensures that employees have a formal platform to voice their concerns and participate in shaping workplace policies (Scheriau, 2015). Works councils, elected by employees, hold extensive rights to consultation and co-decision-making on matters such as working conditions, layoffs, and restructuring (Janetz, 2022). This participatory approach fosters a pluralistic environment where management and employees engage collaboratively, promoting mutual trust and reducing potential conflicts (Harris et al., 2004). Even though the right to establish a works council is enshrined in the Works Constitution Act, Schnabel (2020) points out that works councils and other representative bodies are less common than is often assumed.

Stakeholder – power dynamics and participation in decision-making

Decision-making in German organisations is typically consensus-driven and formalised, requiring deliberation and consultation with stakeholders (Altenburger and Mesicek, 2016). Works councils play a role in mediating between employees and management, particularly during major organisational changes such as restructuring or the adoption of new technologies (Schnabel, 2020). These processes involve detailed planning and negotiations to achieve mutual agreement, showcasing the German cultural preference for thoroughness and preparation (Harris et al., 2004; Hofstede, 1993). While formal structures exist, the genuine inclusion of diverse stakeholder voices requires a commitment to transparency and a willingness to share organisational power (Behrens and Dribbusch, 2014). Critics argue that, in some instances, participatory mechanisms may be utilized as managerial tools for control rather than as avenues for genuine empowerment (Nerdinger, 2008).

Decisions are frequently documented and codified, with a strong preference for written communication over verbal agreement (Völp, 2019), further underscoring the formalised approach to HR practices. According to Völp (2019), this is justified, among other things, by the fact that careful documentation of decisions is essential for managers to avoid legal liability and to ensure that

decision-making processes are transparent. While explicit rules dominate the regulatory landscape, implicit cultural norms also shape workplace dynamics in Germany. Values such as punctuality, reliability, and meticulous attention to detail, though unwritten, are widely understood and adhered to (Hofstede, 1993).

In conclusion, German HRM practices exemplify a structured approach to stakeholder management and participation in decision-making, with legally mandated frameworks ensuring employee involvement at multiple organisational levels. The success of these practices depends on the authentic engagement of stakeholders and the alignment of participatory mechanisms with organisational objectives and culture.

Formalisation

German HRM practices are defined by a high degree of formalisation (Schröter and Davoine, 2013). For the purposes of this study, this high degree of formalisation is also seen as explicit rules. In addition, German HR practice includes a range of implicit role perceptions and power constellations (Holtzheimer, 2022) that complement the formal, explicit framework. Formalisation is rooted in detailed legal frameworks, such as the *Arbeitszeitgesetz* (Working Time Act) and *Betriebsverfassungsgesetz* (Works Constitution Act), which establish clear standards for employment contracts, working hours, remuneration, and occupational health and safety (Janetz, 2022). Employment contracts are legally binding and highly specific, not only outlining terms of employment but also addressing conditions for termination (Lorenz and Falder, 2016). These frameworks ensure consistency and compliance across industries, reflecting Germany's emphasis on legal clarity and precision (Scheriau, 2015).

2.2.3. Organisational performance

Since this study examines the essential features of effective hybrid work at an organisational level based on stakeholder perceptions, it is necessary to establish a clear understanding of OP. The following section will define OP in this context, recognising that the study does not aim to measure it quantitatively but rather to develop a shared conceptualisation aligned with its qualitative approach.

2.2.3.1. Definition of key terms

Performance management and OP have been widely studied, yet the field remains inconclusive, with further research needed to refine definitions, establish reliable measurement criteria, and assess their impact on organisational success (Naqshbandi et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2016). Although the field of research is of such great interest, a terminological fuzziness in the definition of the term and in its measurement is found in research (Kirby, 2005). In management research, performance seems to be so common that its definition is rarely explicitly justified and its appropriateness is often unquestioningly assumed (Richard et al., 2009). OP is commonly viewed as a key outcome variable across areas such as HR, IT, operations, and marketing, with a shared focus in research and practice on enhancing, maintaining, and controlling performance (Singh et al., 2016).

Besides the terminological fuzziness, OP can be generically described as a multidimensional construct that is typically measured through financial and non-financial indicators (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Saridakis et al., 2017). Financial performance is often assessed using publicly available data, such as annual reports or stock market results, providing robust and objective measures (Singh et al., 2016). In contrast, non-financial performance relies more heavily on subjective assessments, such as managers' evaluations of company performance, profitability, or HR contributions, which can offer valuable insights but are prone to bias (Aït Razouk, 2011; Singh et al., 2016). Despite these challenges, subjective measures are ubiquitous in management research and play a critical role in capturing aspects of performance not easily reflected in financial metrics (Camps and Luna-Arocas, 2010). The following study adopts this approach and therefore focuses on the subjective understanding as well as perception of OP followed by the essential features of hybrid work.

Studies demonstrate the importance of subjective measures in understanding performance holistically. For example, Rizov and Croucher (2008) used subjective indicators such as service quality, productivity, and innovation to show that collaborative HRM practices are associated with higher performance. Similarly, Singh et al. (2016) found that subjective measures are not inferior to objective metrics when carefully designed and analysed, emphasizing their potential for uncovering insights unavailable through financial data alone.

Beyond the distinction between financial and non-financial measures, the differentiation between OP and organisational effectiveness is also significant. Organisational effectiveness is a complex construct that includes, among other things, OP (Cameron and Whetten, 1983). However, management research, particularly in strategic management, often narrows its focus to accounting, financial, and market-based results. Based on management research and in line with the research area of this thesis, a distinction is made below between organisational effectiveness and OP (Richard et al., 2009):

(a) OP

OP, as often defined in the literature, refers to three specific areas of company performance:

- Financial performance (profits, return on capital, return on investment, etc.)
- Product market performance (sales, market share, etc.)
- Shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.)

Although this definition primarily emphasises quantitative measures, Camps and Luna-Arocas (2010) challenge the exclusivity of this approach, highlighting the importance of incorporating qualitative dimensions, which are equally significant for OP. Recognising OP as a multidimensional construct that encompasses both financial and non-financial indicators, this study adopts a broader perspective by explicitly integrating qualitative, non-financial measures to ensure a more comprehensive understanding.

(b) Organisational effectiveness

Organisational effectiveness is a broader construct encompassing OP and various internal performance outcomes that extend beyond purely economic evaluations by stakeholders such as shareholders, managers, or customers (Singh et al., 2016). For instance, it includes considerations such as corporate social responsibility. Despite its comprehensive scope, organisational effectiveness is less prevalent in management research compared to OP, largely due to the latter's narrower focus, which facilitates cross-company and cross-industry comparisons (Richard et al., 2009). The literature highlights tools like the Balanced Scorecard, which has brought attention to organisational effectiveness by incorporating a variety of performance dimensions. However, it is tailored to individual companies, making comparisons across organisations "almost impossible" (Neely and Bourne, 2000). As a result, the emphasis on OP remains dominant (Richard et al., 2009).

This study adopts the broad definition of OP (based on definition **a**), recognising it as a multidimensional construct informed by both financial and non-financial indicators. As emphasised by Camps and Luna-Arocas (2010), qualitative measures are also essential in understanding OP. By incorporating this perspective, the study acknowledges the diverse aspects that may influence OP in the context of hybrid work. While the research takes a multi-perspective approach, it does not seek to comprehensively measure OP but rather explores how different target groups perceive it. This definition allows for a more nuanced understanding of OP, particularly regarding qualitative aspects,

without attempting to quantify performance outcomes. Instead, the study focuses on how employees, HR professionals, and general managers interpret OP within hybrid work structures, capturing their insights on potential influences and implications.

The following discussion explores the relationship between performance approaches and HR practices, with a focus on their application within the German context.

2.2.3.2.   Relevant OP theory and approaches

The relationship between HRM practices and OP has been a central focus in management research for decades, with scholars exploring this link through various theoretical perspectives. The systems perspective, for instance, investigates how HRM practices and information sharing influence employee and OP, while the strategic perspective examines how a cohesive set of practices contributes to competitive advantage (Singh et al., 2012). Other approaches, such as the contingent perspective, account for contextual factors like industry, organisational size, and political systems in evaluating HRM effectiveness (Paauwe and Boselie, 2005). Similarly, the RBV highlights HRM's potential to shape human capital by fostering desired attitudes and behaviours, ultimately driving performance (Barney and Wright, 1998; Beardwell, 2004). Despite general consensus on HRM's impact, the empirical evidence is often fragmented, highlighting the complexity of the HRM-OP relationship (Singh et al., 2012).

One prominent critique in the literature is the tendency to oversimplify HR structures, neglecting the unique mechanisms and social processes within organisations (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2006). This has led to calls for more exploratory research that examines how HR practices interact with various organisational contexts and intermediate variables to affect performance (Becker and Huselid, 1998; Becker and Huselid, 2006). Scholars also emphasise that contextual factors, or "characteristics of the organisational environment," heavily influence HR systems, which often vary significantly across organisations (Becker and Huselid, 2006). This variability underscores the importance of qualitative research to better capture the nuanced impact of context-specific factors on OP (Guest, 2011).

Internal and external factors further complicate this relationship. Internally, HR policies such as training, compensation, appraisals, and feedback, along with organisational structure, play a critical role in shaping performance outcomes (Singh et al., 2012). Externally, factors like market demand, regulatory requirements, and financial conditions also influence the effectiveness of HR practices (Singh et al., 2016). Together, these elements highlight the multifaceted nature of the HRM-OP link, suggesting that both internal mechanisms and external pressures must be considered when evaluating performance.

Another layer of complexity arises from the debate over whether HRM practices have direct or indirect effects on OP. Advocates of the direct perspective argue that practices such as High-Performance Work Systems or Pfeffer's HRM best practices directly enhance OP by fostering efficiency and competitive advantage (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008; Wood and Menezes, 2008). Research in this area suggests that integrated HR systems are more impactful than isolated practices, as the synergy of multiple HRM activities enhances their effectiveness (Barney and Wright, 1998; Delaney and Huselid, 1996). However, critics point to the inconsistent results these best practices produce across organisations, reflecting the influence of specific organisational and industry contexts (Guest, 2011). Additionally, studies often prioritise financial performance metrics, overlooking critical aspects like employee satisfaction and wellbeing, which are equally important to a holistic understanding of performance (Redman and Wilkinson, 2013; Singh et al., 2012).

In contrast, the indirect perspective focuses on intermediary mechanisms, often referred to as the "black box" of HRM research, through which HR practices influence OP (Guest, 2011; Wright et al., 2003). Although studies in this area have identified potential mediators, such as employee engagement and organisational commitment, the precise mechanisms linking HRM to performance remain unclear (Way, 2002; Wright et al., 2003).

In this context, Pfeffer's HRM best practices framework provides a compelling approach to examining the HRM-OP link. This model identifies specific practices, such as high-performance work systems and employee involvement, which directly enhance OP by fostering efficiency and competitive advantage (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008; Wood and Menezes, 2008). Pfeffer's framework is particularly well-suited to a qualitative study on hybrid work effectiveness for several reasons. First, it offers a structured set of practices that can be examined in diverse organisational contexts, making it adaptable to the hybrid work environment. Second, its focus on high-performance practices such as fostering trust, autonomy, and participation aligns with the key elements of hybrid work, where flexibility and employee engagement are critical. Third, using Pfeffer's framework allows for an exploration of how these practices interact with both internal and external factors, such as organisational culture, leadership, and external regulatory requirements, providing a comprehensive understanding of hybrid work effectiveness (Pfeffer, 1998).

Complementing this perspective, the JD-R model provides another useful framework for understanding the complexities of hybrid work and its essential features. Widely applied in research on working conditions, the JD-R model explains how job demands and resources influence employee well-being and performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014, 2017). Job demands such as time pressure, emotional demands, and role overload require sustained effort and are associated with psychological and physiological costs (Katou et al., 2022). Conversely, job resources such as autonomy, participation

in decision-making, and organisational support reduce the negative effects of demands, enhance motivation, and foster personal growth (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011; Katou et al., 2022).

The JD-R model identifies two critical processes: motivation and stress. When job resources are abundant, they enhance engagement and commitment, leading to improved performance. Conversely, excessive job demands deplete resources, causing disengagement and decreased performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). This model is particularly relevant to hybrid work, where telework and flexible arrangements alter employees' working conditions. Hybrid work can enhance job resources, such as flexibility and autonomy, but also intensify demands, such as reduced social interaction, leading to mixed outcomes on performance (Naqshbandi et al., 2023).

By integrating Pfeffer's HRM best practices with the JD-R model, the author aims to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the HRM-OP link within hybrid work environments. While Pfeffer's framework provides a structured set of practices to examine organisational-level effects, the JD-R model offers insights into how individual-level dynamics, such as job demands and resources, influence performance. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced exploration of hybrid work's organisational implications, addressing internal mechanisms and different stakeholders. This integration underscores the need for further empirical research to refine these perspectives and better understand the evolving nature of hybrid work and its essential features.

Overall, the relationship between HRM practices and OP is multifaceted, shaped by internal and external factors, direct and indirect effects, and the variability of organisational contexts. While existing research provides valuable insights, significant gaps remain, particularly in understanding the nuanced mechanisms and contextual factors that mediate this relationship. A holistic approach that integrates diverse theoretical perspectives and considers subjective measures and non-financial performance metrics is essential for advancing knowledge in this critical area of management research. This broader perspective will enable organisations to better align HRM practices with organisational objectives, fostering sustainable and contextually relevant outcomes.

2.2.4. Effective hybrid working

Having established a theoretical foundation and examined the current state of the literature on hybrid work, HRM, the employee-centred approach, and OP, the next step is to explore their interplay. Therefore, this section focuses on the current body of knowledge regarding effective hybrid working, identifying key insights and research findings. Additionally, it delves into the essential features and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of hybrid work, providing a comprehensive

understanding of the aspects and conditions that support successful implementation in organisational settings.

The widespread adoption of hybrid work, particularly in countries like Germany, was not a conceivable scenario prior to the pandemic (Jung and Kraus, 2021; Speck, 2022). Thus the pandemic-driven shift towards hybrid work has significantly altered workplace dynamics and introduced new research areas (Bath and Winkler, 2023). Among these is the evolving field of performance measurement in hybrid work environments, which remains under-researched despite growing interest. Similar to hybrid work research itself, the literature in this domain can be broadly divided into two categories: pre-pandemic theoretical studies that explored implications for effective telework, and (post-) pandemic studies that examine the realities of hybrid work and its essential features. The latter provides initial insights into the status quo, existing research gaps, and sector-specific contexts.

Recent years have seen an increase in studies examining effective teleworking during pandemic peaks and in hybrid work post-COVID-19. However, the field remains nascent as hybrid work continues to establish itself. The literature reports inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between telework as well as hybrid work and their impact on OP. Some studies report positive effects, citing increased flexibility and autonomy that empower employees to organise their work effectively, enhancing productivity (Gajendran et al., 2015; Sekhar and Patwardhan, 2023). Conversely, other studies highlight potential drawbacks, such as blurred boundaries between work and personal life, which can decrease productivity (Campo et al., 2021; Wöhrmann and Ebner, 2021).

Research indicates that employees who work almost exclusively from home often experience reduced organisational commitment and professional isolation due to limited interaction with colleagues (Lee and Gascó-Hernandez, 2023; Van der Lippe and Lippényi, 2020). Yet, a study in the United States comparing teleworkers and non-teleworkers found no significant difference in work motivation between the two groups (Caillier, 2012). Collectively, these findings suggest mixed support for the impact of teleworking or hybrid working on individual outcomes, with some studies highlighting positive effects and others noting challenges or inconclusive results (De Vries et al., 2019; Lee and Kim, 2018). Hybrid work, which has received less attention in the literature, remains particularly underexplored in terms of its relationship with OP measurement.

Two noteworthy studies underscore the link between individual and organisational outcomes. Nakrošienė et al. (2019) demonstrate that individual outcomes, such as increased productivity, can positively influence OP. Similarly, Choi, (2020) emphasises the need to differentiate between individual and organisational effects, noting, for example, that an employee's intention to leave an employer (individual level) does not always translate to higher turnover at the organisational level.

These insights highlight the importance of multi-level analyses in understanding telework and hybrid work's broader implications.

Previous studies have predominantly focused on individual employee perceptions and their effects, leaving OP underexplored (Lee and Gascó-Hernandez, 2023). This gap justifies the need for further research that incorporates diverse target groups and examines the impact of hybrid works' essential features on OP more comprehensively. In particular, work engagement is increasingly considered a critical mediator between hybrid work arrangements and performance. Defined as a sustained, positive, affective-motivational state characterised by dedication and absorption, work engagement is influenced by factors such as autonomy and personal discretion, including flexible work arrangements (Gerards et al., 2018; Naqshbandi et al., 2023). Exploring autonomy and flexibility within hybrid work models can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms driving performance outcomes at both individual and organisational levels.

In summary, while existing literature provides valuable insights into the impact of telework and hybrid work on performance, it highlights the need for further research, particularly on qualitative aspects of OP. By addressing the gaps in understanding hybrid work's nuances and exploring multi-level analyses, future studies can better capture the complex dynamics shaping performance in the evolving workplace.

2.2.4.1. Essential features for effective hybrid work

Hybrid work, as described at the beginning, is a flexible working model that is independent of time and place. This means that employees can perform their work from the office, from home or from another location and, in theory, at any time. However, a number of questions implicitly arise here in organisational terms, particularly in terms of productivity. When can employees work most productively, where and, if applicable, on what (Bath and Winkler, 2023)?

Various recent studies and publications have explored these questions, identifying key factors that influence the effectiveness of hybrid work. It is important to acknowledge that while hybrid work relies on a supportive infrastructure, its complexity arises from the interplay of multiple organisational dimensions. These include the alignment of the work model with corporate strategy, as well as the role of organisational culture and leadership in shaping collaboration. Beyond strategic considerations, hybrid work requires the adaptation of management tools, communication frameworks, and collaborative processes, alongside the necessary infrastructure, to ensure that employees and teams can operate effectively within a hybrid environment.

HR policies

A McKinsey study found that companies actively developing and communicating a "post-COVID-19 policy" after the initial pandemic phase achieved higher performance and employee commitment levels than those that did not. Employees in these organisations reported a stronger sense of belonging, better support, and improved individual performance (Alexander et al., 2021).

However, implementing hybrid work presents challenges that may seem contradictory. While employees require significant freedom to organise their work and choose their location, this must be balanced with a clear organisational framework to ensure alignment with company needs (Becker et al., 2022). Legal and operational conditions for establishing a structured and consistent hybrid work culture must also be thoroughly examined (Bogenstahl and Peters, 2021; Hart et al., 2022; Lott and Abendroth, 2020).

Leadership

Leadership is frequently highlighted as a critical factor influencing the success of hybrid work, with managers facing the challenge of effectively leading hybrid teams (softgarden, 2021). Combining the strengths of in-person and remote work requires navigating complexities related to time and distance, which significantly affect collaboration both within teams and between managers and employees (Hirsch, 2022; Winkler et al., 2022).

Surveys underscore the difficulties associated with hybrid leadership. For instance, only 9% of respondents in a study by the Institute for Leadership Culture in the Digital Age perceived purely positive opportunities in hybrid team leadership. Similarly, the "Future of Leadership" survey by softgarden revealed that 80.2% of respondents viewed remote leadership as one of the top three challenges for managers, with many doubting their leaders' preparedness for such roles. Among HR managers surveyed, 59.4% believed their organisations' leaders were "not at all" or "rather not" equipped for remote/virtual leadership (softgarden, 2021).

The literature identifies leadership as pivotal in hybrid work, emphasising the need for further training and digital-oriented competencies. These include IT skills, emotional intelligence, authenticity, and openness to change, which are increasingly prioritised over traditional delegation skills (Winkler et al., 2022). Building trust, fostering a culture of openness, and maintaining emotional proximity to employees are seen as essential components for effective hybrid leadership (Bath and Winkler, 2023).

Communication and collaboration (team/ cross-functional work)

Communication is a critical factor not only in hybrid leadership but also within teams, whether in line organisations, cross-functional collaboration, or project contexts. Hybrid teams face unique challenges due to their dynamic composition, often shifting between "online and offline" members daily (Bernardy et al., 2021). These shifting dynamics can lead to uneven team cognitions and emotions, posing challenges for fostering cohesion and effective collaboration. A key priority is creating a cohesive workplace culture that supports communication and collaboration across locations (Weise, 2021).

According to Weise (2021), effective communication in hybrid work requires clear guidelines and rules, especially in models where employees can choose when and where to work. Setting explicit rules for work processes, result sharing, and managing synchronous and asynchronous workflows is essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure alignment (Winkler et al., 2022). Participation, transparency, and joint decision-making are also vital aspects of communication. A study on hybrid work revealed that 74% of employees felt hybrid work measures in their organisations lacked transparency, fairness, or inclusivity (Owl Labs, 2022). These concerns can be mitigated by maintaining continuous communication about processes and interim results and involving employees in decision-making, both virtually and in person. Such practices not only foster inclusion but also empower employees to shape their working environments (Winkler et al., 2022).

Motivating communication, conscious team-building efforts, and fostering cross-functional dialogue are essential for ensuring effective teamwork in hybrid settings. To prevent physical distance from undermining collaboration, it is necessary to cultivate strong team relationships, establish cross-functional connections, and create regular opportunities for contact and interaction (Bernardy et al., 2021; Winkler et al., 2022). By prioritising communication strategies that address these elements, organisations can support hybrid teams in thriving both online and offline.

Team structure

Team structure is a critical aspect of hybrid work, with "self-organised teams" increasingly recognised as a key feature of modern leadership culture. These teams distribute leadership responsibilities among members, fostering trust and collaboration at both project and departmental levels (Piecha et al., 2012).

The shift to decentralised leadership is driven by the complexity of hybrid work, making centralised control and decision-making inefficient. Traditional leadership models based on hierarchical authority face limitations in this context, leading to growing adoption of shared leadership approaches

(Rybnikova, 2014). Shared leadership, which distributes responsibility among team members, aligns well with the flexibility and collaboration required in hybrid work settings and is seen as a promising direction for the future (Winkler et al., 2022).

2.2.5. Identified gaps in the literature

The literature on hybrid work, OP, and employee-centred HRM reveals significant gaps that warrant further exploration. While hybrid work has gained prominence as a workplace model, particularly during and after the pandemic, the impact of its essential features on OP remains insufficiently understood. Pre-pandemic studies primarily focused on theoretical implications and limited telework adoption, while post-pandemic research has started to examine hybrid work in practice. However, findings are inconsistent, with some studies reporting positive outcomes, such as increased flexibility and autonomy leading to enhanced productivity (Gajendran et al., 2015; Sekhar & Patwardhan, 2023), and others highlighting drawbacks, such as blurred work-life boundaries and employee isolation (Campo et al., 2021; Wöhrmann and Ebner, 2021). Furthermore, most research concentrates on individual-level outcomes rather than exploring the broader organisational implications, underscoring the need for multi-level analyses to capture the full spectrum of hybrid work's impact on OP (Choi, 2020; Lee and Gascó-Hernandez, 2023; Nakrošienė et al., 2019).

The growing emphasis on employee-centred HRM, accelerated by the pandemic, introduces further complexities. This approach challenges traditional hierarchies by promoting inclusivity, shared governance, and adaptability, yet its integration into hybrid work models remains underexplored. While such practices have the potential to enhance employee satisfaction and organisational sustainability (Järlström et al., 2018; Ogbonnaya and Aryee, 2020), they also encounter challenges, including balancing stakeholder interests and managing power dynamics (Edgar and Geare, 2014). Empirical research is needed to examine how employee-centred HRM can operationalise autonomy and inclusivity while maintaining alignment with organisational goals. Additionally, the interplay between employee-centred HRM and stakeholder theory requires further investigation, particularly in managing tensions between shareholder profit objectives and employee well-being (Fischer et al., 2019; Freeman and McVea, 2001).

The role of formalisation in hybrid work requires further investigation. While it ensures consistency and compliance, excessive rigidity can hinder innovation, while insufficient structure risks inconsistencies (Nolan and Harney, 2023; Skorková, 2020). Hybrid work demands a balance between clear policies and adaptive practices to manage challenges such as remote performance management and equitable resource allocation. Although research highlights the need for accountability and

flexibility (Mariappanadar, 2024), more studies are needed to determine how organisations can achieve this balance effectively.

Beyond formalisation, the degree of centralisation in decision-making remains underexplored. While centralisation promotes uniformity and control, it may limit team-level adaptability (Schönenberg, 2010). Conversely, decentralised decision-making allows teams to adjust hybrid work practices but risks inconsistencies in implementation (Scheriau, 2015).Despite its relevance, little research has examined how hybrid organisations can balance centralised oversight with decentralised autonomy to maintain both alignment and flexibility.

Similarly, the level of explicitness in communication and organisational rules remains an underdeveloped area in the literature. Highly explicit communication – through formal policies, structured reporting, and written guidelines – enhances clarity and transparency but may hinder informal knowledge-sharing and flexibility (Peuter et al., 2023). In contrast, Brewster (2018) states that implicit communication, based on shared norms and unwritten expectations, fosters trust and agility but can disadvantage remote employees who lack access to contextual cues. Research is still lacking on how organisations can structure communication and decision-making to support clarity, inclusivity, and adaptability in hybrid settings. Addressing these gaps is key to structuring hybrid work in a way that balances efficiency, autonomy, and organisational coherence.

Another notable gap lies in effective hybrid working and its essential features. Existing studies overwhelmingly favour quantitative methodologies and financial performance metrics, often neglecting non-financial dimensions such as employee engagement, organisational culture, and mental health (Cohanier, 2014). Incorporating qualitative and subjective aspects is critical for capturing the nuanced impacts of hybrid work but is underrepresented in current research. Moreover, much of the literature relies on individual employee perceptions, limiting insights into organisational-level outcomes (Andrei and Militaru, 2022; Harker Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). There is a pressing need for qualitative approaches to address these gaps and provide a more holistic understanding of hybrid work's essential features and their influence on performance.

Overall, the fragmented nature of existing research underscores the need for interdisciplinary approaches that bridge hybrid work, employee-centred HRM, and OP. Current studies often treat these topics in isolation, limiting understanding of their interdependencies. Future research must adopt multi-level frameworks and qualitative methodologies to explore how these elements interact, addressing gaps in knowledge and advancing both theoretical insights and practical applications. By adopting a qualitative lens, this study departs from the predominantly quantitative focus of existing research, offering richer insights into the lived experiences of employees and managers in hybrid work settings.

Furthermore, this study has practical implications. Hybrid work presents unique challenges and opportunities for aligning employee-centred HRM practices with organisational goals. Investigating these complexities within the German context provides an opportunity to inform HRM strategies tailored to hybrid work, addressing the pressing need for balance between employee well-being and organisational outcomes. The research, therefore, not only fills an academic gap but also provides insights for organisations navigating the hybrid work transition.

2.2.6. Summary

Returning to the conceptual framework introduced at the beginning of Chapter 2, the previous subchapters critically reviewed the literature on hybrid working on an organisational level as well as aspects of the employee-centred approach which might be influential in the transition of hybrid work organisations. Taken together, this literature review highlights several topics deserving further investigation.

As a result of the extensive literature review, a framework emerged that illustrates the link between HRM practises and OP when investigating hybrid work in an employee-centred HRM context. This study's conceptual framework integrates key elements from Pfeffer's nine HRM best practices, the JD-R model, and insights from OP literature, particularly regarding internal and external factors influencing the HRM-OP link. All aspects included in the framework are examined through the lens of an employee-centred approach, emphasising flexibility, inclusivity, and employee well-being as central to hybrid work's success. Thus, the concept includes those aspects of the individual theories and approaches that (may) change as a result of hybrid work or that have been directly influenced by the shift to hybrid work. For example, not all of Pfeiffer's 9 HRM practices are taken into account, but the aspect of self-managed teams and decentralised authority, since the author believes that these can be associated with hybrid work:
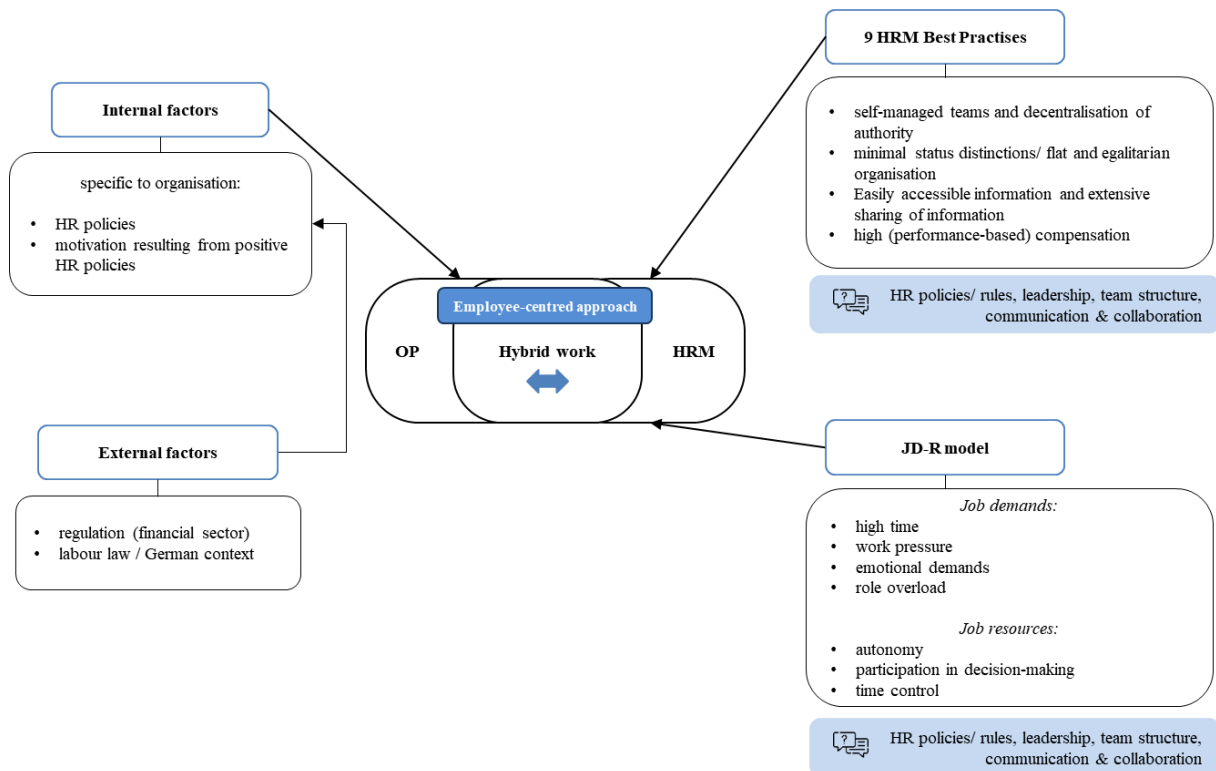
Figure 4: Conceptual framework based on literature review

Source: Own illustration

The conceptual framework not only guides the theoretical structure of this study but also informs the design of the data collection process. It underpins the development of semi-structured interview questions, ensuring that the data collection aligns with the study's objectives and captures the nuanced relationship between HRM practices, hybrid work, and OP.

This approach enables a structured yet flexible exploration of the subject matter, facilitating a deeper understanding of how these interdependent elements operate in practice.

The following chapter explores the philosophical foundations and methodological framework selected for the study. It provides an overview of the qualitative research design, including the justification for applying a single-case study approach and the procedures for data analysis. Furthermore, it discusses key aspects of research ethics and reflects on the researcher's role in the investigation.

3. Research methodology

Based on the previous discussion, research on hybrid work in German organisations and its essential features is a relatively new area of research.

The following chapter will now explain the design of the research. First, a common understanding of the relevant research philosophies is created and an overview of them is given. This is followed by a detailed description and justification of the chosen paradigm constructivism. The pardigm forms the theoretical basis for the axiological, ontological and epistemological position of this research. This is followed by an explanation of the reasons for choosing an inductive and qualitative approach. Moreover, the choice of a mono-method approach, using an iterative interview process, is outlined, including the data collection, with descriptions of the sampling method, sample size and the research ethics to be considered. The remainder of the chapter outlines the process of data analysis and highlights the rationale for choosing thematic analysis.

Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the ethical considerations for this research.

3.1. Research philosophy

The relationship between data and theory has concerned philosophers and scientists for years and still influences management and business research today. Many researchers emphasise choosing a suitable research philosophy and then a suitable research strategy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2023).

As the research philosophy is a set of beliefs, values and assumptions that influence the generation of knowledge, whether consciously or unconsciously, it is crucial for any researcher to consider their philosophical position. The underlying assumptions that researchers make or have already deeply internalised typically influence the research philosophy and design (Saunders et al., 2023). Saunders et. al essentially distinguish three different types of assumptions that are relevant to research philosophy: Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology.

Ontology describes the reality of nature. In the business and management research context, ontology serves as an answer to the question of whether individuals in organisations are understood as objects or subjects (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Espistemology, on the other hand, focuses on assumptions about knowledge (Saunders et al., 2023). Specifically, epistemological assumptions provide information about what is accepted, valid and legitimate in knowledge generation. Thus, this stance also has implications for the way data is collected, and knowledge is communicated. Axiology

explains the role of values and ethics within the research project (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This refers on the one hand to the researcher's own values, but also to how the values and ethics of respondents or other individuals, for example in organisations, are addressed. In summary, these three types of assumptions form the basis for the approach and design of the research.

Therefore, the context and background of the research topic will be discussed below in order to explain the philosophical derivations based on this and to select the appropriate methodology in line with the philosophical orientation.

An overview of the research methodology including the philosophical orientations (see in blue) is illustrated below:

Figure 5: Research methodology - an overview

Source: Own illustration inspired by Saunders et al. (2023)

3.1.1. Research background

The evolution of hybrid work has introduced significant changes to organisational structures, HRM strategies, and employee experiences. While hybrid work has been widely adopted across various

industries, its full implications on essential features influencing OP remain underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by examining hybrid work through a qualitative, multi-perspective approach, capturing the views of different organisational actors. Given the complexity and contextual dependencies of hybrid work, this research acknowledges the necessity of integrating multiple perspectives to generate a comprehensive understanding of its impact.

Hybrid work, integrating remote and on-site arrangements, has become a key feature of modern workplaces. However, its adoption varies based on corporate culture, industry needs, and legal frameworks. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift from presence-based to remote work, prompting a fundamental transformation in work practices. Initially a necessity, hybrid work has since evolved into a long-term model, requiring alignment with HRM policies and organisational goals. This transformation underscores the need for a methodological approach that captures the dynamic and multifaceted nature of hybrid work. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how different target groups perceive and experience hybrid work, providing a richer and more nuanced analysis. To comprehensively understand hybrid work's impact, this research takes an integrative approach by incorporating perspectives from three key organisational groups: general management, HR professionals, and employees. Each group plays a distinct role in shaping and experiencing hybrid work, making their input essential for constructing a holistic framework.

By integrating these perspectives, the study acknowledges that different realities exist within the organisation and that hybrid work is not a one-size-fits-all model. This methodological choice aligns with the study's broader goal of examining hybrid work as a superordinate construct influenced by various actors and features.

A central aspect of this research is understanding hybrid work's essential features impacting OP. Traditionally, OP has been assessed using financial and quantitative metrics. However, scholars such as Camps and Luna-Arocas (2010) highlight the importance of incorporating qualitative indicators, recognising that OP extends beyond purely financial outcomes. This study adopts a broader conceptualisation of OP, incorporating non-financial factors. Instead of relying on quantitative performance metrics or establishing a formal evaluation model, this study prioritises the personal experiences and perspectives of individuals working within hybrid environments. By adopting this approach, the research seeks to uncover what general managers, HR professionals, and employees perceive as essential features of hybrid work, as well as its broader implications for the evolving German workplace.

Thereby this research aims to capture the diverse perspectives of participants, offering a more detailed understanding of the essential aspects of hybrid work, with a particular focus on employee-centred HRM strategies. By investigating what employees, HR professionals, and management perceive as

OP's essential features, the study generates insights into how hybrid work can be structured to support both organisational goals and employee well-being.

Given the evolving nature of hybrid work, the study embraces a flexible research design. Hybrid work is influenced by contextual factors such as labour law, industry regulations, and cultural dynamics, making a static or overly prescriptive methodology unsuitable. Instead, a qualitative approach allows for adaptability in exploring emerging themes and stakeholder experiences. Semi-structured interviews enable an in-depth exploration of key topics while allowing participants to introduce new perspectives that may not have been initially anticipated.

The study also acknowledges the role of HR professionals as a cross-functional group that bridges organisational strategy and employee experience. Their inclusion enhances the study's methodological robustness by providing insights into policy implementation, employee engagement, and structural considerations. This approach strengthens the research's ability to generate a practical framework for hybrid work models and for assessing the potential fit of an employee-centric approach for the respective organisation.

3.1.2. Explanation of the chosen research philosophy

In order to approach a suitable paradigm, the ontological, epistemological and axiological characteristics within the basic philosophical attitudes will be discussed first.

The continuum of the best-known ontological positions ranges from realism to internal realism, relativism and nominalism. Within the social sciences, the last three positions in particular come into question. With regard to this study, a relativistic stance is adopted. Relativism is characterised by the assumption that different views exist. Collins and Stevens (1983) go one step further and say "what counts for the truth can vary from place to place and from time to time.". This study recognising that facts are shaped by the observer's perspective and the surrounding context. In work environments such as hybrid work realities are socially constructed and influenced by time, place, and organisational dynamics. Rather than assuming a single, objective truth about hybrid work, this approach acknowledges the varied experiences and perceptions of general managers, HR professionals, and employees. Given the fast-evolving nature of hybrid work, a relativist ontology is particularly suitable, allowing for an exploration of multiple perspectives that reflect the complexities of this work model. This aligns with the study's qualitative methodology, ensuring that findings are rooted in participants' lived experiences rather than predefined assumptions.

Facts are therefore based on the perspective of the observer and the corresponding context and environment. As the world of work and the very fast-moving environment of hybrid work (often referred to as the "new normal") is characterised by different views and factors that depend on time and place, this positioning is appropriate.

Epistemologically, a distinction is made between two contrasting perspectives: Positivism and social constructionism. Within the social sciences, social constructionism has developed in the last half-century, mainly as a reaction to the limitations in the applicability of positivist positions to the social sciences. In contrast to positivism, it is assumed here that reality is not objective and external. Rather, it is socially constructed and is characterised by the interaction of people and the exchange of their experiences. Therefore, these individual experiences should be valued and researched. In contrast to measuring facts and mathematical correlations, for example, in order to make generalisable deductions, the social constructionism approach focuses on thinking, feeling and communicating, verbally and non-verbally, subjective experiences. Furthermore, the complexity of situations is recognised and not broken down to the simplest terms. Social constructionism serves as the epistemological foundation for this research due to its emphasis on the co-construction of meaning through social interaction. Hybrid work, as a phenomenon, is shaped by individual and collective experiences, organisational structures, and cultural contexts. Rather than existing as an objective reality, hybrid work is continuously negotiated through discourse, policies, and practices within organisations. Given that this study investigates hybrid work through the perspectives of different target groups, social constructionism aligns with the research aim of exploring multiple, context-dependent realities. The study recognises that hybrid work is not a fixed entity but a socially constructed process that varies across organisations, industries, and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, social constructionism acknowledges that knowledge is historically and socially embedded. The shift to hybrid work has been significantly influenced by external events, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as evolving employee expectations and HRM strategies. By adopting this epistemological stance, the research critically examines how participants perceive, negotiate, and institutionalise hybrid work, rather than seeking to measure it as an independent, objective phenomenon. This perspective also supports the study's qualitative approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the meanings that different actors assign to hybrid work and OP. Through interviews and thematic analysis, the study captures the nuanced ways in which hybrid work is understood, implemented, and evaluated, reinforcing the premise that reality is co-constructed through language, interaction, and shared experiences within the organisational setting.

The axiology underpinning this research reflects a value-bound and value-aware (not value-free) approach to understanding hybrid working and OP. This study acknowledges the influence of the researcher's perspectives while striving to engage reflexively and minimise bias. By embracing the

subjectivity inherent in qualitative inquiry, it seeks to honour the complexity and diversity of participant experiences. As a value-bound study, it prioritises context-specific insights over universal solutions, aligning with a relativist ontology. It emphasises that hybrid working must be tailored to organisational and cultural conditions, rejecting sweeping generalisations in favour of nuanced understanding. This approach values the interplay of organisational, collective, and individual factors, highlighting the importance of capturing these dynamics authentically. At the same time, the research is value-aware, maintaining an ongoing commitment to reflexivity. By critically examining the researcher's own influence, the study seeks to uphold transparency, trustworthiness, and fairness. Ethical considerations, such as respecting participant voices and interpreting insights within their contexts, are central to the research process. Additionally, the axiology reflects a commitment to bridging theoretical knowledge and practical application. The study values actionable insights that inform organisational practice, positioning hybrid working as a dynamic phenomenon requiring tailored approaches. This dual focus ensures that the research contributes meaningfully to both academic discourse and real-world challenges. In summary, this research's axiology is characterised by its value-bound foundation and value-aware execution, ensuring findings that are both contextually relevant and ethically robust while maintaining practical significance.

The combination of a relativist ontology, a social constructionism epistemology and value-aware axiology, coupled with the research context and aim of this study, leads to the choice of a constructivist paradigm. Since nuances between the paradigms of constructivism and interpretivism are ultimately essential in the final choice, the following will briefly explain which aspects were decisive:

Constructivism believes that reality is a product of an adaptive, subjective and self-referential cognitive process of an individual perceiving their environment (Hug et al., 2019; Olson, 1995; Von Glaserfeld, 1989). Therefore, constructivists argue that what one knows cannot be the result of a passive acquisition of knowledge. Rather, the knower actively generates new knowledge by applying what is already known in order to construct new knowledge (Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Olson, 1995). Knowledge is understood as a human construction and does not exist independently of the knower (Von Glaserfeld, 1989). In conclusion, according to constructivists, there are multiple realities that are constructed by the people who are actively involved in the research process (Olson, 1995; Vygotsky et al., 1980). In the context of this study, the researcher would seek to understand the complex worldviews of the individual participants and the organisation. The researcher would rely on qualitative methods and ask the views, opinions and feelings for the research questions under investigation through open-ended questions in interviews. In this way, insights from the organisation become known and new knowledge can be generated for practice through self-reflection of the researcher in the role of practitioner. Critics warn that constructivist epistemology can cause confusion because implicit assumptions are usually not made

explicit, leading to different understandings of common concepts, especially reality (Avenier, 2010; Lincoln and Guba, 2007).

Constructivism and interpretivism share a close philosophical foundation, as both emphasise the subjective nature of reality and the role of human interpretation in shaping knowledge. Given their conceptual overlap, the following section will clarify the distinction between the two and apply these perspectives to the research topic, ensuring a precise alignment with the study's epistemological stance.

Interpretivists, on the other hand to constructivism, believe in multiple realities (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) and assume that reality is relative rather than fixed (Djamba and Neuman, 2002). Therefore, they focus on time- and context-bound meanings, motives and reasons among other subjective experiences (Djamba and Neuman, 2002; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Knowledge is generated in interpretivism by applying a personalised and flexible research approach (Carson et al., 2001). The aim is to capture meanings in human interaction (Black, 2006) and thus make sense of what is perceived as reality (Carson et al., 2001). Interpretivists see reality as too complex and unpredictable for the development of an a priori research design (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). According to Hudson and Ozanne (1988), an emergent and collaborative approach, in which the researcher and the participants are participants are interdependent and mutually influential, is considered purposeful. Interpretivist research remains open to adapted knowledge and new social realities throughout the research process (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In the context of this study, an interpretivist researcher would focus on the individual experiences and needs of the participants and the organisation. She would focus on the specific and concrete to gain knowledge of the participants' distinctions between facts and values that would enable him to understand and interpret their realities. By relying on qualitative methods, the subjective reality and actions of an individual, guided by emotion or reason, can be explored in depth. By applying an interpretivism philosophy, the researcher values contextual variables rather than trying to decontextualise the given (business) context (Cooke, 2018; Della Porta and Keating, 2008).

As the research aim is to construct an understanding from multiple angles and to understand the reality regarding effective working in hybrid patterns, the study focuses on how participants construct their business reality in their minds. It should be emphasised that the study aims not only at interpreting different perspectives but rather understanding the phenomenon (Lee, 2012). Therefore, a deep understanding of what conceptualises and constitutes an individual's working model is mandatory. Following this, the aim is to reach a level above the mere interpretation of other people's impressions - one that can reflect the organisational context. As a result, constructivism is the most appropriate for this study, aiming to create a more comprehensive understanding of the essential features influencing effective working from home in hybrid patterns to offer a practical framework.

Constructivism offers the significant advantage of generating an understanding which does not remain at the personal level but enables a higher (organisational) level (Lee, 2012). This allows for developing a practical framework. This level of detail and interpretation, coupled with the practical framework to be developed at the organisational (company) level, will provide new knowledge for companies and the working world of today as well as tomorrow.

3.2. Research approach

The research design depends on the philosophical beliefs of a researcher and specifies different techniques depending on the epistemological positioning. Constructionists research designs are linked to relativists and nominalists ontologies.

Starting with the research approach, in the context of HR and an explorative nature within the research questions an inductive and qualitative approach is pursued. This can be justified from a scientific and a practice-related perspective: Based on published limitations of theory and practice, which often consider a quantification of work features in the white-collar sector to be too simplistic, the topic of hybrid work is to be examined in more depth and qualitative form (Künzel, 2016). It is explored through qualitative data collection to find patterns that generate a theory (Saunders et al., 2023).

Thus, qualitative research enables the investigation of research problems by looking at the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social problem (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In order to understand the complex phenomenon of OP under hybrid working conditions holistically, different perspectives (of the target groups within the integrative approach) were collected and analysed qualitatively. Thus, the research outcome later includes voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the research problem as well as the contribution to literature and practice.

3.3. Research strategy

Coming from an epistemological orientation of the social constructionist, the research aims above all to allow for different truths and to explore the interaction with different perspectives and experiences. Thus, a broad range of research strategies could be considered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

The researcher considered action research, cooperative inquiry, case studies, and grounded theory for this study, selecting methods based on their practical applicability and alignment with research aims. Archival research and ethnography were excluded early due to their limitations. Archival research

lacks the ability to capture lived experiences and the dynamic nature of hybrid work, making it unsuitable for exploring the evolving organisational context. Ethnography, while valuable for in-depth cultural insights, typically requires long-term fieldwork, which extends beyond the specific focus of this study.

Action Research and Cooperative Inquiry

Both action research and cooperative inquiry prioritise participatory engagement, involving collaboration between researchers and participants to address real-world challenges (Argyris and Schön, 1989; Lewin, 1946). These approaches are particularly effective when research aims to implement change or solve organisational problems (Coghlan, 2007). However, their interventionist nature may introduce bias, impacting research objectivity. Additionally, action research's iterative, problem-solving focus may detract from a deeper analysis of hybrid work's complexities in a single organisational setting.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, which generates theories from empirical data, provides systematic and flexible analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). While this method is valuable for developing new theoretical insights, it prioritises broad, generalisable findings over the in-depth, context-specific exploration that this study requires (Charmaz, 2012). As this research aims to understand hybrid work within a single organisation rather than develop a new theory, grounded theory is less suitable.

A case study approach was ultimately chosen as it allows for a detailed, contextual examination of hybrid work, capturing the nuances of stakeholder experiences without the need for theory generation.

While action research, archival research, ethnography, narrative methods, and grounded theory each offer valuable insights in different contexts, none are as well-suited to the goals of this study.

Following a constructivist philosophy, the chosen research strategy can be described as a case study. According to extensive academic research, case study research is a valid method that "has the ability to generate insights from intensive and in-depth research to investigate a phenomenon in its real-world context, resulting in rich, empirical descriptions and the development of a theory" (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2012 cited in Saunders et al., 2019, p. 197). A case study is a research strategy that uses various research methods for data generation and analysis in order to answer the research question in-depth (Eisenhardt, 1989; Saunders et al., 2023; Stake, 2010). Furthermore, it

captures the complexity of a phenomenon by focusing on the values and intentions of the participants (Merriam, 1998, 2015; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

Critics of this method point out that there is a lack of specific design requirements that guide the case study. This has led to case studies in the past that lacked quality and therefore also credibility and validity (Hyett et al., 2014; Meyer, 2001). On the other hand, it is pointed out that this method makes it possible to gather information and experience that would have been hardly possible, if at all, by other means.

One of the main reasons for choosing this research strategy is its detailed investigation (Hartley, 2004), which offers a rich and empirical understanding of the topic. Since hybrid work in the context of a "new normal" is a contemporary phenomenon, the aim is to identify which features are essential and why (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, the chosen methodology is intended to contribute to an in-depth understanding of the effects of the working method and potential implications for OP. Regarding the essential features in hybrid work, the study has an exploratory character to generate new knowledge and identify meaningful findings within the specific population (Jansen, 2010).

There is a heated debate in management research about the use of single or multiple cases. Proponents of the single cases usually come from a constructionists epistemology, while the multiple cases are often positivists (Saunders et al., 2023; Yazan, 2015).

Epistemological views also play an important role within the case study method and their application - the strongly positivistic use of case studies focuses on large amounts of data, which should enable researchers to test theories and hypotheses. Multiple cases are often used with up to 30 samples, which also enable a cross-case comparison. Robert Yin coined this approach and is considered one of the best-known users of this method in the social sciences (Yin, 2009). In contrast to this, an alternative approach of case study methods was developed, coming from a constructionist epistemology. Robert Stake is often associated with this approach in the literature (Yazan, 2015). He characterised this approach by focusing on a big, rich picture of life or (human) behaviour in organisations or groups. This approach focuses more on the individual features of one or a few cases and, therefore, often leads to within-case analysis (Stake, 2010).

Following the epistemological choices within the research philosophy and approach this study considered the constructionists approach to case study research. Furthermore, a distinction should be made between instrumental and expressive case studies analogous to Stake. While the former looks at a specific case and aims to derive general principles, the expressive focus is on a specific case due to the unique features - the findings may be adaptable to other contexts, but this is not the focus of the study (Yazan, 2015).

Table 1: Case Study Approach Yin vs Stake

Source: Own illustration with content from (Yazan, 2015)

	Case Study approach by Yin	Case Study approach by Stake
Philosophical orientation	Positivist/ post-positivist	Constructivist/ interpretivist
Purpose	Theory testing, explanatory, causal analysis	In-depth understanding of particular, unique cases
Types of case studies	Explanatory, descriptive, exploratory	Intrinsic, instrumental, collective
Role of theory	Theory as a starting point to guide data collection and analysis	Minimal role for theory; focuses on unique case insights
Research questions	"How" and "Why" questions focused on causal relationships	Questions focused on understanding unique experiences or contexts
Data collection	Structured and systematic; multiple sources, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation	Flexible and evolving; relies on interviews, observations, and participant perspectives
Analysis approach	Deductive; pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis	Inductive; emphasizes themes, contexts, and participant meanings
Outcomes/ findings	Generalisable findings, often theory-driven	Contextualised, case-specific insights without generalization
Researcher's role	Objective observer, seeks to minimise bias	Engaged interpreter, embraces subjective understanding

Following the case study understanding of Stake (see Table 1), this study applies a single case approach. The single case study approach is suitable because the study focuses on a research topic that represents current academic and practical change and is therefore likely to become typical in the future (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Accordingly, due to the uniqueness of this case in the current state of knowledge and research, the focus is on the detailed study of a single organisation. Dubois and Gadde (2002, p. 554) share this view, stating that "the interaction between a phenomenon and its context is best understood through in-depth case studies".

With the aim of researching large amounts of data, testing hypotheses and producing generalisable results, critics of the single case argue with these very aspects. Researchers who have conducted single cases effectively counter and emphasise the dependence on explorative research questions, the creation of new ideas and abstract concepts. Nicolaj Siggelkow defends the single case study from a constructionist point of view with the frequently cited talking pig example:

"(..) we only need to produce a single talking pig to demonstrate the error of the popular idea that pigs are incapable of intelligent speech." – Nicolaj Siggelkow (2007)

Regarding the chosen company it is important to mention that the understanding of hybrid work is regulated by a German company agreement, which meets the criteria from above's hybrid work definition (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the organisation has a corresponding degree of maturity, so there is a professionalised HRM and a functioning operational and organisational structure. A mature organisation such as this company is deliberately chosen in comparison to, for example, start-ups, as a more stable environment and established personnel processes are assumed here. Considering that hybrid working is offered in Germany regardless of the sector and company size, yet it is implemented and applied individually in companies, exploring one specific organisation at a time seems reasonable. Among other things, the industry, the size of the company, the pain caused by the shortage of skilled labour and the resulting employer attractiveness aspects etc. play a major role here. It therefore makes sense to query this individuality and develop specific knowledge for the selected organisation.

To conclude, the case study approach is the most appropriate methodology for this research on hybrid work in a German financial company. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the hybrid work practices within a specific organisational context, enabling the researcher to capture the complexity and richness of participants' experiences (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). By focusing on a single case, this study can examine the interactions between individual perceptions, organisational culture, and broader structural factors that influence hybrid work, which would be difficult to achieve using other methods (Merriam, 1998; Thomas, 2016).

The case study approach allows for a balanced examination of both individual and organisational factors, offering a detailed understanding of hybrid work as it is experienced within a specific organisation (Yazan, 2015). This methodological choice ensures that the study provides a comprehensive, context-sensitive analysis of hybrid work practices that could inform both theory and practice in organisational studies.

3.4. Time horizon

The time horizon of this research is cross-sectional, reflecting its focus on capturing a detailed and context-specific understanding of hybrid working within a particular organisational setting at a single point in time (Saunders et al., 2023). Following Saunders view, this approach is well-suited to the study's objectives, which centre on exploring participants' perceptions and the interplay of organisationally driven, collectively driven, and individually driven factors that influence hybrid work practices and OP.

A cross-sectional design enables the research to provide a "snapshot" of the current state of hybrid working within the organisation, offering valuable insights into its governance, cultural conditions, and power dynamics (Denzin, 2013; Glaser and Strauss, 2017). This is particularly appropriate given the study's emphasis on generating in-depth, context-sensitive knowledge rather than tracking changes or developments over an extended period, as would be the case in a longitudinal study.

Furthermore, the choice of a cross-sectional time horizon aligns with the practical constraints and theoretical aims of the research (Lee, 2012). She states that by focusing on a specific moment in time, the study can delve deeply into the unique organisational context and the lived experiences of participants, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the realities of the organisation as it operates within the current hybrid working environment.

In conclusion, the cross-sectional time horizon is an appropriate methodological choice for this research. It allows for a comprehensive examination of the organisational and cultural dynamics shaping hybrid working, without the need for temporal comparisons, which are outside the scope of this study.

3.5. Techniques and procedures

This section begins by presenting an overview of the case study context and the chosen methodology for data collection. Subsequent sections provide a detailed account of the iterative process employed in designing interview questions, as well as the strategies used for participant sampling and recruitment.

3.5.1. Data collection methods

Mono-method qualitative research involves employing a single qualitative data collection and analysis technique to address specific research questions (Creswell and Poth, 2025). The decision to adopt a mono-method approach using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method aligns with the research aim of exploring perceptions and experiences of hybrid work within a single case study organisation. Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of hybrid work, semi-structured interviews provide the necessary flexibility to capture rich, in-depth insights while ensuring consistency across participants through a predefined set of guiding questions. This approach allows for adaptability, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into relevant themes that emerge during the interviews (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This stands in contrast to mixed-methods research, which, although broader in scope, may not provide the same level of detailed insight into the specific context and subtleties of individual and collective practices (Denzin et al., 2024).

A central advantage of the mono-method approach is its ability to deliver *depth of understanding*. Hybrid work, encompassing both remote and on-site arrangements, is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by organisational policies, individual preferences, and external influences. A single qualitative method offers the flexibility to explore these layers in detail, allowing for iterative data collection and analysis, and the opportunity to refine inquiries as the research unfolds (Creswell and Poth, 2025). By concentrating on one method, researchers can thoroughly engage with participants' perspectives, reflecting on emergent insights and thereby constructing a rich account of the hybrid work experience (Stake, 2010). This level of detail and contextual embedding is often more challenging to achieve in quantitative or mixed-methods research.

A further reason to adopt a mono-method design lies in its *contextual relevance*. The success or challenges of hybrid work cannot be divorced from the unique environment in which it occurs. Employing a single qualitative technique permits a close alignment with the organisation's specific culture, policies, and stakeholder dynamics. Within the German financial company under examination, local norms, industry regulations, and organisational culture may shape how employees and managers perceive and enact hybrid practices. A single-method study can thus illuminate the intricacies of this context, ensuring that interpretations remain sensitive to the setting (Creswell and Poth, 2025). By contrast, a mixed-methods approach, although it may capture broader trends, risks diluting the contextual depth that is critical for meaningful analysis (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

Methodological consistency is another key benefit. When only one qualitative method is employed, the data collection and analysis processes align closely with the overarching research aims (Denzin, 2013). Fewer methodological variances reduce the potential for conflicting findings or interpretive complexities. Instead, there is a coherent chain of evidence (Yin, 2012) that allows the researcher to trace how insights emerge from the data, thereby bolstering the study's credibility. This consistency also fosters *resource efficiency*, as researchers can invest their time and expertise in mastering a single technique rather than dividing efforts across disparate methods (Creswell and Poth, 2025). Particularly in doctoral research contexts, where time and resources may be limited, such focus can lead to a more rigorous and reflexive inquiry (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

Beyond resource considerations, the mono-method qualitative design aligns with the research objectives of gaining a comprehensive understanding of hybrid work practices within one specific organisational environment. By prioritising depth over breadth, the approach enables the researcher to document subtle nuances in participant experiences and organisational processes, generating findings that may not be discernible through quantitative measurements alone (Creswell and Poth, 2025). While mixed-methods studies can offer triangulation benefits, the granularity afforded by a single-method design is often more conducive to generating rich, context-sensitive insights (Stake, 2010).

In conclusion, the adoption of a mono-method qualitative approach is both recommended and appropriate for an in-depth investigation of hybrid work practices within a German financial company. Its capacity for capturing contextual detail, ensuring methodological coherence, and enabling efficient use of resources aligns strongly with the aims of this research. By emphasising depth of inquiry and local relevance, a single qualitative method provides a robust framework for illuminating how hybrid work functions within this specific organisational setting, thereby advancing both scholarly understanding and practical knowledge of this increasingly prominent mode of work.

All data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, thereby constituting *primary data* gathered exclusively for the purposes of this research in the form of individual interviews. These first-hand accounts provide insight into participants' experiences and perceptions, enabling a deep exploration of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Although secondary data sources are often used in broader research contexts, they are not employed in this study. Instead, the findings derived from the interviews will be contextualised in the Chapter "Discussion and Conclusion" by examining how the findings align with, expand upon, or challenge existing theories and research. As an insider researcher, the author is also familiar with two internal organisational policies that, while not formally analysed as secondary data, have implicitly informed the research by providing contextual understanding of the organisation's hybrid work practices and guiding principles. This process of situating the study's primary findings within the broader scholarly literature does not constitute the analysis of secondary data; rather, it ensures that the conclusions drawn are both theoretically informed and practically relevant (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Interview guide

The process of data collection for this study has been successfully completed, employing semi-structured interviews as the primary method to address the four research questions. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in business research, particularly in HRM studies (Doody and Noonan, 2016; Lee, 2012). This approach offers flexibility, allowing participants to provide detailed responses (Whiting, 2008). According to Doody and Noonan (2016), semi-structured interviews are effective in capturing rich qualitative data and serve as a strong foundation for in-depth analysis. Given the exploratory nature of this research, this method was deemed particularly suitable for understanding participants' subjective perceptions and experiences.

The interview guide was developed based on the conceptual framework established after an extensive review of the literature. This framework provided a structured yet adaptable basis for the interviews, ensuring alignment with key themes identified in previous research. The interview questions were designed to capture insights into organisational, collective, and individual factors influencing the

research phenomenon (see Appendix 2.1; 2.2 and 2.3). Individual interviews were conducted with HR professionals, general managers, and employees within the case study organisation. These interviews followed an open-ended, indicative question format and took place in a one-to-one setting between the researcher and each participant. In line with Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) recommendation for an iterative approach to interview design, the interview guide was adapted for each target group to reflect key thematic areas derived from the literature. As this was an exploratory study, questions remained flexible, allowing for slight modifications or expansions during the interviews to accommodate emerging insights. At the start of the interviews, all participants were introduced to the study's definition of OP (see chapter 2) and asked for their agreement to the given definition or any additional perspectives

All interviews were conducted online via the researcher's University of Worcester Microsoft Teams account and were both audio- and video-recorded. The recordings were subsequently transcribed, and the transcripts were securely stored in a password-protected OneDrive folder hosted on the University of Worcester's secure server. These transcripts will be retained until the dissemination process is complete (an exemplary transcript for each target group can be found in the appendix 2.4-2.9). Since the interviews were conducted in German, the researcher analysed the original audio and video recordings in their source language. Only relevant excerpts were translated into English for inclusion in this thesis and other publications, ensuring the accuracy and contextual integrity of the data.

3.5.2. Samples

Qualitative research typically involves relatively small sample sizes, which are dependent on the research question and academic context. Given that this study sought to capture subjective experiences rather than achieve generalisability, a larger sample size was not necessary (Kitzinger, 1995). The appropriate sample size was determined inductively based on theoretical saturation, as recommended in the literature (Guest et al., 2006) and will be explained in more detail in chapter 3.6.2.

Participants were recruited based on their ability to provide insights into the experience of essential features in hybrid work. They were selected purposefully (Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Marshall, 1996) according to the predetermined criteria relevant to the specific research objective (Guest et al., 2006): To be eligible for the study, participants had to be currently employed by the case study organisation and belong to one of three groups: employees, HR professionals, or general managers. This classification ensured an even distribution across the target groups. Furthermore, the study focused on exploring experiences, needs, requirements, and perspectives on hybrid working within the organisation. Therefore, an additional eligibility criterion required participants to either work in a hybrid format or manage individuals who did. The specific distribution of remote and on-site work (e.g., working from home once a week versus four times a week) was not a factor in the recruitment

process, as potential differences in distribution patterns were considered an aspect to be explored during the interviews.

The selection process leveraged existing organisational networks, which facilitate knowledge exchange among different professional groups. HR professionals were approached through internal HR networks. Managers were recruited from various leadership networks, allowing for a balanced representation of perspectives from different hierarchical positions. This approach ensured that insights were gathered from both senior leaders involved in strategic decision-making and mid-level managers responsible for operational implementation. Employees were selected through networks, including professional working groups such as those for junior staff, IT specialists, and cross-functional teams focused on innovation and artificial intelligence.
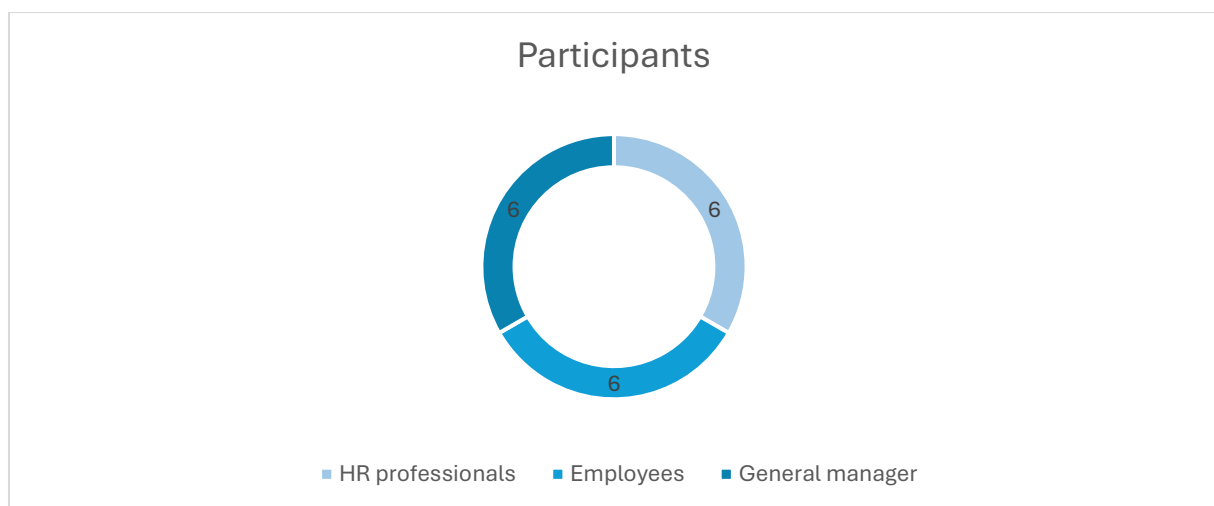
Figure 6: Participants per target group

Source: Own illustration

A total of 18 interviews were conducted, with six participants from each target group, until data saturation was reached (see chapter 3.6.2). Since the only relevant criteria for participation were affiliation with one of the three target groups and engagement in hybrid work or management of hybrid workers, no further descriptive sample analysis was required. Additionally, all participants remained in the study throughout the research process; none withdrew after completing their interviews or receiving the transcribed documents. As a result, all 18 interviews were included in the final analysis.

3.5.3. Recruitment

The recruitment of participants for this study followed a structured process in alignment with organisational regulations and ethical guidelines (see Appendix 1.1 Ethical approval).

Participant recruitment was initiated with approval from HR management, as per company policies. A signed agreement formalised the gatekeeper approval, granting access to potential participants and authorising data collection, including internal documents and public reports. Once this agreement was in place, HR management was no longer involved, ensuring that recruitment remained independent and objective. Participants were contacted through their respective group mailing lists, ensuring that the recruitment process was transparent and aligned with ethical research standards. Communication was conducted via the academic email address of the researcher, providing detailed information about the study to allow potential participants to make an informed decision about their involvement. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. To avoid any potential bias, it was made clear that direct reports were not to be approached individually. Should any direct reports proactively express interest in participating due to prior knowledge of the research, their involvement was declined to maintain the integrity of the study.

No incentives, either financial or otherwise, were offered to participants, maintaining the voluntary nature of the study. The use of organisational networks was deemed the most effective way to reach appropriate individuals who fit the study's target groups, ensuring that recruitment was both systematic and ethically sound.

3.6. Data analysis

Qualitative research involves an in-depth examination using empirical data collected over a defined period, guided by a well-structured research framework to deliver a contextual analysis (Cohanier, 2014; Flick, 2018). This section outlines the data analysis process in the present study, detailing the transcription and translation of interviews alongside the systematic organisation, aggregation, clustering, and interpretation of data. Furthermore, the discussion addresses the achievement of data saturation and reflects on the practitioner-researcher's role within the analytical process.

3.6.1. Thematic analysis

This study employs Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2022). RTA offers a flexible yet rigorous approach to qualitative data analysis, allowing for the identification and interpretation of patterns and themes within the data. The process follows six interrelated steps, detailed below (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Transcription and translation

The first step in the analysis involved transcribing all semi-structured interviews verbatim. The transcription process was undertaken exclusively by the researcher to ensure full engagement with the data from the outset. This approach required additional time and effort but was deemed essential to maintain direct responsibility for the transcripts and to foster a deeper understanding of the data. The data were gathered in Germany, with German being the researcher's native language. To minimise potential misunderstandings, the coding process was conducted in the original language (Galletta, 2013). However, all quotations were translated into English at the report stage and subsequently verified by a professional translator to ensure the highest level of accuracy. Despite these measures, it is important to recognise that the complexity of language may result in some nuances of German being lost in translation. The transcription and translation processes were iterative, with regular reviews to address ambiguities and ensure that the original intent of the participants' narratives was preserved (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Galletta, 2013).

Coding with software (MaxQDA)

The data analysis proceeded with coding using MaxQDA, a software designed for qualitative research. Meaningful segments of text were identified and assigned initial codes, addressing both explicit (semantic) and underlying (latent) content (Braun and Clarke, 2022). These codes were developed inductively, reflecting phrases relevant to the research objectives, while also being informed by the research questions. Prior knowledge from the literature review and the researcher's professional experience provided a foundational context for this phase. MaxQDA was instrumental in organising and systematically examining the data, offering a structured framework for deeper analysis. Reflexivity was integral to the process, with memos used to capture evolving ideas, potential biases, and emerging patterns (Thomas, 2016).

Generating initial themes

Following the completion of coding, the analysis transitioned to identifying initial themes by clustering related codes. Codes with similar meanings were grouped together and organised into potential themes, reflecting significant broader patterns within the data. This process included collating data relevant to each theme to assess their viability (Roberts et al., 2019). A research journal was maintained to document reflections on the data analysis process, enabling the researcher to track and refine insights (Ortlipp, 2008). Codes that were not aligned with the research aims and objectives were set aside in a miscellaneous category for memorable yet non-central statements. The dataset was revisited multiple times (read, listened to, and reviewed) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the material. Themes were conceptualised as overarching patterns representing meaningful aspects of the data in relation to the research questions. This stage involved moving beyond mere description to active interpretation, examining interactions between codes and exploring broader meanings. Preliminary themes were noted for their coherence and relevance, with openness maintained to uncover unexpected insights.

Reviewing themes

The preliminary themes underwent a thorough review to evaluate their accuracy and relevance. This process involved comparing the identified themes against the dataset to ensure they collectively presented a compelling narrative. Themes were assessed for internal homogeneity, focusing on the coherence and meaningful connections between the codes within each theme, and for external homogeneity, ensuring that the themes were distinct and clearly differentiated from one another.

Coded data were revisited to verify that each theme was adequately supported and that no significant elements of the dataset had been overlooked. Themes were refined, merged, or discarded depending on their alignment with the data and their ability to address the research objectives. This stage also included iterative refinement, such as splitting, combining, or eliminating themes to ensure they were robust, comprehensive, and reflective of the dataset. These efforts guaranteed that the resulting themes were both analytically sound and relevant to the overarching research aims.

Defining and naming themes

At this stage, each theme was clearly defined and given an informative, evocative name that encapsulated its essence. Definitions were developed to provide a detailed explanation of what each theme encompassed, its relevance to the study, and its connections to other themes. The process involved a detailed analysis of each theme to determine its scope, focus, and the overarching narrative

it represented (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This step resulted in the identification of 10 key themes. Informative names were chosen to reflect the analytical depth and coherence of each theme, ensuring their alignment with the research objectives and broader theoretical framework.

Report

The final stage focused on synthesising the identified themes into a cohesive narrative for the analysis report. This report presented the key themes and subthemes, supported by illustrative examples from participant responses. Insights derived from the semi-structured interviews were compiled into a comprehensive case report, offering a holistic view of the research findings. The aim was to deliver a rich and nuanced understanding of the research topic while upholding standards of transparency and analytical rigour.

3.6.2. Achieving saturation

Data saturation refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from additional interviews, indicating that the researcher has captured a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Cohanier, 2014; Denzin, 2009). Achieving data saturation is critical to ensuring the credibility and robustness of the findings (Flick, 2018; Lincoln and Guba, 2007). The process of reaching data saturation involves careful attention to the depth and breadth of the data collected (Kitzinger, 1995). Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for this purpose, as they allow for both consistency in exploring predetermined themes and flexibility to probe emergent topics. This combination enables the researcher to identify recurring patterns and themes across participants while remaining open to novel insights that enhance the richness of the data (Galletta, 2013).

While saturation cannot be determined in advance, existing literature offers some guidance on sample sizes for qualitative research. Marshall et al. (1996) recommend 15–30 participants for case studies, while Guest et al. (2006) suggest that 6–12 participants may suffice for homogeneous groups. These recommendations provide a useful reference point, but the actual determination of saturation depends on the nature of the study and the diversity of perspectives within the sample. The iterative approach of this study ensures that saturation is assessed dynamically based on the emergence of new themes. Factors such as the diversity of the sample, the complexity of the research topic, and the variability in participants' perspectives will influence the point at which saturation is reached (Marshall, 1996; Merriam, 1998).

As mentioned previously, theoretical saturation played a crucial role in determining the endpoint of data collection and analysis, which continued until interim findings indicated that further interviews were unlikely to yield new insights for theory building (Braun and Clarke, 2022; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Consequently, interviews were conducted over a defined period until sufficient data had been gathered and saturation was achieved. Data saturation was reached through an iterative interview process, where themes began to recur without the emergence of new insights. This was evident in the final rounds of interviews, where responses increasingly reinforced previously identified themes rather than introducing novel perspectives. Several indicators confirmed saturation:

Redundancy in themes across groups

- In the final interviews, participants echoed similar observations regarding hybrid work's structural implications, team dynamics, and managerial practices. For instance, HR professionals, employees, and managers consistently highlighted flexibility as both an advantage and a challenge, indicating a convergence in perspectives.

- Statements regarding autonomy, digital competencies, and workplace collaboration became repetitive, demonstrating thematic stability.

Saturation in organisational dynamics

- Managers across different departments reported similar experiences in understanding performance and structuring hybrid work arrangements, suggesting that further interviews would not yield significantly new insights.

- Employees described comparable challenges with hybrid work, particularly around communication, visibility, and the boundary between work and leisure, reinforcing that core themes had been thoroughly explored.

Triangulation across target groups

- By incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives (HR, employees, and managers), the study ensured that findings were not limited to a single viewpoint. The consistency of responses across groups confirmed the robustness of the identified patterns.

- For example, the need for collaboration rules in their teams was discussed by both HR professionals and managers, while employees independently emphasised similar challenges related to virtual communication.

Iterative refinement of questions

- o During the interview process, minor adjustments were made to probe underexplored areas.

- o The final three interviews primarily served to validate existing findings rather than expand thematic coverage, reinforcing that additional interviews would likely result in redundancy rather than deeper insight.

Alignment with reflexive thematic analysis

- o As the analysis progressed, coding revealed strong consistency across participant responses. The emergence of well-defined themes with clear supporting data suggested that further data collection would not significantly alter the conceptual framework.

- o Theoretical saturation was observed, meaning that additional data would not contribute meaningfully to the refinement of themes but rather repeat existing insights.

Thus, the decision to conclude data collection after 18 interviews was grounded in both methodological rigor and empirical justification. The purposeful sampling strategy ensured a diverse yet representative participant pool, while the iterative interview process confirmed that core themes had been sufficiently explored. By the final interviews, patterns had stabilized, and additional data collection would have led to diminishing returns rather than meaningful new findings. Therefore, the sample size was deemed appropriate to achieve both depth and saturation, strengthening the validity and credibility of the study's conclusions.

In conclusion, data saturation serves as a key benchmark for ensuring that the findings of this qualitative research are well-grounded and representative. By carefully monitoring the emergence of themes and maintaining a reflective approach, this study aims to reach saturation in a manner that upholds its methodological rigour and analytical depth.

3.6.3. Rigour

To ensure transparency and trustworthiness in the data analysis process, it is necessary to conduct it in a methodically rigorous and systematic way (Flick, 2018; Lincoln and Guba, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017; Stake, 2010). The quality of a qualitative study is judged by whether the results and

interpretations emerge from a structured and transparent process and whether readers can have confidence in the presentation and the conclusions drawn (Grodal et al., 2021). This requirement is particularly challenging for inductive approaches, such as reflexive thematic analysis, because the analytical process is iterative and requires the researcher to play an active role in interpreting the data (Costley et al., 2010; Grodal et al., 2021).

Transparency in this context refers to the extent to which the individual steps, decisions and judgements made during a research project are presented in detail and openly. With this in mind, this chapter (Chapter 3) describes the research process, the approaches and methods used in detail to ensure a high degree of transparency and a shared understanding of the research strategy of this work. The data analysis is also designed to be comprehensible, as it was carried out using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) and the MaxQDA software.

The trustworthiness of interpretative qualitative research is evaluated on the basis of four central criteria: credibility, reliability, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 2007).

Credibility is initially demonstrated by the researchers checking the consistency between the participants' perspectives and their own account, which requires a thorough understanding of the context and the data collected (Hair et al., 2023). In this research project, credibility is ensured by a detailed account of the research process and a precise presentation of the results in conjunction with a well-founded conclusion. In addition, the researcher expanded her knowledge of data analysis by attending webinars and continuously recorded her observations in a research diary.

Dependability, on the other hand, is achieved by documenting the data collection and analysis processes in a logical, comprehensible and transparent manner (Flick, 2018). The selection of participants was justified with protocols and scripts, and the data analysis was carried out using a CAQDAS, which allowed for comprehensive documentation of the process. However, it should be emphasised that despite these measures, which are aimed at the concept of reliability, the results of qualitative analyses are difficult to reproduce (Bortz and Döring, 2002).

Transferability makes it possible to evaluate the results of a study in relation to other contexts. This can be ensured by providing comprehensive explanations and detailed descriptions (Bergold and Flick, 1987). This study provides in-depth insights into the perceptions and experiences around effective hybrid working practices so that other practitioner researchers could apply the findings to their specific organisational contexts (Bortz and Döring, 2002). At the same time, the context of the project is described in detail, highlighting the special features of this study in comparison to other research projects.

The fourth criterion, *confirmability*, is achieved when credibility, transferability and reliability are given. It aims to ensure consistency and exclude bias in the data analysis (Flick, 2018; Lincoln and Guba, 2007). In this thesis, the research process was carefully documented using markers to justify the theoretical, methodological and analytical choices made during the course of the study. However, thematic analysis, which is accessible to inexperienced researchers due to its flexibility, can involve uncertainties. Therefore, the choice of social constructionist research philosophy was first explained in detail before the six steps of data analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2022) were applied.

Being an insider researcher within the case study organisation offered advantages such as deeper contextual understanding and access to key informants (Costley et al., 2010). However, it also required careful consideration of potential biases and preconceptions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). To mitigate these risks, several reflexive strategies were implemented:

> **Research diary:** A reflexive research diary (Ortlipp, 2008; Thomas, 2016) was maintained throughout the study, capturing reflections on interviews, methodological decisions, and emerging patterns in the data. This diary served as a tool for critical self-examination, helping to identify potential biases, track changes in interpretations, and ensure that data analysis remained grounded in participants' perspectives rather than personal assumptions.

> **Bracketing preconceptions:** Given prior knowledge of the organisation's structures, policies, and culture, efforts were made to bracket pre-existing assumptions. Before conducting interviews, notes were made on potential expectations regarding responses to specific themes, ensuring that during analysis, findings were derived from the data rather than preconceived notions.

> **Iterative interview process:** Reflexivity was actively integrated into the interview process by adapting questions based on previous interviews and allowing participants to expand on topics freely. This iterative approach helped avoid leading questions and allowed themes to emerge naturally from participants' perspectives.

> **Member reflection and clarification:** Where possible, participants were asked for clarification during interviews to prevent misinterpretation. This approach minimised researcher bias by ensuring that meaning was derived directly from participants' experiences rather than inferred through assumptions.

> **Peer debriefing:** Throughout the research, discussions with academic peers and supervisors served as a mechanism for critical reflection. These debriefing sessions helped challenge

assumptions, refine coding and thematic development, and ensure a balanced interpretation of the data.

Transparency in data analysis: Thematic analysis was conducted using a systematic, step-by-step process to enhance trustworthiness. A reflexive thematic analysis approach was adopted, acknowledging the researcher's role in interpreting data while maintaining a commitment to grounding findings in participants' voices (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The analytical process, including coding decisions and theme development, was documented to enhance transparency and reproducibility.

Ethical considerations and power dynamics: Reflexivity extended to ethical considerations, particularly concerning power dynamics in interviews (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). As an insider researcher, care was taken to create a neutral and open environment, reassuring participants of confidentiality and encouraging candid responses. Furthermore, only persons who are not in a direct reporting line to the researcher were interviewed.

Engagement with the broader academic community: To enhance methodological awareness and strengthen reflexivity, the researcher actively engaged with the broader academic community. This included presenting the study at academic events, participating in webinars and workshops on qualitative research, and extensively reviewing relevant academic literature. Engaging with other scholars provided valuable external perspectives, reinforced methodological rigour, and contributed to a more informed and reflective research process.

By employing these reflexive strategies, the research upheld rigour, transparency, and ethical integrity. Reflexivity not only strengthened the validity of the findings but also contributed to a more nuanced and authentic representation of participants' perspectives on hybrid work and its organisational implications.

3.6.4. Researcher role & reflexivity

The role of the insider researcher in this case study, as discussed above, offers distinct advantages that enhance the depth and quality of the research (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). One key benefit is the privileged access to a wide range of business networks within the organisation, which facilitates the identification and engagement of participants who are directly relevant to the study. Additionally, established rapport and familiarity with organisational processes allow for a more seamless integration

into the research setting, reducing potential barriers to trust and openness among participants (Costley et al., 2010).

Insider status also provides a nuanced understanding of the organisation's cultural and operational dynamics (Costley et al., 2010). This perspective enables the contextualisation of participants' responses with a high degree of accuracy and relevance. Furthermore, logistical arrangements, such as scheduling interviews or obtaining necessary permissions, can be expedited, thereby streamlining the research process.

Despite these advantages, the role of an insider researcher is not without challenges, necessitating a critical and reflective approach to mitigate potential disadvantages (Creswell and Poth, 2025; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). A significant concern is the potential for power dynamics to influence participant responses. Insider researchers may inadvertently be perceived as representing the interests of the organisation rather than as independent researchers, which could lead participants to withhold or modify their responses. To address this, efforts are made to reassure participants of the confidentiality and independence of the study, with clear communication of its academic and exploratory purpose.

Another challenge lies in the risk of bias as discussed above (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Familiarity with the organisation and its processes may predispose the researcher to interpret data in ways that align with pre-existing assumptions. To counter this, a research diary is maintained to document reflections, assumptions, and decision-making processes throughout the study (Ortlipp, 2008). This practice enables the identification and challenge of any biases that might arise, fostering a more objective and transparent research process.

Moreover, the dual role of insider and researcher requires careful navigation to avoid compromising the study's rigour (Flick, 2018). Reflexivity is actively employed, involving regular reflection on how the researcher's position may shape the research and the data collected (Hibbert, 2021). External feedback from peers and supervisors is also sought to ensure that interpretations remain balanced and credible.

While insider research can blur the boundaries between researcher and participant, efforts to maintain methodological rigour and ethical integrity strengthen the reliability of the findings. By leveraging the advantages of insider status while critically addressing its challenges, this study aims to produce a comprehensive and authentic exploration of the organisational dynamics under investigation (Drake and Heath, 2011).

3.6.5. Ethical consideration

This research adheres to high ethical standards, having received prior approval from the university's ethics committee. This approval ensures compliance with required protocols, safeguarding participants and upholding the integrity of the research process.

Although the study poses no immediate risks, minor considerations are acknowledged. Participants may experience discomfort when reflecting on their work experiences, particularly challenges associated with hybrid work, such as shifts in responsibility, changing conditions, or trust issues. Such reflections might evoke stress or unpleasant memories. To address this, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time, including up to five days after the interview. They were also given the option to take breaks or discontinue interviews if discomfort arises. Local first aiders were available for support. Transparency, empathy, and sensitivity remain central to all interactions (also see Appendix 1.2 Participant information sheet (PIS)).

Discomfort in qualitative research often arises when interviews feel one-sided or led solely by the researcher's agenda (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Nunkoosing, 2005). Conducting research as an insider researcher presents specific ethical risks, including potential bias, power imbalances, and confidentiality concerns (Maxwell and Beattie, 2004). Being embedded within the case study organisation requires heightened awareness of these risks to ensure research integrity and participant trust. To mitigate these concerns, several measures were taken. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by de-identifying data and securely storing research materials. Furthermore, the researcher's role as Product Owner HR IT – without involvement in HR processes like recruitment or compensation and benefits – is disclosed to participants to reduce any perceived power imbalance. Direct reports are excluded from the study to avoid hierarchical relationships, and participation is clarified as entirely voluntary. Interviews are conducted collaboratively, allowing participants to introduce topics and influence the discussion's direction, fostering a more balanced and open exchange (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). To minimise bias as previously indicated, reflexivity was actively practised through a research diary, discussions with academic peers, and participation in qualitative research workshops. Additionally, transparency in participant recruitment and voluntary participation helped prevent coercion or undue influence. The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, data protection, and the right to withdraw at any stage. These measures collectively strengthened the study's ethical rigour while maintaining the credibility of insider research.

Moreover, anonymisation ensures that participant and organisational identities remain protected, with all identifying details removed from analysis and reporting. Participants are informed of data storage

and handling procedures and provide consent under these conditions. As an insider researcher, strict measures are in place to prevent the sharing of participant information within the organisation, further safeguarding confidentiality. Ethical risks in reporting are addressed by ensuring findings are presented responsibly, with attention to protecting participant and organisational anonymity. Reflexivity plays a key role in managing these considerations. As mentioned above, maintaining a reflexive journal furthermore helps reinforce the study's ethical standards and ensures that all findings are credible and balanced (Thomas, 2016).

In summary, the research is guided by proactive measures to address minor ethical considerations. Through informed consent, confidentiality, empathetic practices, and reflexivity, the study upholds ethical integrity while respecting the rights and well-being of all participants.

3.7. Summary

This chapter delivers a detailed examination of the study's methodological framework. Constructivist philosophy forms the foundation, with its ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions carefully analysed. Attention is given to the research strategy, highlighting the case study approach and its methodological implications. Data collection is addressed with a focus on the rationale for sample size and the recruitment process. Reflexive thematic analysis is unpacked in six structured stages, including an in-depth discussion of achieving data saturation. Consideration is also given to the researcher's role, with an outline of the measures adopted to ensure research quality. Ethical principles guiding the study are also presented, providing a comprehensive view of the study's adherence to ethical standards. Subsequent chapters detail the findings generated through the reflexive thematic analysis applied in this research.

4. Findings

The previous chapter provided an overview of the methodological framework for this research on effective hybrid working. This chapter presents the findings. All results were summarised under themes that emerged from the collected data and the researcher's experiences as guided by the research objectives.

Subchapters 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 present the findings from the semi-structured interviews and provide insights into the perceived essential features when working in hybrid patterns (see research question one to three). Furthermore, the agreements and disagreements between those target groups to capture an overall organisational perspective are explored in subchapter 4.4 (see research question four).

To ensure clarity and guide the reader through the analysis, the research questions are reproduced below. This allows for a direct reference to the core inquiries shaping the study, facilitating a better understanding of how the findings align with the study's objectives.

1. What do HR professionals perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

2. What do general managers perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

3. What do employees perceive as the essential features of effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

4. Where do HR professionals, general management, and employees agree and disagree regarding effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level?

The themes and sub-themes are explained below with the help of exemplary quotes for each target group. A detailed presentation of the sub-themes and quotes can be found in the appendix (see tables in appendix 3.2-3.11). The themes are presented in clustered sub-chapters, and the sub-themes are highlighted in **bold print** for clarity and emphasis.

4.1. General management

The findings for the general management target group are described below. Nine overarching themes were identified (see *Figure 7*):
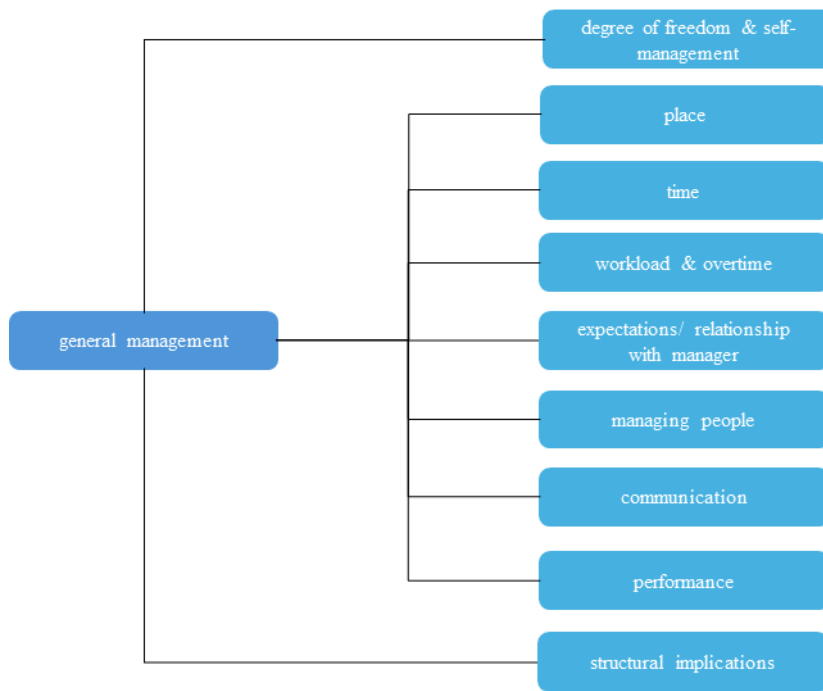
Figure 7: Target group: general management – themes

Source: Own illustration

4.1.1. Degree of freedom and self-management

Within the theme "degree of freedom and self-management" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: framework/ work agreement, department rules/ regulations, HR function, and requirements for employees.

Managers acknowledged that HR provides a flexible **framework** for hybrid work, though awareness of formal policies remains low. One participant noted, *"I have no knowledge of a fixed regulation or works agreement,"* despite existing policies, such as restrictions on working abroad, which one manager estimated as *"something like 30 days."* In this context, data protection was also emphasised, requiring employees to safeguard confidential information in public spaces: *"If you work in flexwork or in public, you must ensure that confidential information is not passed on externally."*

In addition to the very generic HR company agreement on hybrid working, departments are being encouraged by HR to set their own informal **rules**. Some managers require an on-site presence to ensure stakeholder availability, stating, *"at least one person should always be there (on site)."* Others prioritise team cohesion with scheduled office days to foster social interaction: *"This strengthens team dynamics and informal exchanges with other units."* Attendance on scheduled office days is described

as high, with one manager observing, *"as a rule, everyone is actually there in person,"* except for illnesses or appointments.

Considering the **HR function**, hybrid work has expanded recruitment, allowing employees to live further from the contractual workplace. One manager described this as a major advantage: *"An employee's place of residence is no longer tied to the place of work."* This widens the talent pool while requiring occasional travel for key meetings.

According to some managers, success in hybrid work depends on strong self-management and digital competence, which consequently are **required of employees**. Employees must structure their schedules, manage deadlines, and ensure efficiency, with one manager noting, *"Now, all of a sudden, people are responsible for organising their own working hours."* Some teams support this with structured time management, such as blocking focus hours. Digital literacy also plays a key role, though experiences vary. One manager pointed out, *"For some, digitalisation is purely technical, while for others, it significantly impacts hybrid work success."*

4.1.2. Place

The place is perceived as a key role by general managers regarding effective hybrid working. In the context of this study, the place is understood as a collective term for the physical location where work is performed and the associated framework conditions that influence the working environment.

There are four sub-themes that will be explained below: equipment and infrastructure, working in the office, working in the home office, and individual location preferences.

First of all, managers stress that reliable technical **equipment** is essential, noting that *"everyone in the company has a company mobile phone"* but also highlighting outdated systems that hinder efficiency. One criticised, *"Half of the tools look like they're from another century. We could do a lot better with digitisation and automation."* Office infrastructure is also important, particularly having *"enough places in the office to retreat to for concentrated work,"* with reduced open-plan spaces seen as a positive change.

The **office** is favoured for collaborative tasks like brainstorming and workshops, where *"a creative exchange or quick clarifications in the corridor"* are beneficial. Structured routines and social interaction are also advantages: *"It's fun, you get out, you have your routine."* Many managers insist that staff appraisals and difficult conversations happen in person, as one explained, *"I definitely do them face-to-face when they might be more emotional."*

In contrast, **working from home** is preferred for focused, distraction-free tasks. One manager noted, *"I have more working hours without interruptions—no phone calls, visitors, or stairwell chats."* Another suggested that working in the home office creates an implicit expectation of higher quality: *"I want to live up to expectations, and the quality has to be right because I'm much more focused here."*

Ultimately, **preferences** vary based on home office conditions, commute times, and personal circumstances. Managers have reported that some employees come in regularly due to short commutes or inadequate home setups, while others prefer more flexibility. Despite all flexibility, managers occasionally insist on office attendance, with one remarking, *"Some employees aren't thinking about the success of the work, just avoiding the office. When I say it's important, it gets arranged."*

4.1.3. Time

In this study, time is understood as a collective term for the volume, position and distribution of working time as well as the relevant framework conditions that influence working time.

The following five sub-themes have been identified under the theme "time": definition of working time, position and distribution of working hours, regular exchange, response time, and transparency of attendance/ absence.

The **definition of working time** in a hybrid environment remains fluid, with no clear consensus on when work officially begins and ends. One manager acknowledged, *"The question of when work ends is extremely difficult to define."* Some managers see electronic time recording as beneficial, especially now that recording is mandatory according to the latest ruling of the German Federal Labour Court, as they believe it provides clarity and protects employees: *"I think it's good that working hours are tracked to provide an overview for everyone's protection."* Others remain sceptical, arguing that *"time tracking only records presence, not actual work or performance."*

A flexible **position and distribution of working hours** is widely accepted as long as results are delivered. One manager described it as *"a luxury to do an hour of emails or a PowerPoint presentation in the evening."* Another reinforced the results-driven approach: *"You have complete freedom; I don't care when you work, as long as the results are there."*

Transparency of attendances and absences are managed through Outlook calendars and structured meetings. One manager explained, *"We block our calendars to show when we are absent and back."* Others ensure coordination through weekly check-ins: *"Despite all the flexibility, it's important to know when and how we can be reached."* In IT roles, service level agreements (SLAs) define **response times**, however, there are also communicated expectations in other areas regarding an

appropriate response time to enquiries. Those expectations vary between 12 and 24 hours. One manager explains, *"If we were in the office, you wouldn't ignore a direct question, so I expect at least an acknowledgment within 24 hours."*

Regular exchange through virtual meetings helps maintain cohesion and keep teams informed. As one manager put it, *"Since we're not all in the office, our weekly exchange is crucial."* Another highlighted its value: *"Jour fixe [regularly scheduled meeting for ongoing coordination or updates] meetings allow for open questions and shared learning, which benefits everyone."*

4.1.4. Workload and overtime

Within the theme "workload and overtime" three sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: increased load, role-based workload/ relief, and hybrid working model should allow relief.

Managers report a general **increase in workload and overtime**, though the reasons vary. Some attribute it to rising organisational demands without corresponding staffing adjustments, with one stating, *"Is the workload increasing because of a change in the working model, or is it increasing because we have so much input from above that needs to be processed?"* Others link it directly to hybrid working conditions, noting *"work density, meeting density—more work is being done."* The ability to schedule meetings back-to-back and the expectation of constant availability via digital tools contribute to this, as one manager observed, *"You get topics sent to you via Teams in parallel. So, in the call, you discuss one task, and at the same time, you get the next task via Teams."* Another added, *"Because the availability of IT systems means that something is always being worked on again. In the evening..."*

Beyond technical factors, social pressure also plays a role. The expectation to remain accessible can make it difficult to set boundaries, as one manager pointed out, *"There is social pressure because others are doing it, and that is the expectation."* However, some argue that overtime is a personal choice rather than a structural issue, with one stating, *"To a certain extent, that [overtime] depends on the individual—how you see yourself, your role, and what level of commitment you are willing to show at work."*

Perspectives on workload differ between managers and employees. Some managers believe their **role** grants them greater control over their schedules, making their workload more sustainable. One noted, *"Maybe that's due to the role I have—I assign appointments rather than having them set for me. That is perhaps also the privilege of being a manager."* Others, however, see their responsibility to step in

when needed as increasing their workload, explaining, *"I have my mobile phone with me—that's what I'm a team leader for."* Unlike employees with clearly defined responsibilities, managerial tasks are more fluid, requiring greater flexibility.

Despite these challenges, some believe **hybrid work should reduce workload** by allowing for better organisation and eliminating commutes. One participant stated, *"We have the same ten tasks but the option of doing them from flexwork. That takes the pressure off."* Others use hybrid work strategically, choosing remote work for tasks requiring deep concentration. As one manager explained, *"The minutes of the board meeting must be written, and there's a strict deadline. If I can work at home tomorrow, I save myself the trip to the office, have fewer interruptions (...) that takes a load off me."*

This mix of experiences highlights both the pressures and opportunities of hybrid work, with increased workload stemming from both structural and individual factors, while flexibility provides relief in certain situations.

4.1.5. Expectations and relationship with manager

The relationship between managers and employees, along with mutual expectations, is a recurring theme. There are four sub-themes that will be explained below: trust, appreciation, visibility, and connection to manager/ overall employer.

Managers increasingly link **trust** to hybrid work, as location flexibility means less daily interaction, making work *"difficult to grasp in the hybrid."* Many see hybrid leadership as shifting towards *"stronger, greater trust and less control."* Some feel validated in their trust-based leadership, stating, *"Just because you're not under observation doesn't mean you do less."* Others stress avoiding micromanagement, preferring to *"empower people to develop solutions"* rather than *"hover over them and check every cell they fill in."*

Appreciation is also seen as highly individual. Some managers ensure attentiveness in virtual meetings to make employees feel valued: *"When I start a 1:1, I put myself on 'do not disturb' to stay fully focused."* Others believe personal interactions matter more: *"Just going up to someone, sitting down for a chat."* While some find virtual appreciation effective, others note the difficulty of conveying non-verbal cues remotely: *"Appreciation has a lot of interpersonal and non-verbal aspects,"* and *"Hybrid work risks neglecting these, even though appreciation is key to company success."*

Views on **visibility** are split, too. Some argue that work results and digital contributions remain key, as *"the discussion has shifted online, but contributions are still visible."* Others say hybrid work makes it

harder for some, especially introverts: *"You tend to lose the introverts. They don't write, don't respond, or take longer than others."* Virtual meetings also favour outspoken individuals: *"We have people who dominate discussions. It's harder to get a word in than in a physical room."*

Building **relationships with managers and the organisation** has also changed. Some managers feel stronger connections with employees they see in the office: *"I have built a much better relationship with those I see regularly."* Others believe hybrid work weakens identification with the company, particularly for those primarily working from home: *"It has significantly weakened the bond to a team or organisation."*

Overall, hybrid work has reshaped trust, appreciation, visibility, and connection, presenting both opportunities and challenges depending on individual working styles.

4.1.6. Managing people

The following four sub-themes have been identified under the theme "managing people": self-assessment of management behaviour, employee-centred approach, delegation, controlling/ steering,

In line with the study's methodological approach, managers were asked first about any changes in their **management behaviour** to capture their self-perception before exploring broader organisational shifts. Many managers stated that their "*personal leadership style had not changed as a result of hybrid working,*" while some noted that they had only ever worked in a hybrid format and therefore could not compare it to pre-pandemic office-based management. However, their reflections implicitly suggest an evolution in leadership understanding. Many acknowledged a shift towards an **employee-centred approach**, emphasising that the organisation had become more "*people-first,*" influenced by contemporary work culture. One manager highlighted the transformation from a past presence-driven culture to a model where "*you focus much more [...] on people.*"

A recurring reported change towards a more employee-centred approach among managers was the increased attention paid to the mood of the team, which has become particularly relevant in hybrid work settings due to the reduction in non-verbal cues. Regular check-ins, once uncommon in office environments, are now integrated into meetings, allowing managers to assess employees' well-being. "*For example, when we start our jour fixe during the week, I always take the temperature: How's the weather right now? How are you feeling? I can't remember doing that in person before.*" Some also emphasised mindfulness and resilience, encouraging staff to maintain a work-life balance by taking time off when necessary. One manager stated, "*I try to appeal to their conscience regularly,*" reminding employees that their well-being is just as important as their work performance.

Delegation emerged as a crucial element in hybrid leadership, with managers stressing the importance of clearly defining tasks and responsibilities. They noted that once expectations are well established, the mode of working – working from home or office-based - becomes secondary. "*The way the tasks are defined is actually more crucial,*" one respondent explained. Given the reduced frequency of spontaneous in-person interactions, managers place greater emphasis on initial task clarification, fostering commitment and ensuring employees understand their responsibilities. Additionally, interim feedback and structured status updates are common strategies to prevent misalignment and provide ongoing support. As one manager put it, "*You run the risk of being in your own little world […] so that there is a bit of reassurance along the way, I make sure that I check that it's on the right track.*"

The role of management in **steering** work effectively was also highlighted. Ensuring employees are fully utilised and assignments progress as planned requires frequent status updates and prioritisation discussions. Some managers incorporate deadlines and collaborative decision-making on task priorities: "*As a manager, it is also my job to prioritise together with my team.*" Many have also implemented tandem structures within their teams, pairing employees to ensure continuity and shared responsibility: "*The responsible tasks are always handled by two colleagues in a tandem.*" This collaborative approach is designed to maintain consistency and commitment to key tasks, even in cases of absence.

Despite their initial self-assessment indicating no major change in leadership style, managers' descriptions of their evolving practices suggest otherwise. The shift towards an employee-centred approach, structured delegation, and proactive task management reflect an adaptation to the hybrid work environment, reinforcing a more dynamic and responsive leadership style.

4.1.7. Communication

Within the theme "communication" three sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: information, rules/ agreed collaboration, and added value of communication in presence.

To examine the role of communication in hybrid leadership, the study explored how managers distribute information and establish collaboration rules within their teams. A key sub-theme that emerged was the importance of efficiently sharing **information** with the right audience. Managers described using structured communication formats such as jour fixe to cascade information, ensuring that employees remain informed. One participant reflected, "*How do I get information distributed efficiently in organisations? I would say it works. Okay, I haven't heard of anyone who basically always feels left out.*" Another manager explained how scheduled meetings facilitate information flow,

stating, "*Because we have jour fixe twice a week, it's easy to pass things on. And I also use Teams sometimes. So I check; do we have jour fixe tomorrow? This information can wait until tomorrow, because there's something that's supposed to take effect in June or something.*"

Additionally, some managers pointed out that hybrid work reduces osmotic communication, requiring them to be more explicit and intentional in their messaging. One manager described this challenge:

> "*Well, it's much more difficult because it has to be made more explicit. [...] You simply talk a lot more and communicate a lot more because you see each other. [...] Which makes it much more difficult with hybrid working or remote working. So you have to make it much more explicit. You have to share formats, you have to write it down, you have to communicate it well. [...] That's why I say it makes things more strenuous. But I think it makes it better.*"

Many echoed this view, suggesting that hybrid work demands a more organised approach to communication, where information must be carefully structured and distributed to ensure alignment.

Managers also emphasised the importance of agreed-upon **collaboration rules** to maintain effective teamwork. Most respondents stated that establishing common expectations within their teams was essential. One manager explained, "*For me, it's just important to discuss expectations and rules in the team that are okay for everyone, where everyone says, okay, yes, I'll do that. And that you just say, for example, okay, and if we do a workshop like that, it would be great if everyone came, because I won't do it hybrid.*" Teams have also implemented netiquette rules, agreements on virtual meeting etiquette, and structured file management to ensure smooth collaboration. One participant described how virtual call expectations are managed: "*So if someone has their camera off, I don't really like it. So in that sense, it's not at all appropriate in the team meeting.*" Others mentioned agreements on status messages in MS Teams, explaining, "*The rules state that if someone is on red, you don't call them, but write to them briefly; if it's convenient, do you have five minutes? As a manager, I pay attention to this and of course I expect the same. And it works very well, at least for us internally.*" Clear documentation processes further support hybrid collaboration, as highlighted by one respondent: "*We have central storage locations for, for example, decisions that we make. There are central, readable places where you can look up where things, where decisions are documented.*" Another described their structured approach, stating, "*Yes, we are actually organised with Teams and [...] we have written down our delivery objects, which have emerged from a materiality analysis and are grouped into fields of action, i.e. our internal products. [...] have also transferred this to our team folder structure.*"

One participant, however, presented a contrasting case, as their team lacked formal communication rules, shared office days, or structured collaboration formats. This manager admitted, "*Well, we have*

almost nothing." The absence of clear expectations resulted in dissatisfaction, with the manager stating, "*Well, I'm not particularly satisfied. I would actually like to see a higher level of commitment to face-to-face work, but I don't want to prescribe it […].*" Interestingly, throughout the interview, this manager reconsidered their approach, eventually acknowledging, "*But if I now really reflect on our conversation, I believe that I personally have to do more to ensure that I arrange fixed appointments with the individual people. So I think that's something I'll take away from the conversation for myself as well.*" This example highlights the tension many managers face in balancing flexibility with the need for structured collaboration.

Respondents also emphasised the **added value of in-person communication**, particularly for informal exchanges, spontaneous discussions, and issue resolution. One manager described how overhearing conversations in an open-plan office contributed to knowledge sharing: "*I'm sitting in the open-plan area, two people are talking, I pick it up. I try to think about it myself, pick up more information, pass it on, whatever. So this, this kind of communication, it just doesn't really exist anymore.*" Others noted that face-to-face interactions allow for quick, informal conversations that might not warrant a virtual meeting: "*Also, to be able to address things in an uncomplicated way, to talk about things that may be on your mind but for which you wouldn't organise a video conference, [..] And then you talk in presence for three minutes, have clarified things or really exchanged ideas creatively.*"

Another key aspect of in-person communication is the ability to interpret body language and non-verbal cues, which managers argue is limited in virtual settings. One respondent pointed out, "*In person, it's much more pleasant because you present yourself quite differently. You can also see a lot more of the other person's body language. You can't tell from here whether I'm sitting with my legs crossed under the table or whether I'm sitting with my legs open. And that's all very limited, as is the sympathy that you can show for the other person.*" This reflects a broader sentiment that while virtual meetings enable efficient information exchange, they lack the depth and nuance of face-to-face interactions.

Overall, these findings illustrate the dual benefits of hybrid work: while remote collaboration facilitates structured communication and flexibility, in-person interactions remain valuable for spontaneous exchanges, relationship-building, and nuanced discussions. The challenge for managers lies in balancing these elements by structuring information flow, establishing collaboration rules, and maintaining opportunities for in-person engagement where necessary.

4.1.8. Performance

The themes and sub-themes presented above contain essential features that are required for effective hybrid working. The following section will now focus on the impact of hybrid working on OP.

Therefore, it will first be discussed to what extent the interviewees per target group resonate with the definition of OP established for this study and what they understand by performance but also estimate regarding impacts in a hybrid context. This approach resulted in four sub-themes that will be explained below: organisational performance, understanding of performance/ productivity estimate, impact on hybrid work, and underperformance/ low performance.

Managers generally agreed with the study's definition of **OP**, considering it broad enough to apply across different contexts. One manager noted, *"It's generic enough to reflect different organisational goals, whether share values or charitable benefits."*

Some managers **defined productivity** in terms of efficiency, citing fewer distractions and the ability to complete tasks faster: *"If you define productivity as actions per minute, hybrid work has significantly increased mine."* Others linked it to achieving agreed goals within a set timeframe. Performance identification methods varied, with managers tracking response times, deadlines, and progress in digital tools like OneNote and ticketing systems: *"I can see in OneNote how long something has been sitting there or if it's progressing."* A few also mentioned HR's target-setting process for non-tariff employees, though this was less commonly referenced.

Many managers saw hybrid work as **having a positive impact on performance** due to increased autonomy, motivation, and flexibility. *"It ensures good work performance and motivation,"* one noted, while another emphasised that flexibility allows employees to align work with personal needs: *"Some have small children, both partners work, and this flexibility ensures they can still perform well."* Others attributed increased productivity to tighter scheduling and faster digital collaboration: *"We get more done in less time through video calls and structured online meetings."* However, some viewed it as a shift rather than an increase in performance: *"I perform differently in a different setting, but the number of tasks remains the same."*

Regarding **underperformance**, managers unanimously stated that hybrid work had not increased it, with one remarking, *"It already existed before."* Some even found it easier to identify underperformers in a hybrid model, as disengaged employees tend to *"disappear,"* making their lack of contribution more noticeable. However, one manager believed recognising underperformance depended more on experience and intuition: *"You need a fine sensor for it—otherwise, an employee can take advantage of that."*

Overall, managers viewed hybrid work as having a mostly positive or neutral impact on performance, with benefits in motivation, flexibility, and efficiency, but no significant change in identifying or managing underperformance.

4.1.9. Structural implications

There is one sub-theme that will be explained below: no connection to hybrid work.

Interviews with general management revealed **no direct or indirect connection** between hybrid work and organisational structure. When the researcher introduced the topic of *structure*—drawing on literature on self-organised teams and hybrid work success—managers unanimously agreed that hybrid work does not influence structural effectiveness. One manager stated, *"I don't think it has or had any impact in either direction. It should actually work the same whether you're completely on-site or completely remote."* Another confirmed, *"No, no influence from hybrid working."*

The case study organisation operates with different structural models across departments, such as a matrix structure in IT and a traditional line structure in finance. Despite these variations, responses from both structural models consistently indicated that hybrid work has not introduced any noticeable structural changes or dependencies. Structural adjustments in the organisation have occurred independently of hybrid work practices, reinforcing the view that hybrid working functions effectively within any existing structure.

4.2. HR professionals

The findings of the HR professionals target group are described below. Ten overarching themes can be summarised: The degree of freedom and self-management, expectations towards the employer/ impact on the employer appeal, place, time, workload and overtime, managing people, communication, performance and structural implications.
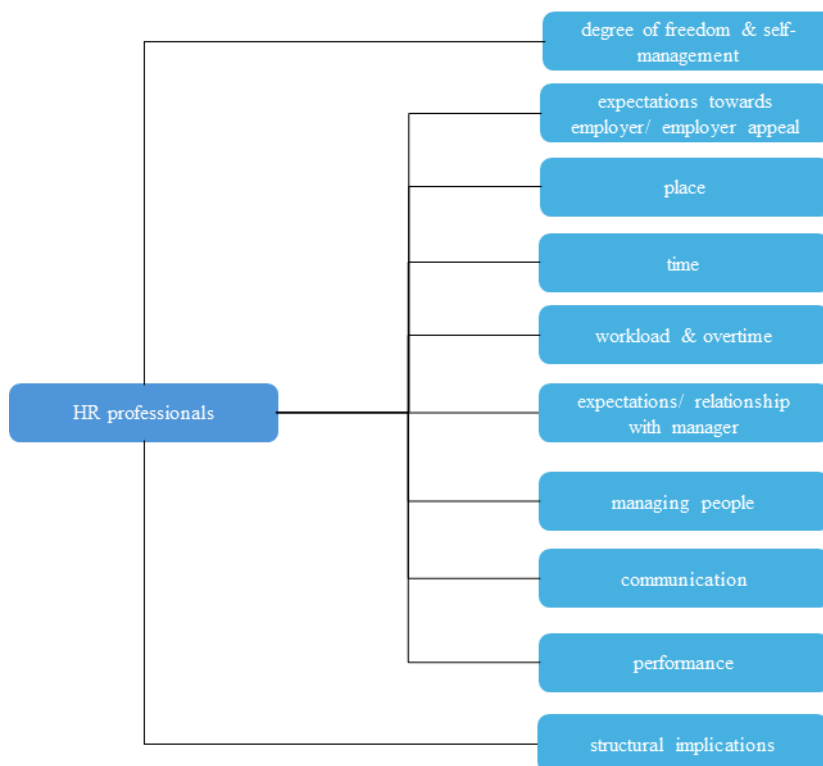
Figure 8: Target group: HR professionals – themes

Source: Own illustration

4.2.1. Degree of freedom and self-management

Within the theme "degree of freedom and self-management" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: framework/ work agreement, department rules/ regulations, HR function, and requirements for employees.

HR professionals agree that the organisation's flexible **work agreement** provides a broad framework, allowing teams to decide how hybrid work is implemented. One manager summarised, *"The agreement supports flexible working for all employees, but specific office or home-based arrangements are determined within teams."* Many see further regulation as unnecessary, as flexibility helps maintain competitiveness: *"It aligns with the zeitgeist, and we want to stay attractive as an employer."* The only formal restriction concerns working abroad, where tax and legal rules limit remote work to 20 days per year within the European Economic Area. *"Work is limited to Germany, with a small exception for European countries, based on agreements with the works council."*

Some question whether hybrid work should be more strictly regulated, noting that some companies are shifting back to office-based models. However, most agree that flexibility is key to attracting talent: *"Can we afford to regulate hybrid work too much? People have experienced self-determination, and restricting it risks losing key talent."*

The HR professionals also report that **departmental or team-level rules** have been established to further develop the company agreement. Teams have naturally developed their own attendance rhythms to maintain in-office presence. *"Each team has its own understanding—some meet weekly, others monthly or quarterly."* Joint office days are seen as crucial for maintaining workplace connections: *"Teams must ensure individuals don't become too detached."* Others highlight the efficiency of in-person meetings: *"A weekly team day simplifies coordination and strengthens collaboration."*

Certain departments, like legal teams handling physical correspondence, require daily office presence: *"Some units need someone on-site at all times."* HR professionals acknowledge that managing expectations and ensuring on-site meetings happen requires more effort: *"It takes more coordination than before, but it's now fully accepted."*

Hybrid work **requirements for employees** were mentioned as a high level of personal responsibility, though only one HR professional explicitly mentioned it: *"Employees must take ownership of their work, but the organisation must empower them to do so."*

HR supports teams in structuring collaboration, believing autonomy leads to better alignment with diverse needs. *"Responsibility should lie with both individuals and teams—requirements vary too much for a one-size-fits-all approach."* Many stress the need for virtual collaboration rules, such as camera use and engagement in discussions: *"Just as office etiquette exists, remote work needs its own guidelines."* HR provides guidance but does not enforce strict rules, instead offering support through change management: *"Teams define their own collaboration rules, but we offer help when needed."*

If hybrid work does not function well, HR advises on labour law implications and reminds employees that office attendance can be mandated: *"There's already a framework in place, and if it's not working, we will enforce it."* HR also highlights that hybrid work has expanded the talent pool, particularly in tech: *"We can now hire better managers without being limited to Berlin."*

Overall, HR professionals see hybrid work as firmly established, with a balance of flexibility and structure emerging through team agreements. The main challenge remains maintaining effective coordination while preserving the benefits of hybrid work.

4.2.2. Expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal

There is one sub-theme that will be explained below: hybrid work as the new normal.

Hybrid work has become deeply embedded in the organisation, with HR professionals describing it as the **new normal**. Beyond being a well-established practice, hybrid work is seen as a key retention factor, with employees expressing strong preferences for flexibility. HR frequently receives feedback suggesting that stricter regulations or mandatory office attendance could prompt employees to reconsider their employment. One interviewee noted, *"People are afraid this will change in the future and that rigid requirements will be introduced. Some say that if that happens, they would consider changing employers."*

All HR professionals consider hybrid work indispensable, reinforced by overwhelmingly positive feedback. As one stated, *"It is now unthinkable that hybrid working would not take place in our organisation."* The prevailing view is that hybrid work is not just an accommodation but an essential part of the company's working culture, shaping employee expectations and influencing long-term retention.

4.2.3. Place

The following five sub-themes have been identified under the theme "place": equipment and infrastructure, working in the office, working in the home office, and individual location preferences.

HR professionals emphasise that **technical equipment** is a fundamental requirement for hybrid work, along with adequate office infrastructure to ensure job security and proper work environments. One respondent noted, *"Infrastructure, job security, and equipment are key aspects often raised by the business."*

The choice of workplace is largely task-driven, with the **office** favoured for collaborative activities, such as workshops. As one interviewee explained, *"When we have workshops to discuss ways of working together, it just makes more sense to do it in person."* Onboarding is another key reason for in-office presence, with HR professionals stressing its importance for team integration: *"For new colleagues, presence plays a crucial role in team bonding."* This aligns with broader feedback on the importance of fostering a strong connection to the organisation.

Conversely, **working from home** is often chosen for tasks requiring deep concentration, as employees face fewer distractions. One HR professional stated, *"Definitely more productive in the home office—*

because you can focus, concentrate, and you're not distracted." Another highlighted the benefits of a quieter environment: *"I can find spaces that are usually quieter and more isolated, allowing for better concentration."* Additionally, remote work offers a sense of security, particularly for confidential tasks. One participant shared, *"In virtual calls, I can have notes in front of me that the other person doesn't have access to, providing an anchor for support."*

Regarding **individual location preferences**, HR professionals acknowledge tensions between economic considerations and hybrid flexibility. The Executive Board periodically encourages higher office attendance due to the financial burden of underutilised office space, with one interviewee noting, *"We are renting out a lot of buildings because it's no longer profitable. It's also a cost issue."* Some managers, especially those accustomed to traditional structures, seek clearer guidance: *"There are still managers who are very hierarchical. They want clear rules to bring people back to the office."* However, the Executive Board has refrained from enforcing a standardised attendance policy, opting instead for voluntary office presence.

A potential balance could involve a structured yet flexible hybrid model, ensuring office use throughout the week without imposing fixed attendance quotas. One respondent proposed, *"We need to relearn a five-day week in hybrid work—not as a rigid requirement, but as a team-driven approach based on need and efficiency."* While hybrid work remains largely self-regulated, the discussion highlights ongoing considerations in maintaining both flexibility and organisational efficiency.

4.2.4. Time

Within the theme "time" five sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: definition of working time, position and distribution of working hours, regular exchange, response time, and transparency of attendance/ absence.

HR professionals agree that hybrid work has blurred the boundary between working hours and personal time resulting in challenges in **defining working time**. In a presence-based culture, the transition from work to leisure was clearer, whereas working from home makes it harder to define the end of the workday. One respondent reflected, *"Back in the good old days, I came to the office, went home, and it was all much clearer. Now, the line between work and private life is increasingly blurred."* This shift also raises concerns about compliance with labour laws, particularly rest periods, as one HR expert noted: *"What about rest periods? What about working hours? The works council has less of a protective function there than it would like."*

To address this, electronic time tracking has been introduced, offering more transparency compared to trust-based working hours. Some HR professionals highlight its benefits, particularly for employees who may not realise how much extra they work: *"There were many people who didn't even realise how much more they were working. Actually having to record it helps."* However, some employees fail to properly log their hours, leading to perceived workload increases despite no official rise in overtime: *"Unofficially, yes. Officially, no. Nobody is keeping records, so it's not visible—for us or the works council."*

Despite these challenges, the flexible **distribution of working hours** offered by hybrid work is widely seen as beneficial, allowing employees to balance professional and personal responsibilities more effectively. One participant described this as an opportunity *"to integrate my private issues even better into the framework."* Many employees structure their working hours around individual preferences, with some starting early while others prefer a later schedule: *"There are colleagues who like to work very early and others who need more time to start the day."*

Some departments, such as customer service and IT, require **transparency about attendances** and structured availability to ensure operational continuity. One HR expert explained, *"In these units, they already organise themselves to ensure availability—for example, from eight to 18:00—by dividing shifts accordingly."* Beyond availability, HR professionals stress the importance of setting clear expectations for **response times**. One noted, *"It's important to clearly communicate expectations between managers and employees. Do I still expect a response if working hours have already been exceeded?"*

While hybrid work presents new challenges in defining and managing working hours, most HR professionals view flexibility as a net positive, provided that teams establish clear agreements to maintain structure and accountability.

4.2.5. Workload and overtime

The following three sub-themes have been identified under the theme "workload and overtime": increased load, role-based workload/ relief, and hybrid working model should allow relief.

HR professionals report an overall **increase in workload**, which they attribute to both rising organisational demands and hybrid work dynamics. While some struggle to pinpoint whether the increase is due to hybrid work or broader trends, others link it directly to faster-paced collaboration, denser schedules, and the elimination of transition time between meetings. One respondent noted, *"The workload has increased because of hybrid work. We move faster, have tighter schedules, and no*

longer have the distance between appointments." Another added, *"Some tools allow us to work together faster, which also increases workload."*

A key issue is the lack of visibility into employees' workload, making it easier to unintentionally overload individuals. As one participant explained, *"You can't see when someone is overwhelmed. I don't see them sighing at their desk. When working remotely, it's easier not to see the mountain of work."* The shift of commuting time into working hours also contributes to increased overtime, as employees start earlier and finish later. One HR professional reflected, *"I no longer have to travel in the morning, which means I can start earlier and leave later. The line is very, very fine."* Additionally, the technical ability to work outside regular hours, coupled with social pressure, has led some to work evenings and weekends, as one noted, *"Some people work on Saturdays just because they can. They do it at home."*

A minority of HR professionals believe hybrid work has no impact on workload, arguing that *"the work package doesn't change just because you're working from a different location."* However, others suggest workload **depends on role**, with managers experiencing greater demands. One explained, *"Managers are always working more, and for them, overtime is simply part of their salary."* Another noted that digital collaboration tools have increased managerial responsibilities: *"Hybrid work allows for a higher management span, which increases workload for some managers."*

Despite these challenges, some HR professionals believe hybrid work provides **opportunities for workload relief**. Increased collaboration and digital tools enable employees to share tasks more efficiently. As one participant put it, *"Collaboration has increased because I can get a colleague to help me instantly—I can share my screen, and we can look at it together."* Others point out that reducing overtime is easier in a hybrid model, as employees feel more comfortable taking partial time off from home than they did in a traditional office setting. One noted, *"When in the office, I'd think twice about leaving early. But at home, it's easier to reduce overtime when needed."*

While hybrid work presents new pressures, HR professionals recognise its potential to both increase workload and offer flexibility in managing it, depending on how teams and individuals structure their work.

4.2.6. Expectations and relationship with manager

Within the theme "expectation and relationship with manager" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: trust, appreciation, visibility, and connection to manager/ overall employer.

HR professionals highlight **trust** as a key factor in the successful implementation of hybrid work. Managers had to shift towards a more trust-based approach, as they no longer had direct oversight of employees' daily routines, such as break times. One interviewee noted, *"Managers necessarily had to change their relationship of trust because they no longer saw everything. They used to walk through the office and see who was there and when they took breaks."* While some initially struggled with this shift, many have embraced it, realising that *"in most cases, there is no difference between performance in the office and in the home office."*

Opinions on **appreciation** in hybrid work vary. Some HR professionals believe it is independent of work arrangements and linked to individual leadership behaviour. As one put it, *"Managers who didn't show appreciation in the office won't do it virtually either."* Others argue that appreciation depends on employees' personal needs, particularly in relation to visibility. For those who associate appreciation with being seen on-site, hybrid work may have reduced this recognition: *"For someone who values direct appreciation, something has been lost if their manager no longer automatically sees what they do every day."*

The impact of hybrid work on employee **visibility** is debated. Some believe visibility is unrelated to location, framing it as a mindset issue: *"Do I feel I'm only seen when I'm in the office? Or is it about the results I deliver?"* Others argue that hybrid work affects visibility differently depending on personality type. Some suggest it has benefited introverts by providing alternative ways to contribute, such as preparing talking points or using digital tools: *"I might be in an online meeting, raise my hand, and contribute. As an introvert, I have more opportunities to prepare and speak."* However, others feel introverts have fewer chances to be heard in virtual settings: *"Introverts don't get a chance to speak digitally. I always advise managers to keep an eye on those who are more inconspicuous."*

Many HR professionals observe a weakening **connection** between employees and both their managers and the organisation. The reduced physical presence appears to have contributed to a sense of detachment, as one interviewee noted: *"Hybrid work makes employees' loyalty to their managers and vice versa less strong. With digital interactions, it's easier to feel distant."* While hybrid work offers many advantages, HR experts acknowledge that maintaining a strong organisational connection remains an ongoing challenge.

4.2.7. Managing people

There are two sub-themes that will be explained below: delegation, controlling/ steering.

According to HR professionals, **delegation** plays a crucial role in managing people, with managers responsible for distributing tasks, fostering regular exchanges, and ensuring goal achievement. One HR professional emphasised the importance of structured goal setting in hybrid work: "*What is important for hybrid leadership, but also for leadership in a culture of presence, are simply goals that I agree with the team. I agree on regular touchpoints where I can track the goals, not in the sense of controlling, but rather in the sense of saying, 'This is the path we want to take. What do you need to achieve this goal?'*"

HR proessionals further clarified that hybrid work requires even greater planning to ensure the fair distribution of tasks and to maintain close connections with employees, despite reduced physical presence. One HR professional noted, "*This means that you have to come up with other ideas and make sure that you have an equal distribution, that you make sure that someone is not overburdened or overwhelmed, and that you still build up a close relationship with the individual, even if you don't see each other in the office every day.*" Another highlighted the need for a structured approach, stating, "(..) *actually a methodical approach. Thinking about how to develop these topics. How do I activate this in the other person as well?*"

Closely linked to delegation is the managerial function of **control and steering**, which, according to HR experts, is maintained through structured cooperation, coordination of joint meetings, and establishing team-based support mechanisms such as tandem structures. The implementation of tandem arrangements, in which two employees share responsibility for tasks, was mentioned by both HR professionals and managers as a strategy to ensure continuity and shared accountability in hybrid settings. Additionally, staff appraisals and on-site meetings remain key moments for structured alignment, requiring careful coordination. One HR professional explained, "*And what's more for managers, but which is also sometimes a team effort, is to simply coordinate and manage in order to then realise presence and meetings on site.*"

A crucial aspect of steering work effectively is balancing guidelines with flexibility while ensuring that agreed-upon objectives are met. One respondent reflected on this challenge, stating, "(..) *How do you find a way between providing a framework and freedom? And still make sure that it works? I think it has become a bit more difficult to manage hybrid working, even if it's not essential. But I think it's something you can reap if more opportunities arise. At the same time, a manager also has to consider at which points they should intervene.*" This highlights the ongoing need for managers to navigate between structure and autonomy, ensuring that teams remain aligned while allowing flexibility in the execution of tasks.

4.2.8. Communication

The following three sub-themes have been identified under the theme "communication": information, rules/ agreed collaboration, and added value of communication in presence.

HR professionals identify a key challenge in hybrid communication: ensuring the right **information** reaches the right people at the right time. One participant noted, *"If my manager is in the office, I can quickly pick up information, but others who aren't there might miss out. This sometimes makes the whole communication loop difficult."* Another highlighted the need for a more intentional approach to digital communication: *"Leadership needs to be rethought. There's a difference between talking in person and exchanging ideas digitally. How can I create a personal space that doesn't end at the screen?"*

To maintain effective **collaboration**, HR professionals agree that managers should establish clear rules defining communication formats, documentation practices, and team responsibilities. As one put it, *"It starts with simple things: how often do we exchange ideas? What are our responsibilities? How do we document and coordinate?"* Setting these expectations early is seen as key to long-term success: *"Otherwise, you keep having the same discussions—'Where did this come from?' We need to clarify once and for all how we want to work together."* While developing such routines requires discipline and self-reflection, it ultimately improves efficiency: *"The longer you do something, the more routine it becomes. But you need honesty to admit what doesn't work."*

Collaboration rules also include technical aspects, such as using MS Teams status indicators. One HR expert explained, *"What applies to managers? What applies to employees? Making availability transparent—am I green, am I absent? These things need to be arranged."* While there is no universal solution, all respondents agree that teams must define and refine their own working models through practice.

The **value of in-person communication** remains significant, especially for informal exchanges, which have become rarer but more meaningful. Hybrid work has made face-to-face meetings a conscious decision rather than a default. One participant reflected, *"In the past, you saw [name] every day. Now, when someone suggests meeting in person, it suddenly carries more value."* Another reinforced this, stating, *"You can't fully compensate for in-person interaction in hybrid work—you can only learn how to manage without it. But it's still important to have both."*

Overall, HR professionals see structured collaboration and intentional communication as critical to hybrid work, while recognising the irreplaceable role of in-person interactions in fostering deeper connections.

4.2.9. Performance

Within the theme "performance" five sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: organisational performance, understanding of performance/ productivity estimate, impact on hybrid work, no long-term studies, and underperformance/ low performance.

HR professionals agree on the definition of **OP**, with one participant describing it as *"the collective achievement of individual actors."* However, views differ on how **performance is understood and defined** in hybrid work. Some highlight the challenge of dedicated performance measurement due to legal considerations: *"If we were to have a dedicated performance measurement, we would need the works council. But at the end of the day, you're judged on the task packages you complete."* Others focus on tracking goals and maintaining regular exchanges to assess productivity: *"I don't recognise performance just by seeing employees work—I see it by setting goals and checking in regularly."*

The shift away from a presence-based culture has made performance assessment less reliant on physical visibility. One participant noted, *"Back then, you could measure presence and assume workload based on how long someone sat in the office. But now, in hybrid work, you can't see how long someone has been busy."* Despite this, many HR professionals believe **hybrid work has led to increased productivity**. Employees and managers report greater efficiency, largely due to improved digital collaboration and reduced travel time: *"You can quickly bring people together for coordination, which increases productivity."* Others point out that former commuting time is now used for work: *"A significant share of productivity is the result of time that was previously spent commuting or taking breaks."*

Some, however, argue that hybrid work has not necessarily made work better or more efficient—just different: *"The work is getting done, but it's simply happening in a different way. Does it affect management? I don't think so. I think it's just more flexible."* HR professionals also acknowledge the lack of **long-term studies** on hybrid work's impact, particularly concerning mental strain. One participant warned, *"We keep pushing our brains to exhaustion without giving them a break—like a footballer training without resting before match day."*

Underperformance remains unchanged, with HR professionals agreeing that *"the issues we would have in the office are basically the same."* Interestingly, some believe underperformance is easier to detect in hybrid work because it relies on results rather than office presence: *"In the office, you could assume someone was working just because they were sitting there. Now, if work results are missing, it's more noticeable."* Others, however, find it harder to identify underperformers remotely: *"I think it's more challenging to recognise this as a manager."*

Overall, while hybrid work has introduced new dynamics in assessing productivity, it has not fundamentally altered performance levels, though it requires ongoing adaptation to ensure both efficiency and employee well-being.

4.2.10. Structural implications

There is one sub-theme that will be explained below: no connection to hybrid work.

HR professionals unanimously agree that there is **no direct link** between organisational structure and the success of hybrid work. Structural changes that have occurred in recent years were driven by other factors, as one interviewee explained: *"I wouldn't necessarily say that hybrid working caused a structural change, but rather that other challenges led to structural reorganisation."*

Instead of being influenced by structure, the effectiveness of hybrid work depends on well-defined team collaboration rules and efficient process organisation. As one HR expert put it, *"The organisational structures form a framework, they set guardrails. But how these are filled depends on the rules agreed upon within the team."* Another reinforced this view, stating, *"It's not about organisational structure but about operational structure. Hybrid work requires the right processes and regulations to function effectively."*

Ultimately, while organisational structure provides a foundation, it does not determine the success of hybrid work. The key lies in team-level agreements and process management, ensuring flexibility while maintaining operational efficiency.

4.3. Employees

Chapter 4.3. explains and illustrates the results of the target group employees. Ten overarching themes were identified: The degree of freedom and self-management, expectations towards the employer/ impact on the employer appeal, place, time, and workload & overtime. Given the perspective of those "being managed", they could also provide observations on managing people, followed by the themes communication, performance, and structural implications.
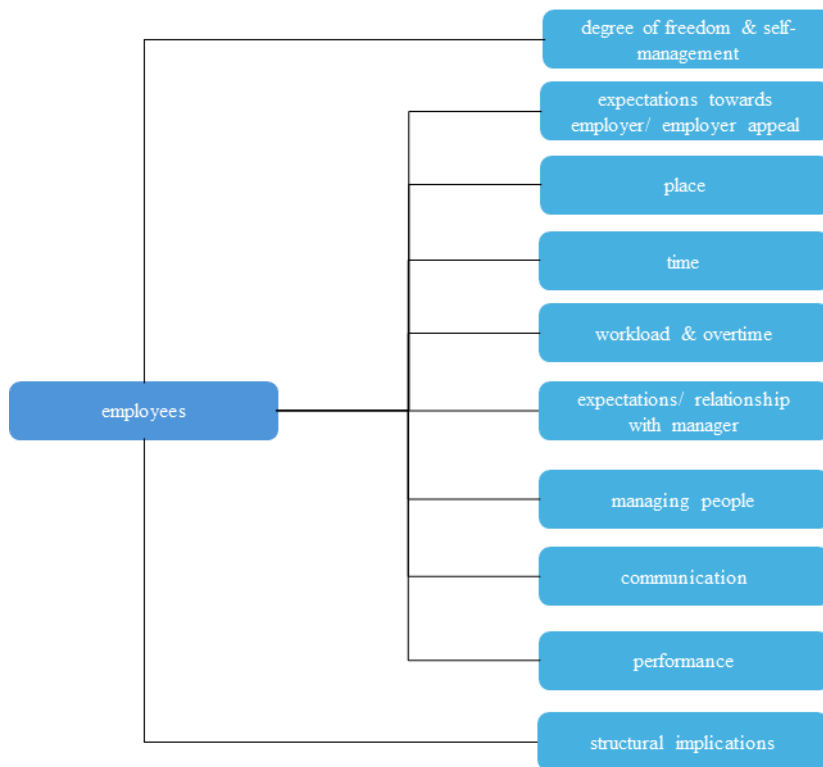
Figure 9: Target group: employees – themes

Source: Own illustration

4.3.1. Degree of freedom and self-management

Within the theme "degree of freedom and self-management" three sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: framework/ work agreement, department rules/ regulations, and requirements for employees.

Employees have little to no knowledge of formal **agreements** regulating hybrid work. While some assume such agreements exist, they are unfamiliar with the specifics. One respondent stated, *"I know that there are some. I have not come into contact with any. Therefore, I could not specify anything."* Only one interviewee mentioned a specific agreement, noting that it includes data protection, occupational health, and working time regulations: *"There is a flexwork agreement. I have to ensure no one at home has access to internal information, and occupational health and safety rules apply."*

At the **departmental** level, hybrid work arrangements vary, with each team establishing its own approach. Some teams have set fixed office days, while others operate on a more flexible understanding. *"In our company, each team actually defines for itself how they want to work*

together." Many employees report joint office days that were agreed upon in advance, often aligning with in-person *jour fixe* meetings. These on-site days are also used for one-on-one meetings and collaborative work: *"There is an expectation that you will see each other in the office two days a week. Wednesdays are our department day."* Another noted, *"We always have Tuesdays as a fixed office day, which is taken seriously by most people."*

Employees widely view these shared office days as beneficial, particularly for team cohesion and relationship-building. One participant highlighted their role in reconnecting after pandemic-related personnel changes: *"The team day was invaluable for team building. We found each other again after the disruptions during the COVID-19 period."* High attendance rates further reinforce the value of these in-person interactions: *"Most people are there, with one or two exceptions. But with 16 or 17 people, that's okay."*

Digital skills are seen as a key **requirement** for hybrid work. While collaboration tools are generally well integrated, differences exist between teams and individuals. One respondent attributed their team's strong digital adoption to age demographics: *"We're a young team. The oldest is 43, the youngest 27."* However, usage varies, with some relying heavily on Teams and chat functions, while others still prefer email. *"The tools are used to different degrees. Some use Teams a lot, others mostly rely on emails."* Despite some inconsistencies, most teams appear to have found a functional approach to digital collaboration.

4.3.2. Expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal

There is one sub-theme that will be explained below: hybrid work as the new normal.

For many employees, hybrid work has become the standard (***"new normal"***) and is no longer questioned. Several respondents stated that they would not support a shift towards mandatory office attendance, as flexibility is a key factor in their decision to work for the case study organisation. One participant emphasised, *"If I knew now that I had to go to the office three or four times a week, that wouldn't be my model. I couldn't see myself working that way."* Another reinforced this sentiment, stating, *"For me, the flexibility of hybrid work is the foundation that makes [organisation] a viable employer for me."*

The responses suggest that hybrid work is not just an operational model but a fundamental expectation, with flexibility playing a significant role in employee satisfaction and retention.

4.3.3. Place

The following five sub-themes have been identified under the theme "place": equipment and infrastructure, working in the office, working in the home office, and individual location preferences.

While employees rarely mention technical **equipment**, they acknowledge its importance for hybrid work. Many note improvements in access to essential tools but still encounter technical issues: *"My Excel kept freezing—IT has to work for hybrid to be effective."* Others recall the limited home-working resources before hybrid work became standard: *"Before COVID-19, there were only three laptops to sign out for home office."*

Employees recognise the benefits of **office** work, particularly for faster exchanges and efficient collaboration. One noted, *"In the office, things move faster, and everyone is there."* Some teams reserve office days to prioritise in-person interactions over virtual meetings: *"On Wednesdays, we block the calendar for on-site meetings."* Onboarding is another key reason for attendance: *"For onboarding, someone always goes to the office."* However, office preference varies, with some appreciating better equipment at work while others find home setups more comfortable: *"In my small apartment, it can be exhausting."*

For focused work, many prefer the **home office**, citing fewer distractions and higher productivity: *"A day at home is more productive than two weeks in the office."* Office background noise is another drawback: *"You have to read, do calculations—background noise doesn't help."* Avoiding long commutes is also a major advantage: *"My commute is 45 minutes each way—that's an hour and a half I get back."*

Personal preferences vary, with some enjoying the office for routine changes or integrating exercise: *"I ride my bike to work—15 kilometres, an hour's ride."* Others, especially those with long commutes, prefer staying home: *"I have more peace and quiet at home, and taking the train for another hour isn't worth it."* Some teams struggle to encourage office attendance, even for in-person workshops: *"Some colleagues avoid coming in, and sick notes conveniently appear before scheduled workshops."*

Employees believe office presence should be motivated rather than enforced: *"Hybrid should stay hybrid—not just five days at home. You have to show the value of coming in."* They are aware that the Executive Board would prefer higher attendance but note it has not been mandated: *"They've hinted at two days a week, but since it's voluntary, most teams stick to one."*

Overall, employees value hybrid work's flexibility, emphasising the need for a balance between office and remote work to maintain efficiency and well-being.

4.3.4. Time

Within the theme "time" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: definition of working time, position and distribution of working hours, regular exchange, and transparency of attendance/ absence.

Employees acknowledge that **defining working hours** is more challenging in a hybrid setting, as drawing a clear boundary between work and personal time requires more discipline at home. Many find it easier to disconnect when leaving the office, whereas at home, the temptation to continue working remains. One respondent noted, *"When I'm on site and come home, I wouldn't sit down again to check emails. But at home, it takes self-discipline to close the laptop and stop working."*

Despite these challenges, employees appreciate the flexibility hybrid work offers in **distributing** their working hours. Many tailor their schedules to personal preferences, whether as early risers or based on family needs: *"We have very different working hours. Some start early—at seven."* Flexibility also allows for extended availability, particularly during high-demand periods: *"In the office, by 6 p.m., people were gone. Now, the chat is active until 7 or 8 p.m."*

To maintain coordination, many teams have agreed on structured **availability** rather than requiring everyone to be present at the same time. *"We don't have official working hours, but we ensure availability from nine to five. Someone is always reachable for each topic."* Regular team check-ins have also become essential in hybrid work, providing visibility into ongoing tasks and challenges. One employee described the format: *"Everyone shares what they're working on, what's important, and what challenges they're facing. It gives an overview of team progress."*

Employees note that these **regular exchanges** compensate for the reduced interdisciplinary communication that naturally occurred in a fully on-site environment. One participant explained, *"Interdisciplinary exchange has suffered, but we counter it with regular meetings and topic-specific discussions to stay up to date."* Importantly, employees do not see the physical location of these meetings as critical—regular communication matters more than whether it happens in person or remotely. *"We have so many regular formats every week that location doesn't really matter."*

Overall, employees value the autonomy hybrid work provides.

4.3.5. Workload and overtime

The following three sub-themes have been identified under the theme "workload and overtime": increased load, role-based workload/ relief, and hybrid working model should allow relief.

Employee experiences with workload and overtime vary. Many report an **increase** in overtime due to the shift from commuting time to working hours and the expectation of being permanently available. One respondent explained, *"I already start working on the train. It's not like before when you knew you'd leave at 5:00 p.m. because you had to pick up the kids."* Another added, *"You're always available for your employer. Whether you take advantage of it is another question, but it's different now. Are you more efficient? I think so."*

Beyond time-related factors, some employees also describe an increased workload. Two key reasons are cited: the ability to switch quickly between virtual meetings, leading to a higher density of appointments, and the influx of additional work orders through digital collaboration tools. Many describe a *double burden*, as tasks accumulate through chat messages and ticketing systems while they are engaged in virtual meetings. One participant noted, *"You probably have more meetings than before. In the past, there was buffer time when running from office to office. Now, everything happens faster."* Another observed, *"Tasks come in more quickly. You get a call, answer a question, and solve an issue on the spot. It adds up."* Others report no change in workload, stating that any fluctuations are unrelated to hybrid work: *"I don't feel like I have too much on my plate. If I did, I wouldn't blame hybrid work."*

However, some employees believe that while workload has increased, digital tools help manage it efficiently and therefore **should allow relief**. One remarked, *"Yes, there's more coming in, but it can be solved faster through digitalisation."*

Only one respondent commented on **role-specific** workload, noting that their manager conducts weekly one-on-one meetings with all team members. While these individual check-ins are widely seen as a positive aspect of hybrid work, they also contribute to a heavier workload for managers. The respondent reflected, *"We have a weekly team jour fixe and a one-on-one. I find it okay, but my boss has to do this with everyone. It's different for her, but that's part of the job."*

Overall, while hybrid work has introduced efficiencies, it has also intensified workloads in certain areas, particularly due to the increased pace of communication and the expectation of constant availability.

4.3.6. Expectations & relationship with manager

Within the theme "expectation and relationship with manager" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: trust, appreciation, visibility, and connection to manager/ overall employer.

Employees primarily associate **appreciation** with feedback and recognition, with many valuing praise for their efforts. One respondent noted, *"If you do something extra, it's nice to hear. But I don't think I need it that much."* Some teams actively promote positive feedback, especially for new colleagues, to boost motivation: *"It's good to say thanks for a job well done. That motivates everyone."* Most employees feel appreciated and see no difference in hybrid work, while one noted, *"I think it has become more difficult to make appreciation visible."*

Perceptions of **visibility** in hybrid work vary but are generally positive. Some employees highlight increased visibility through digital collaboration tools, which make smaller contributions more noticeable: *"With more digital work, things that used to happen in the background are now more visible, and that benefits the team."* Others appreciate the speed of knowledge sharing and accessibility of colleagues: *"If I ask a question in chat, I know who will respond within five minutes."* Some see no change in visibility, believing that participation remains the same regardless of work location: *"Hybrid work doesn't change my opportunities to contribute. We have plenty of ways to exchange ideas."*

However, several employees report less interaction with upper management and thus a different **relationship with management**. While they maintain regular meetings with direct supervisors, they see senior leaders less frequently, which they perceive as a disadvantage: *"Managers are less present now. Before, they'd walk around, say good morning—it created a connection."* Others mention that social bonding, particularly with new colleagues, has suffered: *"You don't get to know your colleagues as well. That affects team relationships and employer loyalty."*

This lack of spontaneous interaction makes onboarding particularly important, with most teams ensuring that new employees spend more time in the office to integrate. *"We try to be more present during onboarding phases to train people properly."* However, building a broader organisational network remains a challenge in hybrid work, requiring more proactive effort: *"Networking takes discipline in a hybrid setting."*

Networking is mentioned more frequently by employees than by other groups, with long-term team members noting that maintaining existing networks is easier in hybrid settings. *"I know a lot of people in the organisation, so I'm not afraid to call anyone. That's an advantage."* However, building new

connections requires more initiative, and many see office presence as beneficial for this. One respondent shared, *"I arrange to meet for coffee, even if I feel I don't have time. It's important, especially for younger colleagues."* Another emphasised, *"You have to take the initiative—reach out to colleagues, go for lunch with them. It was easier in the office when there were more natural points of contact."*

Overall, employees feel valued and engaged but acknowledge the need for intentional efforts to maintain visibility, social connections, and leadership presence in a hybrid environment.

4.3.7. Managing people

The topic of 'managing people' is described below from the employees' point of view – thus placing a focus on the role of the person being managed. There are two sub-themes that will be explained below: employee-centred approach, controlling/ steering

Some employees have perceived a shift in meeting culture towards a stronger **employee focus**, where greater emphasis is placed on personal exchange and interdisciplinary topics. They describe how their teams have introduced *check-in questions* at the beginning of meetings to create space for informal interactions, which they view positively. *"When everyone was in the room, there was automatic chatting. In virtual meetings, everyone is silent at first. We introduced check-in questions to counteract this."* These changes are seen as a way to maintain team cohesion and engagement in a hybrid setting.

In terms of managerial oversight, employees provide limited feedback but mention the introduction of tandem or representation structures to ensure continuity during absences, what can be attributed to the **controlling/ steering** role of managers. One participant explained, *"We have substitution arrangements in place, so everything is coordinated for holidays, and the substitute is usually your QA partner for that topic."* Beyond this, employees offer little insight into specific management tools, likely due to their role as those being managed rather than overseeing processes themselves.

4.3.8. Communication

The following two sub-themes have been identified under the theme "communication": information and rules/ agreed collaboration.

Employees highlight the importance of timely and targeted **information** sharing in hybrid work, with digital tools playing a key role. Most communication now happens virtually, whether through scheduled meetings, emails, or chat messages. One respondent noted, *"It's 100% digital, and everyone has their preferred method—meetings, email, or chat. But it works well."* Some appreciate how large-scale meetings now reach hundreds of colleagues simultaneously, improving transparency: *"We never had regular department-wide exchanges before. Now, every four weeks, 140 people join a meeting where updates and new projects are shared."*

However, digital channels also increase information density, sometimes leading to overload. One employee described, *"If there's an IT issue, I get notified through five different channels—email, chat, and Confluence. It can be too much."* Employees also recognise the need for more deliberate communication, requiring adjustments to suit different audiences: *"You have to consider what format works best and be more attuned to your colleagues' needs."*

Collaboration rules have also developed organically, with most employees preferring to use cameras in virtual meetings: *"If I call someone, I always use the camera—face-to-face."* Many differentiate between email and chat, seeing email as more formal and chat as ideal for quick, informal exchanges: *"I use Outlook for formal messages or documentation, but for a quick question, I go to MS Teams."*

Some informal meeting protocols have become standard, such as using the *raise hand* function in large virtual meetings: *"In smaller meetings, we speak freely, but in bigger ones, we raise our hands or use signals."* Teams also structure collaboration through weekly *jour fixes*, shared agendas, and organised document storage: *"We have a team jour fixe every week with an agenda on Confluence, plus various Teams channels for quick coordination."*

Overall, employees see hybrid communication as effective, but they acknowledge the challenge of balancing accessibility with information overload while adapting to new ways of collaborating.

4.3.9. Performance

Within the theme "performance" four sub-themes emerged, which will be summarised in the following: organisational performance, understanding of performance/ productivity estimate, impact on hybrid work, and no long-term studies.

Employees generally agree with the study's definition of **OP**, with one respondent affirming, *"No, I think the definition is very apt and also very comprehensive."* Few additional perspectives on their **understanding of performance** were shared, though one employee described using completed work

packages as a measure of productivity in appraisals: *"What topics have you actually worked on over the year? You invest time and effort—does that get recognised?"*

Regarding the **impact of hybrid work**, many employees report increased productivity, citing improved efficiency and better-structured workdays. *"I would say I can get more done. Yes, we have a lot on our plates, but we're still meeting deadlines."* Quick coordination through virtual tools is seen as a key factor, enabling faster decisions and clearer planning. *"You have it all virtually, we see each other, we can share things—that's efficiency."* However, some note the downside of back-to-back scheduled meetings, with one commenting, *"My calendar is always full of appointments."*

While multitasking in virtual meetings is sometimes seen as a burden, many employees also use it to their advantage, quickly addressing issues via chat while their colleagues or managers are in calls. *"If my boss is in meetings all day, I can't just barge in, but I can message her on Teams and she'll reply when she can."* Others see no significant change in productivity, believing that the hybrid model simply shifts where certain tasks are best completed: *"Some things work better at home, others in the office. The mix makes it work."* One respondent pointed out that individual motivation remains unchanged regardless of location: *"Someone who used to have long coffee breaks at the office won't suddenly become a workaholic at home."*

One employee raised concerns about the **long-term** risks of hybrid work, particularly regarding mental health. *"I've heard that burnout and depression rates have increased. This model isn't for everyone—you have to be very structured when no one is there to check on you."* As with HR professionals, employees acknowledge the lack of long-term studies and note that the sustainability of hybrid work depends on effective self-management.

Overall, performance is not a primary concern for employees; instead, they focus on collaboration, flexibility, and autonomy. Hybrid work is generally seen as enhancing efficiency, though its long-term impact remains uncertain.

4.3.10. Structural implications

There is one sub-theme that will be explained below: no connection to hybrid work.

Employees unanimously agree that hybrid work has had **no impact** on team or unit restructuring. Any structural changes had already been implemented before the pandemic and were unrelated to hybrid work. One respondent confirmed, *"The main phase of hybrid working didn't bring any restructuring or team changes for us. They didn't do that at the time. No."*

4.4. Comparison between the target groups

The previous subchapters 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 provided a summarised overview of the findings for each target group, highlighting key insights from HR professionals, general managers, and employees. While there was broad agreement on certain aspects of hybrid work, significant variations emerged at the sub-theme level. This section now delves deeper into these differences, exploring how perspectives on essential features of hybrid work diverge among the target groups (see research question 4). By examining these sub-theme variations, this discussion aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in designing effective hybrid work models. Since not every sub-theme was mentioned equally by all target groups, commonalities and differences are also identified that may only have occurred between two target groups.

4.4.1. Degree of freedom and self-management

Framework/ work agreement

All groups recognised the flexible work framework established by HR, valuing its flexibility for remote work, which aligns with the organisation's goal of being a modern, attractive employer. All also acknowledged the importance of adhering to regulations, such as data protection and the German Working Hours Act (Arbeitszeitgesetz).

However, understanding of the framework's specifics varied. Managers valued flexibility but lacked detailed knowledge of the company-wide „flexwork" agreement. HR professionals had the clearest understanding, highlighting the absence of mandatory attendance quotas and the flexibility for teams to adapt the framework. Employees were the least informed, often unaware of formal agreements or assuming their existence without knowing the details.

This reveals a hierarchical gap in understanding: HR is well-informed, managers have partial knowledge, and employees are largely uninformed. Improved communication strategies are needed to ensure all employees can effectively utilise the framework.

The discrepancies also reflect varying levels of engagement. While HR and managers focus on implementing and adapting the framework, employees appear disengaged, limiting their ability to benefit from it. Strengthening communication and providing accessible resources could help align understanding across the organisation.

Departmental rules/ regulations

There is strong alignment among the three target groups regarding the decentralised nature of departmental rules for hybrid working. All groups emphasised that individual teams or departments have significant autonomy to develop their own practices and schedules for on-site attendance. flexibility is consistently portrayed as a positive aspect of the organisation's hybrid work culture.

While there is a shared recognition of the importance of flexibility and team autonomy in defining hybrid work practices, the perspectives differ in emphasis. Managers and HR professionals focus on operational needs, such as stakeholder availability and legal obligations, while employees highlight the collaborative and social aspects of team-specific office days.

The absence of rigid top-down rules appears to be appreciated across all groups. However, the need for continuous coordination mentioned by HR suggests that the current decentralised model requires active management to address potential inconsistencies and ensure alignment with organisational goals. Improved communication of the reasoning behind certain requirements, such as on-site presence for operational purposes, could help employees better understand and appreciate these expectations.

HR function

The findings reveal a shared recognition among general managers and HR professionals of the HR function's critical role in adapting to and enabling hybrid working. Both groups highlight the expansion of the labour market as a significant benefit of hybrid working, particularly in recruitment. Hybrid work arrangements now allow for hiring talented individuals who live far from the workplace, which was previously unfeasible in a face-to-face work culture. Both groups view this flexibility as a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining skilled workers.

While general managers and HR professionals agree on the expanded recruitment opportunities enabled by hybrid working, their perspectives diverge on the broader roles and responsibilities of HR: HR professionals describe their multifaceted role, including governance, change management, and labor law advisory functions, to ensure hybrid working is effective and compliant. General management does not explicitly address these roles, focusing more on departmental autonomy and specific recruitment benefits. Interestingly, employees did not identify themes directly related to the HR function. This absence may suggest limited awareness or direct interaction with HR's hybrid work initiatives.

Requirements for employees

All three target groups emphasise the need for employees to have robust digital skills and the ability to

adapt to and use digital tools effectively. Managers and employees note variability in the depth of digital tool usage across individuals and teams.

Moreover, general management and HR highlight the importance of self-management in hybrid work. This includes time management, task ownership, and ensuring that work runs smoothly without constant oversight. What differs is the focus on employee empowerment. HR uniquely highlights the employer's role in empowering employees to take responsibility for their work. This contrasts with the managerial perspective, which assumes employees are inherently responsible for their tasks.

4.4.2. Expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal

Hybrid work as the new normal

Both HR professionals and employees view hybrid working as deeply integrated into the organisational culture, describing it as the new "normal." Both groups view it as a baseline expectation rather than a differentiator, with some interviewees noting that stricter attendance requirements could lead employees to leave the organisation. The findings suggest that hybrid working has become essential, serving as both a retention strategy and a key element of employer branding.

While HR professionals and employees share an appreciation for hybrid working, their perspectives differ in focus: HR professionals view it as both a retention factor and a hygiene factor, indicating that it has shifted from a unique selling point to a minimum expectation. They note challenges in reversing the flexwork arrangement, such as labour law issues, works council involvement, and potential resignations. Employees, on the other hand, focus more on personal benefits, such as work-life balance and flexibility. Many directly link the hybrid work model to their decision to stay with the employer, describing it as an essential part of the "complete package" that makes the organisation attractive. Unlike HR professionals, employees are less concerned with legal or operational aspects and more focused on their personal experiences and preferences.

Interestingly, general managers did not contribute to this discussion, which may suggest a lesser emphasis on hybrid work as a cultural or organisational norm compared to HR professionals and employees.

4.4.3. Place

Equipment and infrastructure

The target groups unanimously agree that adequate technical equipment and reliable tools are critical for hybrid work. General management and HR professionals emphasise the provision of essential tools, such as laptops and mobile phones, as fundamental to success. The need for adequate physical office infrastructure is also commonly mentioned, particularly by managers and HR professionals. Key points include creating private spaces for focused work and reducing reliance on open-plan offices to improve productivity during on-site work.

Differences exist in the perception of the state of the technical systems. While employees acknowledge progress in providing basic technical tools, managers raise concerns about outdated systems and software applications. This issue is less frequently mentioned by HR or employees, suggesting that some groups may not perceive the system's limitations as critical or may not experience these challenges as acutely as managers do.

Bridging these gaps in perspective could help create a more cohesive approach to addressing equipment and infrastructure needs across the organisation.

Working in the office

All groups agree that the office is ideal for collaboration, creativity, and workshops, and plays a key role in onboarding new employees, fostering social and organisational integration.

General managers and HR professionals believe sensitive conversations, such as feedback or disciplinary discussions, are best conducted in person. Although not explicitly stated, employees' alignment with collaboration benefits suggests they would support face-to-face communication for such topics.

There is disagreement regarding office efficiency and workplace conditions. Managers emphasise that office presence enhances efficiency through quick coordination and structured routines, while some employees prefer the home office for focused work. Views on workplace conditions vary: some managers acknowledge that not all colleagues have ideal home office setups, suggesting the office may offer better conditions. HR professionals do not focus on workplace conditions. Employees cite personal preferences, with some favouring the office for better equipment, and others preferring home for better isolation.

Overall, while all groups value the office for collaboration and interpersonal functions, differences emerge in perceptions of efficiency, workplace conditions, and the impact of spontaneous versus deliberate exchanges.

Working in the home office

Working from home allows for higher concentration due to fewer distractions compared to the office according to all three target groups. Furthermore, they all acknowledge that home office work can enhance productivity due to the quieter environment and elimination of commuting time. All groups align on using the home office for tasks requiring concentration, conceptual work, or reading.

Feedback regarding the impact of background noise and the benefits for commuters varies slightly. While HR and employees strongly highlight office background noise as a critical factor driving their preference for home office work, managers recognise background noise in the office as a distraction but do not emphasise its impact as much as other groups. Regarding the work-life integration employees explicitly mention the benefit of saving commute time and integrating personal life with work, framing it as a key advantage of home office work. The other target groups do not focus as much on work-life integration as a significant factor.

These nuances reflect their differing roles and priorities within the organisation.

Individual location preferences

Both HR professionals and employees recognise the tension between hybrid working flexibility and concerns over underutilised office spaces. Both are aware of the Executive Board's informal preference for increased attendance, though it lacks enforceable mandates.

HR professionals focus on the strategic implications, such as the impact on office space economics and efficiency, while employees are more concerned with the practical and personal effects. They acknowledge the Board's preferences but note these are not enforced, maintaining team flexibility.

HR also highlights that some managers struggle to enforce attendance without clear guidance, calling for more clarity but stopping short of advocating rigid mandates. Interestingly, managers did not comment on this, suggesting they may not view it as an issue.

Participants recognise a wide range of individual preferences regarding work locations. While all agree location should depend on task nature and personal needs, all groups acknowledge the challenge of motivating employees to return to the office. General managers and HR see this as part of their role,

while employees struggle to convince colleagues of the value of in-person attendance without compulsion.

Resistance to office attendance is framed differently: general managers sometimes see it as a lack of effort, while HR and employees attribute it to personal challenges, such as long commutes or unsuitable home offices. HR and employees suggest emphasising the benefits of office attendance to promote a balanced hybrid model, although some managers resort to mandates when necessary.

4.4.4. Time

Definition of working time

There is consensus between all target groups that hybrid working has blurred the boundaries between work and private life, particularly when working from home. The difficulty in delineating work and leisure time in a home environment, attributing this to the absence of a clear commute and separation from the office, is reflected on by all groups. Moreover, there is a shared recognition across groups of the value of time tracking in increasing transparency and helping manage workloads.

Yet, there are divided opinions regarding the value of time tracking within the target groups. While some managers view time tracking as a protective measure to monitor workloads, others see it as inadequate for capturing true work performance. HR professionals strongly favour time tracking as a necessary tool for transparency. Employees do not directly engage with the debate on the value of time tracking, focusing more on personal discipline and self-control in managing work hours.

These insights suggest that a hybrid work model requires both structural support from organisations and active engagement by employees to effectively manage working time.

Position and distribution of working hours

All target groups agree that the flexibility to set and distribute working hours is a key advantage of hybrid work, allowing employees to tailor schedules to individual needs and preferences.

However, there are differences in focus: managers prioritise outcomes, HR professionals balance flexibility with operational requirements, and employees emphasise personal benefits. HR professionals stress that flexibility must align with team and operational needs, such as covering availability times, viewing these constraints as essential for effective hybrid working. While they acknowledge the need for coordination, managers and employees focus more on the personal benefits, such as improved work-life balance and completing tasks at optimal times.

HR professionals also raise concerns about overworking and neglecting labour law requirements, such as rest periods and maximum working hours. While managers highlight the practical benefits of flexible working hours, they may not fully consider these risks.

Overall, HR emphasises the importance of organisational oversight to ensure compliance with labour laws and safeguard employee well-being, ensuring the long-term success of hybrid working.

Transparency about attendances/ absences

There is broad agreement across groups on the need for transparency. General management and HR professionals advocate for structured approaches to attendance tracking, such as using calendars and availability times, to ensure operational efficiency. Employees mirror this sentiment, emphasising practical arrangements that ensure coverage of responsibilities rather than strict adherence to formal tools.

Employees provided fewer details about their practices compared to managers and HR, suggesting that while the systems in place are effective, employees may perceive this sub-theme as a routine aspect of their work rather than a distinct organisational strategy.

Response time

Both General Management and HR agree on the importance of establishing clear expectations regarding response times in hybrid work settings. These expectations are seen as critical to maintaining efficient communication and collaboration when team members are not physically co-located. Employees did not provide any insights into response time expectations, indicating either a lack of formal discussion about this topic within teams or a perception that it is not a significant concern.

While there is no apparent disagreement, there is a variation in the response time: Managers appear to set response time expectations informally and inconsistently, with variations such as 12 hours in one department and 24 hours in another. While this flexibility allows teams to tailor practices to their needs, it may also lead to uneven experiences across the organisation.

Regular exchange

Both managers and employees emphasise the importance of regular exchanges in hybrid work environments to foster communication, transparency, and team cohesion, compensating for the reduced opportunities for spontaneous, in-person interactions. Both groups agree that the need for such

exchanges has grown with hybrid work, as location flexibility and fewer on-site interactions require more structured communication. HR did not provide specific input on regular exchanges.

While there is general agreement on their importance, the focus differs: employees highlight challenges like a lack of interdisciplinary exchange and explain how regular meetings help address these gaps. Managers, however, place less emphasis on these challenges, suggesting that employees are more focused on overcoming the disadvantages of hybrid work.

4.4.5. Workload and overtime

Increased load

There is broad consensus across managers, HR, and employees that hybrid working increases workload due to factors like more meetings, frequent digital assignments, and the absence of physical cues signalling workload. Digital tools are seen as both helpful for communication and a source of overstimulation, contributing to higher meeting density and social pressure for constant availability.

The sources of increased workload differ: Managers link it to structural demands and hybrid work conditions, while HR focuses on organisational trends and digital task assignment. Employees highlight the challenge of rapidly switching tasks and handling multiple communication channels. These differences suggest a need for tailored interventions, such as better workload management for employees and enhanced tracking for managers and HR.

While most acknowledge the increased workload, a minority, particularly among managers, HR, and employees, view the changes as unrelated to hybrid work. Some managers see overtime as a personal choice, while HR argues that core tasks remain unchanged. Employees attribute increased demands to external factors or view digitalisation as a mitigating factor. This highlights the importance of considering individual and contextual factors in workload perceptions.

Views on boundary-setting differ: Managers emphasise personal responsibility in managing workload, while HR and employees focus on structural factors in task distribution.

Role based workload/ relief

There is broad agreement that managerial roles involve greater workloads, particularly in hybrid environments, where additional communication formats intensify demands. This is linked to leadership responsibilities like planning, oversight, and team interactions. Managers' tasks are often more fluid, while employees have more structured roles.

However, there is disagreement on the extent to which managers can autonomously manage their workloads. Some general managers view this autonomy as an advantage, allowing them to control their schedules, while others see it as a pressure, with constant availability to support their teams. HR focuses on the structural increase in managerial responsibilities due to hybrid work, rather than autonomy as a solution. Employees recognise that one-on-one meetings contribute to managerial workload but view it as part of the role, showing less concern about its impact on managers. This contrasts with the concerns raised by managers and HR about workload increases and sustainability.

These differences highlight the need for clearer organisational strategies to balance managerial autonomy with the demands of hybrid work, ensuring sustainable workload management across roles.

Hybrid working model should allow relief

Both managers and HR professionals recognise hybrid working's potential to reduce stress, though with differing focuses on individual versus collaborative benefits. Both highlight the flexibility to choose work location and timing as a key factor in enhancing focus, especially for tasks like report writing or meeting deadlines. Managers emphasise task isolation and time efficiency, while HR focuses on shared workloads and reducing overtime.However, the realisation of this potential varies. Managers acknowledge hybrid working's theoretical benefits but suggest that the ongoing volume of tasks limits its impact, noting that while working from home may offer relief for specific tasks, overall workload remains unchanged. HR professionals, in contrast, are more optimistic, highlighting how hybrid working has helped reduce overtime and balance work demands.

The lack of employee input suggests a gap in understanding or communication about the potential benefits of hybrid work across all levels. Further exploration is needed to assess whether employees experience these benefits or if they remain underutilised.

4.4.6. Expectations & relationship with manager

Trust

Both General Management and HR professionals agree that trust has become a central component of hybrid working. The shift to location-flexible work necessitates greater trust between managers and employees, as physical visibility and daily in-office interactions are reduced. The shift away from micromanagement is highlighted as a natural adaptation to hybrid work, with managers focusing on empowering employees to take ownership of their tasks rather than prescribing detailed solutions. HR professionals also describe trust as a necessity in hybrid working, noting that managers can no longer

rely on traditional visibility or control mechanisms, such as monitoring break times or in-office presence.

There is no significant disagreements evident. There are rather slight variances in that employees do not explicitly mention the sub-theme of trust, but rather share positive experiences in the sub-theme 'employee-centred approach', which can also be traced back to trust. The reports of experiences also vary slightly: While many managers and HR professionals report a positive shift toward greater trust, some managers' hesitation to micromanage may indicate varying levels of comfort and adaptation to hybrid leadership.

Appreciation

All three target groups recognise the importance of appreciation in the workplace, with shared acknowledgement that it can manifest in various forms, including feedback, recognition, and gestures of care. Appreciation is understood as a highly individualised concept that depends on personal preferences and leadership behaviours.

While appreciation remains a central element of workplace relationships, hybrid work introduces complexities in how it is expressed and perceived. These complexities vary based on personal expectations, leadership behaviours, and the context of interactions.

There is disagreement, especially on how the impact of hybrid work on appreciation is perceived: HR professionals as well as general managers are divided in their perspectives. Some view hybrid work as having little effect on appreciation, while others highlight challenges in expressing non-verbal or situational gestures of appreciation virtually. Most employees feel that appreciation remains intact in the hybrid setting, but a minority echo concerns about reduced visibility making it harder to feel recognised.

Visibility of employees

All groups recognise the importance of employee visibility and its evolution in hybrid work. There is consensus that visibility depends on personal traits, work outcomes, and contributions, with hybrid work offering new opportunities for some while posing challenges for others. Managers and HR highlight that digital collaboration tools maintain visibility through output and participation in virtual discussions. Employees also note that hybrid work has made smaller contributions more noticeable.

Visibility is often seen as individualised, influenced by personality. Extroverts may naturally maintain visibility, while introverts face challenges, especially in competitive virtual settings. Opinions on hybrid work's impact on introverts vary. Some managers and HR professionals worry that hybrid

work reduces visibility for quieter employees, while others see it as an opportunity for introverts to prepare and contribute more easily. Employees focus on the positive aspects of increased transparency through digital tools, without specific concerns about introverts.

Employees report no significant change in visibility due to hybrid work, suggesting it remains consistent regardless of the work model. General managers and HR professionals are divided, with some viewing hybrid work as neutral for visibility, while others cite challenges from reduced in-person interactions.

Connection to manager/ overall employer

There is consensus that hybrid work has affected employees' connections with managers, teams, and the broader organisation. Reduced office presence weakens social bonds, trust, and loyalty, especially for remote workers. Managers observe that in-person interactions build stronger trust and rapport, while HR notes that hybrid work can make employees feel detached, reducing loyalty. Employees mention fewer opportunities to interact with managers and leadership, diminishing informal moments of connection, such as greetings or casual chats.

The perceptions vary: Managers focus on how hybrid work impacts their direct relationships with employees, noting that frequent in-office contact strengthens connections. HR highlights systemic challenges, such as reduced loyalty and the physical distance between remote workers and the office. Employees emphasise a lack of visibility and approachability of upper management, rather than their immediate supervisors. They also note that long-term employees are buffered by pre-existing bonds, while new hires struggle with isolation during hybrid onboarding, an issue less emphasised by managers and HR.

4.4.7. Managing people

Employee-centred approach

Both General Management and Employees recognise a notable shift towards a more employee-centred approach in hybrid working environments. This change reflects a growing emphasis on employee well-being, personal exchange, and fostering a supportive work culture. Both managers and employees perceive these changes as improvements compared to the previous presence-driven culture, where personal well-being and interpersonal exchange were less prioritised. Employees particularly value the opportunity to address non-work-related topics in structured formats like team meetings.

In addition to the similarities, the following differences should be noted: While some managers and teams have embraced an employee-centred approach, it is unclear whether these practices are widespread across the organisation. This variability could indicate that such efforts depend on individual leaders rather than being a systematic cultural shift.

HR professionals did not provide feedback on this sub-theme. Their absence from this discussion suggests that while managers and employees experience and implement these changes directly, HR may not yet be actively involved in driving or formalising these practices.

Delegation

Both general managers and HR professionals agree that delegation in hybrid environments has become more structured, requiring deliberate planning, clear task definitions, regular communication, and opportunities for feedback. Both groups emphasise the importance of creating a safe environment for employees to ask questions, especially for newer employees who may hesitate to seek clarification in hybrid settings.

However, it is unclear whether these practices are consistently applied across the organisation. Employees did not provide feedback on delegation, suggesting either a lack of awareness or a different prioritisation of the issue. This highlights an opportunity to involve employees in evaluating and improving delegation practices.

Controlling/ steering

There is a common acknowledge of the importance of controlling and steering functions in hybrid work settings between all groups. These functions are seen as essential for ensuring task completion, maintaining alignment, and supporting effective team collaboration. All groups frequently mention tandem or representation structures as a key tool for managing hybrid teams. These arrangements ensure continuity by designating at least two individuals to handle shared responsibilities or provide coverage during absences.

Managers and HR note that hybrid work introduces challenges in steering due to the lack of spontaneous interactions and the need for more structured communication. Employees, however, do not comment on how these challenges affect their experience. Employees provide limited feedback on the steering tools used by managers, such as tandem structures or monitoring systems. Their perspective is more focused on how these structures impact their day-to-day work, such as providing coverage during absences.

4.4.8. Communication

Information

One thing all groups have in common is emphasising the importance of effectively sharing information in hybrid work environments. The overarching consensus is that delivering the right information to the right audience at the right time is critical to hybrid work success, though the approaches and challenges vary. Across all groups, a recurring challenge is balancing the volume of communication with its relevance and clarity. Hybrid work necessitates more explicit communication, which can be time-consuming but ultimately enhances understanding.

There are minor differences in the way information is accessed and the information overload described. HR professionals and employees occasionally note disparities in how information reaches different groups, particularly when in-office discussions exclude remote colleagues. Managers focus more on the efficiency of existing structures and less on such gaps. Employees report occasional information overload due to redundant updates via multiple channels (e.g., emails, chat messages, and Confluence), which is not explicitly mentioned by managers or HR.

Rules/ agreed collaboration

There is general agreement on the importance of clear rules for hybrid collaboration, including communication expectations, digital tools, and documentation practices. Structured collaboration is seen as essential for improving efficiency and reducing misunderstandings. All groups recognise the role of digital tools like MS Teams, with rules on camera use, status indicators, and chat behaviours often formalised within teams.

However, there is variability in how these rules are developed and followed. HR professionals suggest managers should be more consistent, while employees generally follow existing rules but are less involved in creating them.

Only general managers and HR professionals emphasise the need for a balance between virtual and face-to-face exchanges to maintain team dynamics. All groups agree on the value of joint team days in the office for social interaction, team cohesion, and collaboration, with high attendance typically for personal reasons. Managers and HR view these days as boosting both efficiency and relationships, while employees focus more on their social value, with less emphasis on task performance. This reflects a slight misalignment in prioritising productivity versus social benefits.

In conclusion, while clear collaboration rules and a balance of virtual and in-person interactions are recognised as important, inconsistencies in implementation and differing views on in-person interactions reflect broader challenges in hybrid work environments.

One individual stands out with significant differences in experiences, particularly regarding collaboration and communication. This manager's team lacks clear protocols and office days, and while the importance of rules was not initially addressed, the manager later attributed low attendance and lack of team spirit to this absence, expressing a desire to implement clearer rules in the future.

Added value of communication in presence

General managers and HR professionals recognise the unique advantages of face-to-face communication in a hybrid work model, noting its role in fostering informal exchanges, interpreting non-verbal cues, and enabling spontaneous dialogue that enhances collaboration and empathy.

Managers emphasise the limitations of virtual communication for understanding employee well-being, highlighting the importance of in-person interactions for reading body language, facial expressions, and emotional states, which are essential for empathy and duty of care. HR agrees, pointing out that face-to-face interactions offer a depth of engagement not fully replicated virtually. They also note that hybrid work has shifted face-to-face meetings from routine to intentional, high-value encounters.

No employee feedback was provided on the value of face-to-face communication, suggesting a need to explore employees' perceptions of in-person interactions in a hybrid model. While both managers and HR focus on the benefits of face-to-face communication, they do not elaborate on strategies for balancing it with the efficiency of virtual collaboration.

4.4.9. Performance

Understanding of performance/ productivity estimate

General managers, HR professionals, and employees acknowledge the complexity of assessing performance and productivity in hybrid work environments. While the perspectives and emphases differ, shared themes emerge around the importance of mindset, the need for effective management practices, and the challenges introduced by the hybrid model. Managers rely on tracking tools such as OneNote and ticketing systems to monitor progress. This digital documentation is seen as an evolution spurred by hybrid work, enabling greater transparency. HR confirm the importance of goal tracking and maintaining regular exchanges with employees to monitor workload and well-being.

There are differences and gaps in the naming and use of tools and a (formal) objective agreement process. Managers are enthusiastic about digital tools like OneNote and ticketing systems, while employees do not reference these tools directly in their feedback. This suggests a potential disconnect in how managers and employees perceive the role of technology in performance identification. Furthermore, managers and HR mention goal-setting as a tool for performance measurement, but it appears to be underutilised or less frequently referenced by employees. This indicates a need for better communication and alignment regarding these processes. While HR highlights the shift from presence to output-based performance measurement, employees seem to value the flexibility of hybrid work more than formal performance evaluation processes. This difference suggests employees might prioritise their autonomy over detailed performance scrutiny.

Organisational performance

All three target groups aligned with the study's definition of OP, agreeing that it is comprehensive and reflective of collective achievement.

Managers specifically emphasised the variability of OP, particularly its link to company-specific objectives like shared values or societal benefits. This focus on aligning performance with organisational identity was not explicitly mentioned by HR professionals or employees.

Overall, the consensus across all groups underscores the robustness and adaptability of the study's definition of OP.

Impact of hybrid work

Within all target groups, there are many proponents who assume that hybrid work is enhancing productivity through flexibility, efficient coordination, and leveraging digital tools. Digital tools and virtual meetings enable faster, more structured coordination: managers benefit from tighter scheduling, HR sees smoother cross-functional collaboration, and employees enjoy quicker responses and easier alignment with colleagues and superiors. Flexibility in work schedule and location is recognised as a key factor driving higher productivity, with managers and employees highlighting its harmony with personal needs, and HR emphasising its relevance to individual circumstances.

However, there are differences in emphasis. Managers focus on the motivational aspects of hybrid work, suggesting that autonomy fosters ownership and commitment. HR professionals view productivity gains at the organisational level, citing widespread adoption of hybrid practices, while managers and employees highlight individual or team-level improvements.

Some who don't link hybrid work to productivity argue that it changes the how and when of work but not the outcomes. Managers and employees note that tasks are performed in different settings and times, while HR professionals suggest that flexibility alters workflow without necessarily improving efficiency. All groups agree that while the work setting and timing have changed, the volume and quality of work remain consistent, indicating that hybrid work reshapes processes, not outcomes.

Overall, there is a consensus that hybrid work is neutral in terms of performance outcomes, with its value lying in adaptability. It allows individuals to manage tasks flexibly without compromising output, but its broader impact on organisational efficiency is context-dependent.

No long-term studies

Both HR professionals and employees recognise the risks of overwork and mental strain in hybrid environments. HR highlights the importance of mindfulness and breaks to sustain performance, likening it to sports training. Employees echo these concerns, citing rising burnout rates and emphasising the need for strong self-management skills to mitigate mental strain.

A key point of divergence is the lack of long-term studies on hybrid work's impact. HR professionals stress that without such research, it's difficult to assess the sustainability of hybrid work and its effects on performance over time. Managers focus more on immediate, team-specific productivity, while HR and employees express concerns about the potential long-term negative consequences of overwork, lack of structure, and the mental health challenges of hybrid work. This gap in long-term data highlights the need for further research to understand the systemic effects of hybrid work on both well-being and productivity.

Underperformance/ low performance

Both general managers and HR professionals agree that hybrid work has not increased underperformance, which they attribute to long-standing issues that predate hybrid work. They consistently state that underperformance is no more common in hybrid settings than in a face-to-face culture. Both groups acknowledge that hybrid work has changed how underperformance is identified. Some believe it has improved visibility by focusing on work results rather than presence, while others note that digital tools and structured documentation have enhanced transparency, making it easier to spot performance gaps.

However, there are differing views. Some managers feel hybrid work makes it easier to identify underperformers due to a focus on deliverables, while others think it requires more understanding of employees' behaviours. Within HR, opinions are split, with some seeing hybrid work as improving

detection and others viewing it as more challenging. Employees did not provide insights into underperformance, suggesting a potential gap in communication or awareness regarding how performance issues are addressed.

4.4.10. Structural implications

No connection to hybrid work

There is consensus across all target groups that hybrid working has not led to structural changes in the organisation. General management and HR professionals emphasise that recent structural shifts were driven by factors unrelated to hybrid work, such as pre-pandemic priorities. Employees share this view, seeing no direct connection between hybrid work and organisational restructuring. However, employees highlight the importance of operational structures, like processes, collaboration rules, and role clarity, in supporting hybrid work—a practical aspect not emphasised by general management or HR.

This suggests that hybrid work has been integrated into the existing structure without requiring formal changes. However, HR's insights on the importance of operational frameworks indicate that further attention may be needed to optimise hybrid work practices.

5. Discussion

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion linking the research problem (Chapter 1.2), the literature review (Chapter 2), and the findings (Chapter 4). The overarching aim of this study was to investigate what makes hybrid working effective for the organisation. In this context, the literature pointed to a paradigm shift towards an employee-centred approach that changes the definition of OP in a way that takes into account the needs of employees and a more qualitative stakeholder approach. The shift towards hybrid work has often been implemented with a predominant focus on employee preferences and needs. While this employee-centred approach acknowledges the growing demand from employees for flexibility, this study emphasises the risks of neglecting the broader organisational ecosystem, including managerial capacities, HR infrastructure, and the operational requirements of the organisation. A narrow focus on employee-centredness can lead to fragmented processes, misaligned expectations, and a lack of scalability.

At the outset of this chapter, the new framework *Structured Autonomy* is introduced as the central outcome of this study. Rather than leading up to the framework gradually, it is presented upfront to clearly position it as the main contribution of the research. This deliberate choice supports the structure of the discussion, which then unpacks the framework by tracing its development through the empirical findings and linking it to existing theory. By placing the framework first, the chapter provides readers with a conceptual anchor that guides the subsequent interpretation of themes, stakeholder perspectives, and theoretical implications.

To ground the discussion in its practical relevance from the beginning, the thesis advocates for the structured autonomy framework as a response to the challenges identified in hybrid work settings. Structured autonomy is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a tailored mechanism that balances the autonomy afforded to employees with organisational coherence. It integrates the needs of different stakeholders such as employees, managers, and HR professionals, creating a sustainable model that fosters both individual flexibility and collective alignment.

At the core of structured autonomy lies the idea of three continuums, where organisations can calibrate three critical dimensions based on their unique needs and culture:

1. **Formalisation continuum (informal ↔ formal)**
   This dimension concerns the degree to which hybrid work practices are codified. Organisations may choose to operate on a more informal end of the spectrum, relying on mutual trust and ad-hoc arrangements, or adopt a formal approach with detailed policies and documentation. For example, an organisation with a strong collaborative culture may lean

towards informality, while those with regulatory obligations may require more formalised processes.

2. **Centralisation continuum (centralised ↔ decentralised)**
This refers to the level at which rules and policies regarding hybrid work are centralised. Centralisation offers consistency and ease of management but may limit flexibility for teams with diverse needs. On the other hand, decentralisation allows departments or teams to adapt policies to their specific contexts, albeit with the risk of uneven application across the organisation. Decisive factors may include organisational culture and HR philosophy, but also the company size and structure. Organisations with a culture and HR philosophy that emphasises trust, empowerment, and flexibility are more likely to adopt decentralised and broad hybrid work rules that grant employees significant autonomy over their work location and schedule. In contrast, companies with a more hierarchical, control-oriented culture may implement stricter centralised guidelines to ensure oversight and coordination.

3. **Decision and communication continuum (explicit ↔ implicit)**
Decision-making and communication in hybrid work can range from highly explicit—where all processes, expectations, and decisions are clearly articulated—to more implicit arrangements, where norms are understood informally within the organisational culture. The choice on this spectrum depends on factors such as workforce diversity, organisational size, and the complexity of tasks.

structured autonomy					
continuum of control mechanisms					
formal ⟷	informal	centralised ⟷	decentralised	explicit ⟷	implicit
balancing stakeholder needs/ level of interest					
external	organisation/ executive board	HR	general managers	department/ team	employee/ individual
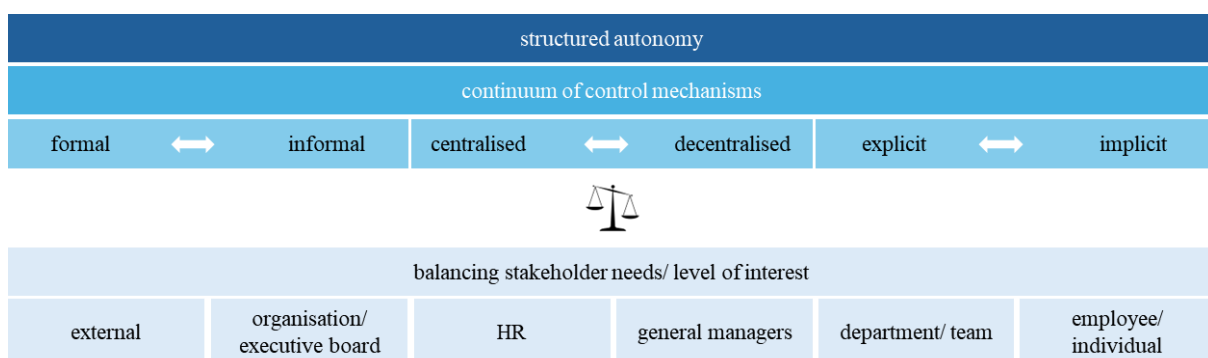
Figure 10: Structured autonomy to balance out different levels of interests

Source: Own illustration

By carefully assessing these continuums, organisations can design hybrid work rules that not only support flexibility and autonomy but also ensure that performance, and organisational coherence are maintained.

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this case study furthermore revealed a continuous development that defined the organisation's pandemic-initiated transition to hybrid work: The evolution from forced adaptation to a conscious decision in favour of hybrid work, a reconfiguration of participation and power in decision-making, and the implementation of structured autonomy as a guiding principle.

The following sections first delve deeper into the development towards a conscious implementation of hybrid work (subchapter 5.1), since this development provided the basis for the three continuums that emerged from it. Subchapter 5.2 then turns to the mentioned continuums before finally introducing structured autonomy (5.3).

This study's findings provide a nuanced perspective on the hybrid work model within the investigated organisation. They offer critical insights into the interplay between organisational structures, team dynamics, and individual agency in shaping hybrid work practices. Regarding different stakeholder groups and interest levels, the role of external and, for example, stakeholder groups such as customers did not come up in this research and was not proactively questioned regarding the research questions. These groups are therefore deliberately not considered. Ultimately, the discussion aims to integrate these findings with existing literature and practical applications, highlighting the complex layers that define effective hybrid work models.

5.1. Employee-centred approach – A paradigm shift

Hybrid work literature refers to the COVID-19 pandemic as a trigger for a dramatic transformation in workplace dynamics, accelerating the adoption of hybrid work models and foregrounding the importance of employee-centred approaches (Alexander et al., 2021; Howe et al., 2021). As previously mentioned, this shift reflects a broader recognition of the need to prioritise employee well-being, autonomy, and engagement as core components of organisational success. By enabling greater flexibility and tailoring work environments to individual needs, organisations have sought to balance productivity demands with enhanced job satisfaction (Howe et al., 2021; Naqshbandi et al., 2023).

The findings of this research reveal the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organisational work practices, serving as an unprecedented disruptor that compelled organisations worldwide to

reassess their traditional models (Bath and Winkler, 2023). For the case study organisation, this disruption catalysed a significant cultural and structural transformation. Initially conceived as a temporary response to the immediate challenges of remote work, the shift evolved into a long-term commitment to hybrid working, signifying an employee-centred approach to flexibility and work-life balance. At the pandemic's onset, the organisation was unprepared for the sudden shift to remote work. This unplanned transition, driven by necessity, unveiled unexpected benefits. Nevertheless, participants noted employees' resilience and adaptability, demonstrating that productivity and results could be maintained despite the physical separation from the office. Thus, these outcomes challenged the organisation's presence-based culture, highlighting the viability of alternative work arrangements. Over time, what began as a crisis response matured into a strategic decision. By the end of the pandemic's acute phase, the organisation had formalised its approach to hybrid work through the implementation of the „flexwork" agreement, embedding flexibility into its operational framework as a cornerstone for the future.

These findings align with existing literature that emphasises the potential of hybrid work to enhance employee autonomy while fostering innovative work arrangements (Edgar and Geare, 2014; Richards, 2022). However, this research also identifies gaps and limitations in the current discourse. Specifically, while many studies advocate for an employee-centred approach, the findings suggest that prioritising employee preferences in isolation can lead to unintended organisational challenges. Evidence from the case study highlights instances where decision-making power and organisational flexibility shifted excessively towards employees, resulting in inefficiencies and weakened cohesion. For example, according to the general managers observations granting employees unrestricted control over work schedules and locations often overlooked operational demands, leading to coordination difficulties and misalignment with organisational objectives. Similarly, decentralised decision-making processes created inconsistencies across teams, diminishing clarity and accountability, particularly in complex organisational structures. Interestingly, the target group of general managers and HR professionals pointed out the challenges that arose from an excessive focus and shift of power towards employees. The employees interviewed had little criticism or remarks regarding the increase in autonomy and flexibility.

Furthermore, hybrid work environments are inherently complex, involving varied and sometimes conflicting priorities. Research indicates that while certain themes such as the demand for work-life balance, technological accessibility, and organisational efficiency are consistent across contexts, stakeholder needs are ultimately highly individual and specific to each company and its culture. Studies by Voll and Moses emphasise that factors such as organisational size, sector, workforce composition, and leadership style heavily influence the unique hybrid work requirements of

stakeholders (Owl Labs, 2022). Addressing these varied needs is crucial for fostering collaborative, inclusive, and efficient hybrid work environments (Speck, 2022).

Since this study criticises an approach that is too employee-centred, contrary to the opinions of advocates such as Edgar and Geare, (2014), Guest (2017) and Richards (2022), other stakeholder groups and their interests also come into focus. While the literature provides generic summaries of the underlying needs and interests of three main parties in the context of German hybrid work – employees, organisations/employers and external parties in the form of legislators –, the practical insights highlighted divergent stakeholder needs and power balances within the organisation. Looking at the case study and its findings, each group (executive board, HR professionals, general managers, teams, and individual employees) approaches hybrid work with unique priorities, shaping its overall design and operation. In the following, the different stakeholders are explained and their main interest regarding the respective continuum is outlined:

Executive Board

Many participants pointed out that the executive board's primary focus is on the strategic and economic sustainability of hybrid work. This includes addressing the underutilisation of office spaces, managing associated costs, and ensuring alignment with organisational goals such as employer branding, recruitment and (labour law) regulations. The board's role is largely one of oversight, establishing high-level frameworks like the 'Flexwork' agreement to guide hybrid work while delegating operational control to other stakeholders. Their strategic intent reflects a calculated balancing act: granting autonomy while safeguarding the organisation's broader interests.

HR Professionals

HR occupies a dual role as both enabler and regulator. This is also in line with reports from the participants stating that they prioritise compliance with legal requirements, such as labour laws, while fostering a culture of trust and flexibility. HR's emphasis on tools like time tracking and structured attendance aims to enhance transparency and address workload disparities. Additionally, HR advocates for employee empowerment and supports managers in navigating the complexities of hybrid work. However, according to the interviews of the case study organisation, their reliance on informal agreements and decentralised decisions at the team level underscores the need for continuous monitoring and adaptation.

General Managers

General managers act as the bridge between organisational goals and team dynamics. As mentioned by many participants, their primary concern is operational efficiency, ensuring that hybrid work practices align with stakeholder needs while maintaining productivity. According to the information provided in

the interview, managers face the challenge of balancing autonomy with oversight, often tasked with co-creating team-level rules such as shared presence days. Proactive managerial involvement is essential to fostering cohesion and mitigating tensions, particularly in teams that lack clear structures for collaboration.

Team Level (Employees as a collective)

According to the study's findings, teams value autonomy in designing hybrid work practices that align with their specific operational needs and interpersonal dynamics. Joint team days emerge as a key mechanism for strengthening professional exchange and social bonds, yet variability in managerial involvement can lead to inconsistencies. Teams thrive on informal agreements but require clear guidance from managers to ensure alignment with organisational expectations. The findings suggest that empowering teams to co-create rules fosters ownership but must be balanced with structured oversight to avoid fragmentation.

Individual Employees

Many employees emphasised that they prioritise flexibility and work-life integration, viewing hybrid work as a means to balance personal and professional needs. They value the autonomy to tailor work arrangements but often lack visibility into the broader organisational implications, such as economic considerations or strategic goals. Tensions arise when individual preferences conflict with team or organisational expectations, highlighting the importance of transparent communication and negotiation mechanisms to harmonise competing priorities.

Considering the different levels of interests and stakeholder needs, this study critically questions an excessive focus on employee-centricity. Drawing conclusions from the interviews, a purely employee-centred HR practises, as postulated by its advocates, proves problematic if it is not embedded in a holistic concept that also centres the different interests and stakeholder needs. The literature presents a differentiated picture in this regard. While authors like Edgar and Geare (2014) who focus on modern HR practise often promote employee-centred approaches, Ulrich (1997), for example, underscores the need to align employee needs, management requirements and the strategic objectives of the company.

From an organisational perspective, it can be argued that focusing exclusively on individual needs carries the risk of undermining the strategic and tactical dimensions of corporate management. In practice, this leads to a situation in which key decisions – especially those concerning long-term corporate goals and competitiveness – are insufficiently taken into account. The interviews show that employees appreciate the autonomy and flexibility gained through hybrid work, but in some cases place it above company requirements when face-to-face appointments become a matter of discussion in the team. Therefore it must be ensured from an entrepreneurial point of view that orientation and

leadership are provided by superiors and central HR functions in order to ensure operational and strategic business continuity. In the case study organisation this takes place through fixed attendance days and rules of cooperation initiated by the managers in consultation with the team, yet not every manager demands this – with the consequence that in some cases less team cohesion and openness to joint presence days are reported by general managers.

Building on this foundation, the study highlights that such flexibility requires ongoing evaluation to maintain a balance between organisational goals and individual needs. Moreover, the study stresses the importance of considering the executive board's priorities in navigating these challenges. For example, this research identifies the tension between increased home office days to accommodate personal or family obligations and the inadequate use of office space.

Therefore, the study underscores the necessity of rebalancing power dynamics to avoid the pitfalls of an overly employee-centric model. Rebalancing requires a nuanced approach that considers organisational priorities alongside employee needs. For instance, participants highlighted the importance of managerial involvement in establishing core working hours to address scheduling conflicts, thereby maintaining both flexibility and team alignment. HR professionals also emphasised the value of centralised guidelines that allow for local adaptation while ensuring coherence across the organisation.

As the existing body of literature regarding employee-centred approaches mainly focuses on its values and philosophies (Nerdinger, 2008), rather than implementing a very strong employee-centric model in combination with hybrid work, this study adds to the theoretical knowledge by emphasising the need for a balanced framework, referred to here as structured autonomy. This approach recognises the unique context of each organisation and calibrates hybrid work practices along key continuums. Although there is research in the literature on every topic of the mentioned continuums and topics such as formalisation in the context of HR are not new, no study combines these three continuums and establishes a relationship to hybrid work in Germany. The findings contribute to the emerging field of hybrid work research by advocating for a balanced, context-sensitive approach that addresses gaps in the literature. Structured autonomy offers a pathway for organisations to navigate the complexities of hybrid work, ensuring sustainable and effective outcomes for all stakeholders.

5.2. Continuums of formalisation, centralisation and decisions & communication

In addition to the development towards an employee-centred approach in the case study organisation, the developments and characteristics on the three continuums based on the data collection will be explained below. Furthermore, initial implications for possible generalisations will be offered.

Overall, the role of formalisation and decentralisation proves to be central to the operationalisation of hybrid work, with the case study organisation being an example of an approach that combines centralised HR governance as well as formalised rules. For instance, as the company agreement on flexwork being a central, formal policy is combined with decentralised, informal practices that i.e. the teams are expected to develop independently since the implementation of hybrid work. However, the results of the data collection show that conflicts of interest prevail in some areas and that a balancing of power relations is necessary to make hybrid working an organisational success.

The results of this study offer a generalisable concept for creating structured autonomy, even if the processes and balancing of the three continuums remains organisation-specific and individual.

5.2.1. Shift in the degree of formalisation

The findings of this research highlight the nuanced relationship between formal and informal rules in hybrid work governance, reflecting both alignment with and divergence from the literature. The literature consistently emphasises the complementary nature of formal and informal rules in organisational settings (Kreuzer et al., 2022). Formal frameworks provide structure, consistency, and compliance with legal standards, while informal norms offer the flexibility required to adapt to specific organisational contexts. Scholars such as Fischer et al. (2019) and Nerdinger (2008) highlight the importance of formalisation in German HRM practices, where explicit rules often coexist with cultural norms to ensure operational efficiency. Similarly, Grzegorczyk et al. (2021) argue that balancing formal and informal practices is essential for managing the complexities of hybrid work. This study aligns with these perspectives, demonstrating that while formal policies like the 'Flexwork' agreement initially framed the hybrid work model, informal mechanisms have increasingly taken precedence. These informal practices, shaped by organisational culture and peer interactions, govern day-to-day operations, such as on-site presence and remote work scheduling.

While the literature underscores on the one hand the necessity of balancing formal and informal practices, this research identifies unique dynamics that are less frequently addressed. Unlike the rigidly formalised structures traditionally associated with German organisational contexts (Hofstede, 1993), the case study organisation demonstrates a marked preference for minimal formalisation. Thereby these findings challenge the traditional German preference for a high degree of formalisation and point to a broader cultural transition within the organisation, moving towards decentralised and trust-based governance. While this approach mirrors trends identified in the international literature, such as the

growing importance of informal norms (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021), it also introduces unique organisational dynamics that challenge conventional models and challenges the German cultural norm.

Informal practices like virtual check-ins and flexible scheduling are seamlessly integrated into the organisation's operations, bridging gaps left by formal policies. For example, the co-creation of hybrid work rules by managers and employees reflects an innovative but complex governance structure. However, the findings reveal that without careful balance, such practices can create inconsistencies across teams and departments, highlighting the limitations of informalisation in certain contexts. For instance, the absence of clear formal guidelines in some teams led to tensions and diminished cohesion, particularly when common presence days were not established. These findings suggest that informal norms, while fostering adaptability, require proactive managerial oversight to maintain alignment with organisational goals. Apospori et al. (2008) note the critical role of informal practices in maintaining interpersonal relationships, but the case study findings highlight that without structured oversight, these practices may fail to support team cohesion and inclusivity.

The research demonstrates that informal practices can enhance collaboration and inclusivity but must be supported by structured oversight to ensure alignment with organisational objectives. This finding extends existing literature by emphasising the need for proactive managerial involvement in hybrid work governance, particularly in contexts where informal norms dominate.

Moreover, the governance of hybrid work exemplifies the interplay between formal and informal rules, each with distinct strengths and limitations. This research highlights the importance of balancing these elements to create inclusive, efficient, and sustainable hybrid work environments. While the findings align with the literature in recognising the critical role of informal norms, they also reveal unique challenges and opportunities associated with minimal formalisation and decentralised practices. By integrating these insights, organisations can better navigate the complexities of hybrid work, addressing the evolving needs of employees and employers alike.

5.2.2.   Transition from centralised to decentralised rules and policies

The degree of centralisation in HRM practices plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational dynamics, particularly in the context of hybrid working (Schönenberg, 2010; Winkler et al., 2022). Within the German context, HRM practices are historically characterised by a balance between regulatory-driven centralisation and operational flexibility (Scheriau, 2015). The regulatory framework, including the Works Constitution Act, ensures consistency and compliance across organisations, while

decentralisation allows adaptation to specific cultural and operational contexts (Janetz, 2022). The continuum of centralisation, ranging from highly centralised models to decentralised approaches, reflects the need to align central, formal policies with the unique needs of teams and individuals.

This research underscores the importance of this continuum, illustrating how the case study organisation navigated the balance between centralised and decentralised practices during its transition to hybrid work. As mentioned above the „flexwork" agreement established a central, foundational framework for hybrid work, yet the organisation adopted a decentralised approach, delegating significant decision-making authority to individual departments and teams. This autonomy empowered managers and employees to co-create hybrid work practices tailored to their operational and interpersonal needs. Such decentralisation fostered a culture of mutual trust and accountability, with the implicit understanding that work location choices should align with broader operational priorities.

Similar to the shift in the degree of formalisation, the decentralisation of hybrid work practices also signified a broader cultural shift within the organisation. By redistributing decision-making power from the executive board and senior management to teams and employees, the organisation fostered a sense of ownership and participation previously absent in its traditional hierarchy.

Even though the literature reinforces the dual necessity of centralised and decentralised mechanisms in organisations (Harris et al., 2004; Scheriau, 2015), there were no specific recommendations for the transition to hybrid working in Germany. Therefore, this study adds to the current body of knowledge by illustrating the strengths and limitations of decentralisation applied with a strongly employee-centred approach. Within the case study organisation, on one hand, autonomy allowed teams to innovate and align work practices with their specific needs; on the other, it required proactive managerial oversight to maintain alignment with organisational priorities. Although this resonates with previous research suggesting that balancing formalisation and decentralisation is crucial for fostering inclusivity, efficiency, and sustainability in organisations (Apospori et al., 2008; Begemann et al., 2024), the aspect of tactical guidance from managers in flexible, hybrid work settings is an additional factor.

The study also revealed that while the organisation's employee-centred approach was instrumental in fostering flexibility and trust, it exposed the risks of excessive decentralisation. Teams with proactive managerial involvement succeeded in creating cohesive and effective work arrangements, while those lacking such guidance faced inconsistencies and misalignment. This tension underscores the importance of structured autonomy (see subchapter 5.3).

5.2.3. Explicit and implicit decisions and communication

The range between implicit and explicit decisions and communication in HRM significantly influences organisational dynamics, especially in hybrid work settings. Explicit approaches involve clear, formalised rules and well-documented policies, while implicit methods rely on cultural norms, shared understandings, and informal agreements (Brewster et al., 2018). The degree of explicitness in HRM practices varies across organisations, influenced by regulatory frameworks, organisational culture, and operational priorities (Peuter et al., 2023).

Even though there are publications on hybrid work and also on implicit and explicit decisions, there are no research results that combine both areas in this specific German context. Therefore, this study addresses findings from a German case study organisation in a highly regulated context (financial industry) with a view to the communication norms and decisions involved in hybrid work. Many overarching results can therefore be applied to similarly regulated industries and organisations – even if the core message remains that the process of achieving a balance of structured autonomy must be gone through individually. Building on the principles and cultural characteristics of German HRM practices, the German HRM landscape traditionally leans towards explicitness, shaped by a robust regulatory environment that prioritises transparency and compliance (Kreuzer et al., 2022). For example, laws such as the Works Constitution Act mandate formal agreements and clear communication about workplace conditions and employee rights (Scheriau, 2015). These frameworks ensure fairness and consistency, providing employees with a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities while safeguarding compliance with labour laws (Fischer et al., 2019).

The interplay between explicit and implicit practices is vital for managing hybrid work's complexities. Formalised policies establish a necessary baseline, yet informal norms allow for the adaptability required in dynamic work environments. Grzegorczyk et al., (2021) suggest that hybrid work thrives when organisations balance these two elements, blending clear rules with the flexibility to accommodate diverse situations. This balance is evident in the case study findings, where formal agreements such as the „flexwork" policy coexist with decentralised, team-driven decision-making.

Documents such as the „flexwork" agreement observed in the case study organisation provide an explicit structure anchoring the right to hybrid work. However, according to the study's findings implicit communication and decision-making have emerged as equally significant in operationalising hybrid work. Informal norms develop within teams, influenced by cultural values, peer interactions, and shared experiences. For example, while policies may outline general expectations, the specifics of day-to-day collaboration such as shared office days or virtual meeting etiquette are often governed by

unspoken agreements among employees. This underscores the need for face-to-face settings, which provide the ideal context for the development of implicit understandings and unspoken agreements among colleagues. Theoretically this in line with Polanyi (1966), who suggests that tacit knowledge is best transferred through direct interaction where contextual and nonverbal cues play a critical role (Nonaka, 1994).

Considering the Germany's cultural context those findings are still surprising. As a country that values structure and certainty, there is a historical preference for explicit rules to minimise ambiguity and foster trust (Hofstede, 1993). Nevertheless, the rise of hybrid work has prompted the case study organisations to embrace more decentralised and informal practices, reflecting a shift towards greater reliance on implicit agreements. This evolution demonstrates the adaptability of this organisation in balancing structured governance with the need for flexibility.

In conclusion, the continuum of implicit and explicit communication and decision-making is fundamental to understanding how organisations navigate hybrid work. The findings of this study reveal that successful hybrid work relies on a careful balance between different elements, ensuring both consistency and flexibility. For the case study organisation, this balance highlights the importance of active dialogue and leadership in fostering sustainable and inclusive hybrid work models. With a view to a possible generalisation of these findings, organisations should be aware of their own influencing factors and control elements in relation to hybrid work and different levels of interest, and find a company-specific balance.

5.3. Structured autonomy

The sustainability and effectiveness of hybrid work require a careful balance between flexibility and structure, which this study conceptualises as *structured autonomy*. Structured autonomy proposes a framework where organisations align individual, team, and organisational needs by calibrating decision-making and operational practices along the three continuums set out above. Moreover, this approach suggests that organisations periodically reassess and, where necessary, adjust power dynamics to ensure that hybrid work practices remain equitable, efficient, and aligned with strategic goals.

In the case study organisation, hybrid work emerged as a transformative response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the potential for flexibility to foster innovation, trust, and collaboration. Employees were granted substantial freedom to determine their work arrangements, and teams autonomously developed norms for collaboration, such as shared office days and virtual

meeting guidelines. These practices reflected a significant cultural shift towards decentralisation and employee empowerment, but they also revealed tensions and inefficiencies that suggest a need for recalibration.

At the organisational level, hybrid work has been framed by many participants as a strategic initiative to enhance employer branding, talent retention, and operational effectiveness. However, economic concerns, such as underutilised office spaces and resource allocation, highlight areas where the balance of power has shifted too far toward employee preferences, potentially at the expense of organisational coherence. This study's findings indicate that the organisation could benefit from revisiting these imbalances by establishing clearer, more centralised guidelines on issues like minimum attendance requirements and resource usage.

At the team level, decentralised decision-making allowed managers and employees to co-create tailored work practices that aligned with specific team dynamics. For some teams, this autonomy led to stronger professional bonds and improved collaboration, particularly when managers actively facilitated the co-creation of rules such as shared presence days. However, in teams where such managerial involvement was absent, the lack of structured practices resulted in diminished cohesion and alignment with organisational objectives as reported by one respondent. The findings suggest that more explicit frameworks for managerial oversight and team collaboration could help address these inconsistencies, ensuring that all teams benefit equally from hybrid work arrangements.

For individual employees, several participants point out that hybrid work provided flexibility that supported work-life integration and personal autonomy. However, this flexibility occasionally conflicted with broader organisational or team needs, such as the requirement for on-site presence to optimise office utilisation or address collective goals. These tensions highlight the importance of transparent communication mechanisms and structured negotiation processes to reconcile personal preferences with team and organisational priorities. By explicitly incorporating both individual and collective needs into its hybrid work framework, the organisation could foster a more cohesive and equitable environment.

The findings of this study suggest that structured autonomy offers a pathway for addressing these challenges. Rather than relying solely on informal team norms or centralised mandates, the executive board and HR could use a continuum-based approach to evaluate and redistribute decision-making power across various dimensions. These continuums include formalisation (from informal to formal), centralisation (from centralised to decentralised), and decision-making and communication (from implicit to explicit). For example, while informal norms and decentralised decision-making have

fostered flexibility and trust, certain areas such as resource allocation, attendance requirements, and the equitable distribution of responsibilities may benefit from more formalised and explicit guidelines.

This study's conceptualisation of structured autonomy reflects a broader cultural and structural shift that hybrid work necessitates. Trust, a central theme in hybrid work, requires a move away from traditional presence-based supervision towards output-based evaluation and accountability. While informal practices and decentralised decision-making empower employees, they also rely heavily on proactive managerial involvement and continuous dialogue to ensure alignment with organisational goals. The case study organisation could further strengthen its hybrid work model by implementing structured mechanisms for communication, feedback, and realignment, ensuring that team and organisational practices remain adaptive and inclusive.

In conclusion, structured autonomy provides a conceptual framework for organisations to navigate the complexities of hybrid work by balancing flexibility with structure. For the case study organisation, adopting this approach would involve the executive board as well as HR to reassess the current balance of power across its hybrid work practices, addressing areas of tension, and ensuring that decision-making aligns with the needs of all stakeholders. The results of the data collection reveal a specific need for action and a power shift in the design of attendance days to optimise office space utilisation, a firm anchoring of team rules as tactical guidelines by managers to strengthen team spirit but also to strengthen implicit communication. Both examples represent a shift of power towards the managers and the board, while other freedoms and flexibilities, such as the high number of home office days and the flexible working hours that currently already exist at the employee level, remain in place.

By periodically evaluating and adjusting its hybrid work strategies along the proposed continuums, the organisation can create a sustainable framework that fosters innovation, collaboration, and long-term organisational resilience.

6. Conclusion

This chapter summarises the key findings in relation to the research objectives and questions, emphasising their contributions to both theoretical and practical aspects, particularly in HRM. It also addresses the study's limitations, proposes directions for future research, and reflects on the researcher's personal and professional growth.

The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify, through a critical review of relevant literature, the current state of understanding how working from home (in hybrid patterns) can be effective and what are currently considered the main influences on it.

2. To understand the perceptions of all groups on essential features for effective work from home in hybrid patterns (target group: HR professionals, general managers and employees).
    a) To investigate how perceptions on essential features coincide between the three target groups.
    b) To investigate how perceptions on essential features differ between the three target groups.

3. To construct a practical framework – based on the account of the three target groups – on how to design relevant framework conditions for a working model in hybrid patterns.

By expanding theoretical frameworks and offering a practical framework, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of hybrid work. A key outcome of the research is the development of a model of structured autonomy, which operates along three continuums – formalisation, decentralisation, and explicitness – to effectively balance varying needs and levels of interest within organisations. This model serves as a strategic approach to navigating the inherent tensions in hybrid work, ensuring a dynamic equilibrium between flexibility and structure, autonomy and alignment, as well as individual and organisational priorities. By integrating these dimensions, the study establishes a foundation for shaping the future of work, offering organisations a framework to foster both adaptability and clarity in an evolving work environment.

In doing so, the study has successfully met its research objectives. The critical literature review (Objective 1) provided a foundation for understanding current perspectives and influencing factors of effective hybrid work. Through qualitative case study research, the perceptions of HR professionals, general managers, and employees were explored (Objective 2), revealing both areas of agreement and divergence (Objectives 2a and 2b). These insights formed the basis for developing the structured

autonomy framework (Objective 3), offering a practical, organisation-specific model to guide the design of hybrid work arrangements.

6.1. Contribution to theory

The findings of this study offer valuable theoretical insights into the evolving nature of hybrid work, shedding light on essential features, cultural changes, and stakeholder alignment. Moreover, it contributes to the theoretical discourse on hybrid work by critically questioning an excessive focus on employee-centricity and advancing the understanding of how decision-making authority shapes organisational culture and collaboration in flexible work environments. The findings and discussion chapter demonstrate that this research contributes to a deeper understanding of hybrid work's theoretical dimensions.

The research highlights the evolution of hybrid work from a reactive measure during the COVID-19 pandemic to a deliberate organisational strategy. This development illustrates how an unforeseeable, external phenomenon such as a pandemic can, after a period of familiarisation and positive interim results, bring about a significant strategic and cultural change in HR towards hybrid work. In many German companies, this was unimaginable pre-pandemic, as described, and the German HR culture was strongly driven by face-to-face work. Drawing from the employee-centred approach, it illustrates how the pandemic acted as a catalyst for prioritising employee autonomy, well-being, and flexibility. However, this study critiques the excessive focus on employee-centricity, arguing that it may overshadow the importance of overarching OP. This critical lens enriches theoretical frameworks by calling for a more balanced perspective that integrates individual needs with collective and organisational goals.

A pivotal contribution of this study is the concept of structured autonomy, which offers a nuanced understanding of balancing individual agency and collective objectives in hybrid work environments. This theoretical construct extends the literature on hybrid work by emphasising the interplay between trust-based governance and decentralised decision-making, where autonomy is exercised within boundaries that maintain organisational coherence. Also, this research deepens theoretical discourses on power dynamics and decision-making in hybrid work settings. It reveals the pivotal role of the interplay between implicit and explicit decision-making processes, where informal agreements and cultural norms underpin formal structures. By illustrating how decentralised practices foster flexibility while maintaining coherence, the findings advance organisational governance theories, particularly in the context of trust-based and adaptive governance models.

The study provides a more sophisticated understanding of agreement and disagreement within organisations. Traditional theories often valorise alignment as a sign of organisational success and view disagreement as a source of dysfunction. However, this research demonstrates that the analysed disagreement between the different participating target groups, particularly when it stems from diverse perspectives, can foster innovation and critical reflection. By analysing how those agreements and disagreements emerged across organisationally, collectively, and individually driven aspects, the study contributes to a richer theoretical discourse on how the case study organisation balances alignment and diversity to promote resilience and adaptability. Furthermore those disagreements especially enriched the hybrid work research as it offers insights into different levels of interests, the need for re-balancing power in some regards such as the office utilisation and the positive development towards decentralised, in some cases also implicit, decisions.

Moreover, the research underscores the cultural shifts necessary for effective hybrid work, particularly the transition from presence-based supervision to output-based evaluation. It highlights how fostering trust and adaptability becomes central to sustaining hybrid work practices. These insights extend organisational culture theories by illustrating how hybrid work necessitates new cultural norms that challenge traditional hierarchies and power structures, fostering a culture of accountability and trust.

6.2. Contribution to practice

In addition to advancing theoretical knowledge, this research offers a practical framework for organisations seeking to implement and sustain effective hybrid work models. The findings offer an exploratory framework for understanding the complexities of hybrid work in real-world settings as well as actionable insights for organisations seeking to optimise their hybrid work models.

This study critiques the limitations of the employee-centred approach, which, while emphasising autonomy and well-being, often neglects the broader organisational dynamics essential for strategic alignment. Over-reliance on employee-centric strategies can result in fragmented decision-making, diluted organisational coherence, and reduced performance outcomes. To address these challenges, the findings advocate for integrating management-centred, HR-centred, and employee-centred approaches. Such integration ensures that organisational practices balance the priorities of leadership, HR, and individual employees to achieve inclusivity while aligning with broader strategic goals.

Organisations are encouraged to adopt management-centred strategies that focus on leadership development, equipping managers to navigate the complexities of hybrid work. This includes fostering trust, implementing output-based evaluation methods, and balancing decentralised decision-making

with accountability. HR-centred approaches should provide the necessary structural support by creating scalable frameworks that offer consistency across the organisation while allowing for team-level flexibility. Employee-centred practices, which value the interests of employees and enable a high degree of self-management should complement, rather than dominate, broader organisational imperatives. Empowering teams to co-create hybrid work norms ensures inclusivity and ownership, while anchoring these practices in organisational objectives maintains alignment and coherence.

A key contribution of this research is its emphasis on evaluating and managing the continua of formalisation, centralisation, as well as explicitness/implicitness of decision-making and communication. Effective hybrid work policies require organisations to strike a framework that incorporates decision-making at a number of different levels to balance along these dimensions. Furthermore, continuous monitoring and adaptation of hybrid work mechanisms are crucial for sustainability. Regular evaluations of hybrid work practices driven by the executive board and HR help identify emerging tensions and address potential challenges before they escalate. This iterative approach ensures that hybrid work remains effective and responsive to the evolving needs of both the organisation and its workforce.

The integration of these approaches enables organisations to drive alignment and foster OP. Transparent communication across all levels of the organisation is essential for building trust and ensuring that policies resonate with employees while meeting operational and strategic objectives. Iterative evaluations and feedback loops allow organisations to adapt hybrid work practices to evolving challenges and opportunities, ensuring they remain effective and relevant. This balanced approach acknowledges the unique dynamics of hybrid work environments, offering organisations a practical roadmap for achieving sustainable success.

This study's insights enrich the hybrid work discourse by emphasising the critical role of power dynamics, decentralised decision-making, and cultural shifts in shaping effective flexible work practices. The findings advocate for a balanced approach that respects employee autonomy while addressing organisational priorities, offering a sustainable model for hybrid work in contemporary organisations.

The following generalisable concepts can be given to organisations when going through the process towards structured autonomy. It should be noted that, as explained at the beginning, each company has different characteristics along the three continuums that are suitable.

- *Clarify power and decision-making levels*: Organisations should define the levels of decision-making authority allocated to employees, teams, and management, ensuring alignment with organisational goals.

- *Enhance managerial involvement*: Managers should proactively facilitate the development of team-level collaboration rules to bridge gaps between organisational frameworks and individual needs.

- *Foster organisational alignment*: Transparent communication strategies and structured initiatives, such as shared presence days, can strengthen cohesion and address economic concerns.

- *Monitor and adapt mechanisms*: Continuous evaluation of hybrid work practices is essential to address emerging tensions and ensure sustainability.

6.3. Reflection of the outcomes of the research

Although the use of a single qualitative method generated a rich and focused dataset, the findings should be further explored, considering the study's limitations, to identify additional directions for future research.

6.3.1. Limitation

At the outset of this research in October 2021, empirical studies on hybrid work were limited, particularly regarding its large-scale implementation. Much of the existing research was based on theoretical frameworks and individual teleworking agreements rather than comprehensive empirical analysis. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to remote and subsequently hybrid work models, research interest in this area grew, leading to a greater availability of data. In response, the literature review was updated multiple times throughout the thesis to incorporate new insights. Nevertheless, the review represents a snapshot in time and cannot fully capture the continuous evolution of research on hybrid work, employee-centred HRM, and OP. Furthermore, as mentioned much of the existing OP research is based on quantitative methodologies or, in qualitative studies, primarily focuses on health and safety aspects. In contrast, this thesis takes a qualitative approach, emphasising the key factors that contribute to the long-term effectiveness of hybrid work.

While the qualitative design of this study enables a rich and detailed exploration of hybrid work, it is inherently interpretative and shaped by a social constructivist perspective. Consequently, the findings may not be broadly generalisable, as qualitative research is context-dependent and deeply rooted in the experiences of the participants. The subjective nature of qualitative inquiry, while valuable for capturing complexity, also introduces potential biases in data interpretation.

Another limitation stems from participant selection. The study relied on the researcher's professional network to recruit participants, which may have inadvertently introduced a selection bias. This could have led to a predominance of views that align with the researcher's existing perspectives. Although efforts were made to ensure diversity in participant backgrounds, the potential for partiality remains. A more randomised or stratified sampling approach could help mitigate this limitation and enhance the objectivity of future research.

Additionally, the research design was cross-sectional, focusing on participants at a single point in time. While this approach provides valuable insights into current perceptions of hybrid work, it does not account for changes over time. A longitudinal study – such as repeated data collection at regular intervals – could offer a more dynamic perspective on how hybrid work evolves and how structured autonomy is perceived in the long term.

The study also concentrated on three primary stakeholder groups actively engaged in hybrid work. While this framework proved useful in developing the structured autonomy model, the research revealed additional layers of complexity among stakeholders. For instance, the executive board emerged as a distinct entity with strategic interests that differ from those of general management, HR and employees. Similarly, distinctions within the employee group such as between teams and individuals became more apparent. These nuanced perspectives were not fully explored within the scope of this research but could lead to different insights if the study were replicated with a more differentiated stakeholder approach. Furthermore, external stakeholders, such as regulatory bodies or labour market institutions, were not included in the study but play a crucial role in shaping hybrid work policies and practices. Their influence on structured autonomy remains an area for further investigation.

Furthermore, the context-specific nature of this study may pose challenges in achieving transferability. The insights gained are deeply embedded in the organisational and cultural context of the research setting, which may limit their applicability to other industries, organisations, or national contexts. Without methodological diversity, the study is also more susceptible to researcher subjectivity, as findings are shaped by the particular lens through which data is collected and analysed.

While these limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings, they do highlight areas where caution is warranted when interpreting and applying the results. Recognising these constraints provides an opportunity for reflection and further refinement in future research endeavours. A broader methodological approach, incorporating diverse data sources and a wider range of stakeholders, could enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of future studies on hybrid work and structured autonomy.

6.3.2. Future research directions

As the landscape of hybrid working continues to evolve, further research is necessary to refine and expand the understanding of structured autonomy within hybrid work environments. This chapter outlines key theoretical and practical research approaches that build on the findings of this study, offering opportunities to deepen knowledge and support organisations in optimising hybrid work models.

Structured autonomy, as presented in this study, balances organisational control with employee autonomy to enable effective hybrid working. Future research should explore its theoretical underpinnings further by investigating how structured autonomy aligns with established organisational theories, such as self-determination theory and job demands-resources theory. Additionally, cultural variations in the implementation and perception of structured autonomy across different national and organisational contexts warrant further exploration.

Given the evolving nature of hybrid work, longitudinal studies could provide insights into how structured autonomy impacts employee performance, engagement, and well-being over time. Key research questions include how structured autonomy influences long-term job satisfaction and retention, the role of external factors such as economic shifts, technological advancements, or global crises in shaping structured autonomy, and how individual and team dynamics adapt to structured autonomy in different organisational life cycle stages.

Further research could also delve into the psychological and social dimensions of structured autonomy. This includes its impact on work identity, motivation, and career progression, the role of trust and psychological safety in hybrid teams operating under structured autonomy, and potential disparities in access to autonomy and structure across different employee demographics, such as hierarchical levels, job roles, or gender differences.

Applying structured autonomy across different industries and organisational contexts will help validate and refine the framework. Therefore, future research could conduct comparative case studies across

diverse sectors, such as technology, education, and public administration, to assess how structured autonomy manifests in different work settings. Investigating best practices for integrating structured autonomy into hybrid work policies and leadership strategies and assessing how small and medium-sized enterprises implement structured autonomy compared to multinational corporations would also provide valuable insights.

With hybrid work increasingly dependent on digital technologies, research should examine how structured autonomy interacts with technological advancements. Potential areas of exploration include the effectiveness of digital collaboration tools in facilitating structured autonomy, the role of artificial intelligence in supporting autonomous decision-making while maintaining organisational oversight, and the impact of digital surveillance and monitoring tools on perceptions of autonomy and trust.

Future research should also address how leadership practices evolve to support structured autonomy in hybrid environments. Key questions include what competencies and training programmes enable leaders to balance structure and autonomy effectively, how performance management systems can be adapted to align with structured autonomy principles, and what leadership styles foster high levels of autonomy while maintaining organisational coherence. Additionally, as hybrid work continues to shape labour markets and organisational policies, research should explore regulatory and policy implications, such as the role of labour laws in supporting or hindering structured autonomy, policy recommendations for governments and organisations to ensure equitable hybrid work practices, and the implications of structured autonomy for work-life balance and employee rights.

The study of structured autonomy within hybrid work models is still in its early stages, and there are numerous theoretical and practical avenues for further exploration. Future research should aim to refine the conceptual underpinnings of structured autonomy, examine its long-term impact, and support organisations in implementing effective hybrid work strategies. By advancing knowledge in this area, scholars and practitioners can contribute to the continued evolution of hybrid work and enhance its effectiveness for employees and organisations alike.

6.3.3. Personal and professional reflection

Pursuing a doctoral degree is widely recognised as one of the most intellectually rigorous and personally transformative endeavours. It demands not only an advanced level of academic engagement but also significant perseverance, adaptability, and resilience. My own experience has reinforced this notion, as I have navigated the complexities of independent research, critical self-reflection, and the intricate balance of professional, academic, and personal responsibilities. While I embarked on this

journey with a clear research focus, I underestimated the profound personal and professional impact it would have on me.

A major challenge has been the inherent solitude of doctoral research. The necessity of sustained intellectual engagement and deep analytical thinking requires extended periods of solitary work, which can lead to a sense of isolation. Although I have received invaluable support from my supervisors, academic peers, and professional networks, the unique demands of a doctorate can be difficult for those outside academia to fully comprehend. The intensity of intellectual labour, the constant refinement of ideas, and the pressure to contribute original insights create a demanding mental environment. At times, it has been challenging to articulate these pressures to colleagues, friends, and family who, while supportive, may not fully grasp the emotional and cognitive investment required. This realisation has reinforced the importance of finding a sense of belonging within the academic community, whether through conferences, workshops, or informal discussions with fellow researchers facing similar challenges.

Despite these moments of solitude, I have come to appreciate the independence that doctoral research fosters. The ability to work autonomously, structure my own inquiries, and take full ownership of my research has been both daunting and empowering. Through this process, I have cultivated a level of intellectual self-sufficiency that extends beyond academia, strengthening my ability to approach complex problems with confidence and rigour. The necessity of critically evaluating existing literature, synthesising diverse viewpoints, and constructing coherent arguments has significantly enhanced my analytical thinking, a skill that has already begun to influence my professional work.

One of the most transformative aspects of this journey has been stepping outside my professional comfort zone. In my career, I have primarily operated in a quantitatively driven environment, focusing on technical HR processes, scalability, and data-driven decision-making. Entering a predominantly quantitative field from a qualitative research perspective initially presented moments of doubt, as I questioned whether I had the right expertise to make a meaningful contribution. However, this transition has ultimately expanded my intellectual perspective, challenging me to engage with a more interpretivist approach to research. By immersing myself in qualitative methodologies, I have developed a greater appreciation for complexity, nuance, and the importance of context in understanding organisational phenomena.

This shift has had a lasting impact on my professional outlook, reshaping the way I approach problem-solving and decision-making. Previously, I prioritised empirical evidence and measurable outcomes, often seeking definitive conclusions based on numerical data. Now, I have learned to embrace ambiguity and recognise the value of diverse perspectives. Qualitative inquiry has enabled me to explore not just what is happening within an organisation but *why*—uncovering underlying

motivations, perceptions, and social dynamics that quantitative data alone cannot fully capture. This evolution in thinking has enhanced my ability to navigate organisational challenges, fostering a more holistic and adaptable approach to leadership and strategy.

Beyond personal and professional growth, the research itself has been immensely rewarding. My study on hybrid work has allowed me to critically examine an increasingly relevant phenomenon, deepening my understanding of its implications for organisations, leadership, and employee well-being. Hybrid work is not just a structural shift; it represents a fundamental transformation in how individuals and teams interact, collaborate, and maintain productivity across physical and virtual spaces. Investigating this topic has enabled me to engage with complex questions surrounding organisational culture, communication, autonomy, and managerial adaptation.

One of the most gratifying moments of my research came during an interview with a participating manager. Upon reflecting on my findings, the manager recognised the need to rethink his leadership approach in response to the challenges of hybrid work. This moment underscored the tangible impact of my study, demonstrating its potential to inform real-world organisational practices. The knowledge that my research is not merely theoretical but has practical relevance capable of shaping leadership strategies and workplace dynamics has been profoundly affirming. It has reinforced my belief that academic inquiry can drive meaningful change, bridging the gap between research and application.

Beyond intellectual development, the doctoral process has been instrumental in refining critical professional skills. The ability to manage large-scale projects, synthesise complex information, and construct well-founded arguments are just a few of the competencies I have strengthened. Time management has been particularly crucial, as balancing research with professional responsibilities has required careful planning and discipline. Furthermore, the iterative nature of academic writing— constantly revising, refining, and improving—has enhanced my ability to communicate ideas with precision and clarity, a skill that translates directly into my professional role.

Networking and academic engagement have also played a vital role in this journey. Attending conferences, participating in scholarly discussions, and receiving feedback from experts in my field have broadened my perspective and encouraged intellectual exchange. These interactions have not only deepened my understanding of hybrid work but have also exposed me to new methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and emerging debates within the field. The process of presenting my work to academic and professional audiences has further solidified my confidence in articulating complex ideas and defending my research choices.

Reflecting on this experience, I can say with certainty that pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration has been transformative. It has equipped me with a wealth of knowledge, an expanded analytical framework, and a sharpened ability to critically engage with complex organisational

challenges. Perhaps more importantly, it has reaffirmed my confidence in my own capabilities, demonstrating that I am capable of navigating uncertainty, overcoming intellectual obstacles, and contributing valuable insights to my field.

I am deeply grateful for the learning opportunities this journey has provided, the personal and professional connections I have made, and the profound growth I have experienced. Completing this doctoral programme has not only been an academic achievement but also a testament to my resilience, adaptability, and determination. As I look forward, I am excited to continue applying the knowledge and skills I have gained, contributing to both academic discourse and organisational practice. The insights developed throughout this process will remain a guiding force in my career, reinforcing my commitment to rigorous inquiry, evidence-based decision-making, and continuous intellectual exploration.

While this journey is not yet complete, reflecting on these experiences highlights the invaluable lessons learned along the way. Knowing that my research has the potential to influence leadership strategies, inform policy decisions, and shape the future of hybrid work provides a profound sense of purpose and fulfilment. This doctorate has been more than an academic pursuit—it has been a transformative experience that will continue to shape my professional identity and aspirations for years to come.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.1 Ethical approval

University of Worcester

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL (ECS REP)

CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL

10 April 2024

REP CODE: ECS23240025-R

WORKING FROM HOME IN HYBRID PATTERNS IN GERMAN CORPORATES

Dear Annika

Thank you for your revised application for proportionate review ethical approval to the Education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel submitted on 6 April 2024.

Your application has been reviewed in accordance with the University of Worcester Ethics Policy and in compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures for proportionate ethical review.

The outcome of the review is that the Panel is now happy to grant this project ethical approval to proceed.

Your research must be undertaken as set out in the approved application for the approval to be valid. You must review your answers to the checklist on an ongoing basis and resubmit for approval where you intend to deviate from the approved research. Any major deviation from the approved application will require a new application for approval.

As part of the University Ethics Policy, the University undertakes an audit of a random sample of approved research. You may be required to complete a questionnaire about your research.

Yours sincerely

DR PETER GOSSMAN
Chair – Education, Culture and Society Proportionate Review Panel
Deputy Chair – Education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel
ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 1.2 Participant information sheet (PIS)

University of Worcester

Version:

Date:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

TITLE OF PROJECT: WORKING FROM HOME IN HYBRID PATTERNS IN GERMAN CORPORATES

Invitation

The University of Worcester engages in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

We would like to invite you to take part in one of our research projects. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done, what it will involve for you, what information we will ask from you, and what we will do with that information.

We will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. The UK continues to be bound by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation which is now the "UK GDPR" Under UK GDPR we are required to provide a justification (what is called a "legal basis") in order to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**".

You can find out more about our approach to dealing with your personal information at https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/visitor-privacy-notice.html.

Please take time to read this document carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

The central aim of the study is to explore which influential features of hybrid working are necessary to ensure effective organizational performance according to HR professionals, general management, and employees.

Who is undertaking the research?

Name: Annika Hesse
Position / Role: Researcher in the "Doctor of Business Administration" (DBA) program

Professional role at Deutsche Kreditbank AG: I would like to deliberately emphasise the description of my work and the dependencies within HR in order to ensure transparency. As Product Manager, I am responsible for HR IT, so I am technically responsible for our HR applications (IT systems) as well as requirements management for the further development of these systems. I therefore have no responsibility or procedural contact with HR processes such as recruitment, personnel selection or personnel support. Furthermore, my work has no influence or decision-making authority for remuneration issues, salaries, promotions, etc.

Who has oversight of the research?

The research has been approved by the Education Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel in line with the University's Research Ethics Policy. The University of Worcester acts as the "Data Controller" for personal data collected through its research projects and is subject to the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and our Data Protection Officer is Helen Johnstone (infoassurance@worc.ac.uk).

For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/index.html.

Why have I been invited to take part?

Inclusion criteria have been defined for participants to take part in the study. You have received this invitation as you meet the following criteria:

I am looking for participants who:
- work as employees/ general manager/ HR professionals
- telework at least one day per week on average from home (telework from home)
- are employed at the Deutsche Kreditbank in Germany

I am hoping to recruit 21-30 participants for this study.

How do I take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide and talk to others about it if you wish. Deciding to take part or not will not impact on my study. If you do decide to take part, at the data collection stage, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

If you decide to take part, you can withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection phase without explaining your reason(s) and without any consequences. The withdrawal period ends when the transcript is agreed upon. When the transcript is emailed to you, you have five working days to respond, after which, if you don't respond, the transcript will be used in the data analysis.

If you wish to have your data withdrawn, please contact us (our contact details are given below). Your data will then not be used.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

My first priority is that you feel comfortable during the whole study, beginning with offering you all the information you need and answering all the questions you may have related to the study. If you agree to take part in the study you will be offered the opportunity to arrange an appointment (phone or video call) with the researcher before you sign the informed consent and the data collection phase. The appointment gives you the chance to ask questions to clarify things mentioned in this document or also to address worries. As soon as you feel ready and comfortable to participate in the study, you will be asked to send me the signed informed consent form as a password protected PDF to my academic e-mail address. Please send me your chosen password for the PDF and the PDF itself in two separate e-mails. If you do not need a call prior to the data collection event, you will be asked to send me the signed informed consent form right after you have agreed to take part in the study.

After receiving your signed informed consent form, I will contact you to schedule an appointment for the interview. The interview(s) will be conducted using a video conferencing tool.

There is one interview for each participant planned. This will occupy between 60 and 90 minutes. After the data collection phase you might be asked to review interpretations that I make during the data analysis phase if I see the need for accuracy/clarification.

The study aims to collect data by the means of semi-structured interviews. The interview(s) will be conducted by the researcher. A prepared interview schedule with predefined topic areas and related questions will guide the conversation but will be used in a flexible manner.

The study requires a semantic (video and audio) record of the interview and a transcript of all the spoken words of the interview participants. In view of this, it is necessary that the whole conversation has to be video and audio recorded.

The researcher will also take some handwritten notes during the interview. Afterwards the audio recorded data will be transcribed (representation of spoken language in written form). Your name, names of persons or organizations will be anonymized in the transcript. Finally, the transcript will be analyzed.

The gained recorded data will be exclusively used for the research. The recorded and processed (transcribed) data will be stored securely and safely in a password protected space on the University drive that will be only accessible by the researcher. The audio recordings will be kept until the data have been transcribed and analysed. Afterwards the recordings will be deleted. The transcripts will be deleted after the completion of the dissertation. Notes that will be taken during the interviews will be stored securely in the researchers' safe at home. After the completion of the dissertation, these notes will be shredded.

For a better understanding of the whole process, please see the following flow diagram:

Participants have been provided with Participant Info Sheet (PIS) & Privacy Statement, consent sheet and anonymous participant number

Participant needs call for clarification → Call for clarification with researcher → Participant does not want to be part of the study → Participant withdrawal

Participant is interested, needs more information

Additional call for clarification with researcher → Participant does not want to be part of the study

Participant wants to be part of the study

Participant does not want to be part of the study or withdrawals after the interview**

Participant needs no call for clarification → Participant sends signed consent form to researcher → Researcher schedules interview → interview → * → Data collection phase is completed

* to ensure clarification, the researcher might contact you after the interview once again to review interpretations

**Withdrawal: The withdrawal period ends at the point that the transcript is agreed. Participants will be told at the point where the transcript is emailed to them that they have five working days to respond after which, if they don't respond, the transcript will be used in the data analysis.

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

Most people lead themselves unconsciously. Taking part in the study will allow you to reflect on your hybrid work experiences by making the unconscious conscious.

Against the backdrop that little knowledge exists concerning what influences effective working from home in hybrid patterns on an overall organisational level, your participation in the study helps to generate knowledge in this field and contributes to a better understanding of how hybrid work can be beneficial on an organisational level. Based on the insights, practical suggestions can be made to improve hybrid work conditions relating to organisational performance.

After the completion of the study I am happy to grant you access to the aggregated knowledge if you are interested in it.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

The research does not pose any immediate potential risks. However, it is conceivable that you may feel uncomfortable when recalling and reflecting on your hybrid work experiences. You might recall situations in which you have been under pressure and have felt stressed or anxious. The reflection process might unearth unpleasant experiences and feelings. In case you feel discomfort during the interview, I will provide support through meeting your individual needs. If you feel distressed and seek support, local first aiders can be contacted at any time during or after the interview.

To avoid any discomfort to you and to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the interviews will be conducted using a video conferencing tool.

All information shared by you as a participant will be treated confidentially by me. It is subject to confidentiality and will not be shared with anyone else in the organisation. Confidentiality is also guaranteed when sharing unlawful activities, unless I as the researcher believe that the activity poses a threat or harm to you as a participant or others. In this case, I will need to inform the designated security officers within the organisation.

What will you do with my information?

Your personal data / information will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone other than the project supervisors. It will also not be shared with any third

parties specified in the consent form unless it has been fully anonymised. The exception to this is where you tell us something that indicates that you or someone else is at risk of harm.

During the project, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

We will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the project primary of which are:

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have gathered.
- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, a thesis, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any aggregated data and/ or of the publications arising from the research, please contact me.

How long will you keep my data for?
Your personal data will be retained until the project (*including the dissemination period*) has been completed.

At the completion of the project, we will retain your data only in anonymised form. This anonymised data will be archived and shared in line with our Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?
You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/requests-for-personal-data.html.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?
You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/requests-for-personal-data.html.

What happens next?
Please keep this information sheet.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us using the details below and we will be delighted to answer any further questions you have about the research.

Our contact details are:
If you would like to contact me or my supervisors, please find the contact details below:

Researcher:
Annika Hesse, hesa1_21@uni.worc.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Professor Lynn Nichol, l.nichol@worc.ac.uk
Dr Catharine Ross, c.ross@worc.ac.uk

Allegations of Research Misconduct
To view University of Worcester's Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct please click here. For information about who to contact please click here.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact the University of Worcester, using the following details:

Secretary to Education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel
University of Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester WR2 6AJ
ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 2.1 Interview guide – target group: General manager

Category	Topic	General management
Organisational performance		As explained, my research project is looking at the influencing aspects and implications of hybrid work on overarching organisational performance. According to my previous literature research and based on a preliminary study, I personally understand organisational performance as a multidimensional construct that is typically measured through financial and non-financial indicators. -Would you agree with this definition? Is there anything else missing? Prompts: What do you understand by organisational / overarching company performance? -In your opinion, what influence do employees have on organisational performance? -Which of your needs (as a manager) must be met in order for you to contribute as much as
Hybrid work		I would now like to talk to you about hybrid work. By hybrid work, I understand the combination of working from home (home office) and on site in the office. I'm deliberately not talking about permanent working from home, for example the peak phase of the coronavirus pandemic, when working from home was organised across the whole country. It's much more about the new world of work that emerged afterwards and in which we currently find ourselves.
	a. HR policies	-Do you currently work hybrid and if so, what does the working model look like for you? -Are you aware of any HR policies that regulate hybrid working? If so, what do they look like? -Do you have departmental/area agreements that you and your team have to adhere to? If so, what do they look like? -How do you feel about working as a manager in this hybrid form? -What impact does the hybrid way of working have on your performance? Are you more productive than pre-corona? Are you less productive? Why is that?
	b. leadership	-Has anything changed about your leadership style as a result of hybrid working? -In your opinion, is there a "hybrid leadership style"? If so, how does it differ from pure presence leadership? -What has changed in terms of collaboration/coordination with your employees as a result of hybrid working? -What impact has hybrid working had on your workload? -What impact does hybrid working have on your employees' workload? -What impact does hybrid working have on your overtime/working hours? -What impact does hybrid working have on your employees' overtime/hours worked? -How has the relationship with your employees changed in the context of hybrid working? (Trust, perception, control, assessment/measurement of performance possible? Etc.) -Do you have regular meetings/ dialogue formats with your employees? Do these usually take place on site or virtually? -What impact does the hybrid way of working have on your performance as a manager? Are you more productive than pre-corona? Are you less productive? -What impact does hybrid working have on your employees' performance? Are they more productive than pre-corona? Are they less productive? -What aspects do you think increase the effectiveness of employees' hybrid work? -What aspects do you think reduce the effectiveness of employees' hybrid work?
	c. team structure	-Has the work of your employees in the team changed as a result of hybrid working? Could you please give a few examples of how the work has changed? -What do you see as positive and what do you see as negative about this change? -To what extent are your employees involved in decision-making? What has changed as a result of hybrid working?
	d. communication & collaboration - team/ cross functional work	-Has hybrid working had an impact on your team communication? Could you please give a few examples of what has changed? -Has hybrid working had an impact on your teamwork? Could you please give a few examples of what has changed? -Have you changed anything with the switch to hybrid working or have you coordinated anything in the team? For example, are there collaboration rules, availability times, etc.? -What parameters/framework conditions do your employees need in order to work together successfully? • Observations/ assessment by manager • if necessary, reports/ feedback from the team/ employees -How does the transfer of information work in hybrid work in your team? -What is the biggest challenge with regard to communication & collaborative teamwork in hybrid work (from your leadership role)?
Review and outlook		We are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you think is important for the purpose of this discussion? Short summary and thanks for the time. Information of the evaluation and farewells given by researcher.

Appendix 2.2 Interview guide – target group: HR professionals

Interview questions - HR professionals

Category	Topic	HR professionals
Organisational performance		As explained, my research project is looking at the influencing aspects and implications of hybrid work on overarching organisational performance. According to my previous literature research and based on a preliminary study, I personally understand organisational performance as a multidimensional construct that is typically measured through financial and non-financial indicators. -Would you agree with this definition? Is there anything else missing? Prompts: What do you understand by organisational / overarching company performance? -In your opinion, what influence do employees have on organisational performance? -Which of your needs (as HR staff) must be met in order for you to contribute as much as possible to organisational performance?
Hybrid work		I would now like to talk to you about hybrid work. By hybrid work, I understand the combination of working from home (home office) and on site in the office. I'm deliberately not talking about permanent working from home, for example the peak phase of the coronavirus pandemic, when working from home was organised across the whole country. It's much more about the new world of work that emerged afterwards and in which we currently find ourselves.
	a. HR policies	-Do you currently work hybrid and if so, what is your working model? -What are the HR policies that regulate hybrid working? -What would regulations for hybrid work look like that you would design from your HR function? -Are you aware of any deviating regulations within individual teams and areas (from your HR support)? If so, what exactly do they look like? -What feedback do you receive from the divisions/departments regarding hybrid working? -What impact does hybrid working have on employee performance? Are they more productive than pre-corona? Are they less productive? Why is that? -What impact does hybrid working have on the performance of managers? Are they more productive than pre-corona? Are they less productive? Why is that?
	b. leadership	-What aspects are brought to your attention in your HR role that have changed in terms of leadership in the organisation as a result of hybrid working? -What aspects are brought to your attention in your HR role that have changed in terms of collaboration between direct managers and employees as a result of hybrid working? -What impact does hybrid work have on the workload of employees? -What impact does hybrid work have on the workload of managers? -What impact does hybrid work have on employees' overtime/working hours? -What impact does hybrid work have on managers' overtime/hours worked? -What has changed in terms of visibility and appreciation for employees in the course of hybrid work? -From your HR perspective, to what extent does management differ in presence vs. hybrid? -What aspects should managers take into account when leading in a hybrid way? What increases effectiveness? What reduces it?
	c. team structure	-Has the structure in the divisions/teams changed as a result of hybrid working? Could you please give a few examples of how the work has changed? -What do you see as positive and what do you see as negative about this change? -In your opinion, do team structures have an influence on the success of hybrid working? If so, which organisational structures do you think are positive for hybrid working? Why?
	d. communication & collaboration - team/ cross functional work	-In your HR role, what aspects of communication within teams/divisions have changed as a result of hybrid working? What has changed (examples)? -What aspects of your HR role have changed as a result of hybrid working in terms of collaboration within the teams/divisions? What has changed (examples)? -Has the change to hybrid working been accompanied or proactively encouraged by HR in terms of collaboration/communication within the divisions/teams? -What have the divisions / teams adapted / changed independently? For example, are there collaboration rules, availability times, etc. in your support areas? -From your HR perspective, has there been a change in terms of employee participation in decision-making as a result of hybrid working? What has changed (made more difficult/simplified)? -How has your HR work changed as a result of hybrid working?
Review and outlook		We are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you think is important for the purpose of this discussion? Short summary and thanks for the time. Information of the evaluation and farewells given by researcher.

Appendix 2.3 Interview guide – target group: Employees

Interview questions - employees

Category	Topic	Employees
Organisational performance		As explained, my research project is looking at the influencing aspects and implications of hybrid work on overarching organisational performance. According to my previous literature research and based on a preliminary study, I personally understand organisational performance as a multidimensional construct that is typically measured through financial and non-financial indicators. - Would you agree with this definition? Is there anything else missing? Prompts: What do you understand by organisational / overarching company performance? - In your opinion, what influence do employees have on organisational performance? - Which of your needs must be met in order for you to contribute as much as possible to organisational performance?
Hybrid work		I would now like to talk to you about hybrid work. By hybrid work, I understand the combination of working from home (home office) and on site in the office. I'm deliberately not talking about permanent working from home, for example the peak phase of the coronavirus pandemic, when working from home was organised across the whole country. It's much more about the new world of work that emerged afterwards and in which we currently find ourselves.
	a. HR policies	- Do you currently work hybrid and if so, what does the working model look like for you? - Are you aware of any HR policies that regulate hybrid working? If so, what do they look like? - Do you have team/departmental agreements that you have to adhere to? If so, what do they look like? - How do you feel about working in this hybrid form? - What impact does the hybrid way of working have on your performance? Are you more productive than pre-corona? Are you less productive? Why is that?
	b. leadership	- Has anything changed in the leadership style or collaboration/coordination with your direct manager as a result of hybrid working? - What impact does hybrid work have on your workload? - What impact does hybrid working have on your overtime/working hours? - How has your relationship with your manager changed as a result of hybrid working? - Do you feel seen/appreciated by your manager? Have there been any changes as a result of hybrid working? - Do you have regular meetings/ dialogue formats with your manager? Do these usually take place on site or virtually?
	c. team structure	- Has working in a team changed as a result of hybrid working? Could you please give a few examples of how work has changed? - What do you see as positive and what do you see as negative about this change? - How is your team organised? Do you work purely in the line or, for example, still in cross-functional structures, in projects, etc.? - Has hybrid work had an impact on these team structures? Positive? Negative? Why is that?
	d. communication & collaboration - team/ cross functional work	- Has hybrid working had an impact on your communication within the team? Could you please give a few examples of what has changed? - Has hybrid working had an impact on your teamwork? Could you please give a few examples of what has changed? - Have you changed anything with the switch to hybrid working or have you coordinated anything in the team? For example, are there collaboration rules, availability times, etc.? - What do you need from your team colleagues to successfully carry out your work? - In your opinion, do you have the option to get involved in decision-making? Has hybrid working changed this (made it more difficult/simplified)? - How does the transfer of information work in hybrid work in your team?
Review and outlook		We are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you think is important for the purpose of this discussion? Short summary and thanks for the time. Information of the evaluation and farewells given by researcher.

Appendix 2.4 German transcript of interview – general management

(Aufnahme beginnt)

[0:00:12.3] **S1:** Ich werde dir immer einen Überblick geben, wo wir uns gerade im Interview befinden und würde gerne mit zwei Definitionsfragen starten, bevor wir dann die zwei Themen kombinieren. Das eine Thema gleich zu Beginn ist organisationale Leistung. Es geht mir in meiner Forschung ja wie gesagt um Einflussfaktoren und Implikationen von hybrider Arbeit auf die übergeordnete organisationale Leistung. Für mein Forschungsprojekt habe ich jetzt eine Definition mitgebracht - ich persönlich verstehe nach bisheriger Literaturrecherche und Vorstudien unter organisationaler Leitung - erstmal sehr generisch - ein multidimensionales Konstrukt, welches durch verschiedene Kennzahlen und Messgrößen bestimmt werden kann und letztlich auch bestimmen soll, inwiefern die Organisation übergeordnet mit ihren Akteuren und Strukturen möglichst performant ist. So mein bewusst generischer Fokus. Verschiedene Kennzahlen, Messgrößen, Zielerreichung des Unternehmens. Da die Frage an dich: Würdest du dem so zustimmen? Fehlt dir was?

[0:01:21.2] **S2:** [Hält inne] Ich glaube, es ist generisch genug, um den Facetten von organisatorischer Leistung, wie ich darüber nachdenke, irgendwie gerecht zu werden. Also du hast halt viele verschiedene Aspekte, die da mit reingehen. Also wo ich ein bisschen überlege gerade ist organisatorische Leistung. Ist ja wahrscheinlich auch immer im Kontext eines Unternehmens zu sehen. Also das kann ja auf der einen Seite sein - je nachdem, was meine Vision oder meine Mission oder meine Strategie auch als Unternehmen ist, kann das ja unterschiedlich sein. Für die einen ist das, sage ich mal, sehr stark gekoppelt an Aktienwerte, für an andere ist das vielleicht durch den gemeinnützigen Nutzen, den sie irgendwie entfalten, gekoppelt. Also das ist ja auch eine Frage; wie definiere ich denn organisatorische Leistung im Kontext eines bestimmten Unternehmens? Und ich glaube, auch das kann dieses Modell, so wie du es jetzt gerade kurz skizziert hast, durchaus abbilden. Insofern glaube ich ist das generisch genug. Vielleicht sogar ein bisschen zu generisch um diesen ganzen Themenkomplex irgendwie gerecht zu werden. Aber da geht es ja bei dir gerade darum, das auch zu erhärten und mit entsprechenden Hypothese diese Fakten irgendwie zu erhärten und das Zusammenspiel der einzelnen Faktoren auch irgendwie zu erkennen und und herauszuarbeiten. Insofern finde ich es einen guten Ansatz. Kann man durchaus so machen, glaube ich, also ohne mich näher mit diesem Thema beschäftigt zu haben.

[0:03:02.1] **S1:** Ist auch bewusst erstmal generisch gehalten, wohlwissend, dass es aber kontext- und unternehmensspezifisch ist. Und in meinem Forschungsprojekt dann wirklich die DKB im Kontext der Finanzdienstleistungsbranche und unternehmensspezifisch angucken. [Nicken S2] Okay, dann gleich verbunden mit der Frage, welchen Einfluss deiner Meinung nach Mitarbeitende auf die organisationale Leistung eines Unternehmens haben?

[0:03:35.8] **S2:** Ich überlege gerade, ob ich sage, die maßgebliche oder eine maßgebliche. Ich glaube, in der DKB ist es die maßgebliche, wenn man sich produzierende Industrien oder produzierendes Gewerbe mit großen Maschinenparks eventuell anguckt, die ja auch Werte anders schaffen, könnte das anders sein. Aber ich glaube in der Bank oder auch einer Versicherung, also Finanzdienstleistungen, ist das Personal die maßgebliche.. [hält inne] Ja, der maßgebliche Ausschlag für die organisatorische Leistung Also das hängt aus meiner Sicht oder wie ich darüber nachdenke, sehr, sehr stark zusammen. Klar, du kannst immer sagen, wenn ich eine Bank bin, dann bin ich gesteuert über Zinsergebnis und Provisionsergebnis und weiß ich was. Und das ist sehr stark abhängig davon, wie ich irgendwie auf dem Geldmarkt agiere oder sowas. Aber am Ende glaube ich, sind es die Kunden, die zum Erfolg führen und das Kundenerlebnis ist sehr stark geprägt davon, von den Entscheidungen und den Tätigkeiten der handelnden Mitarbeitenden im Finanzdienstleistungsunternehmen. Insofern würde ich sagen, in der Bank und in der DKB sind definitiv die Menschen/ die Mitarbeitenden, die den größten Einfluss darauf haben.

[0:04:58.3] **S1:** Und wenn wir jetzt eine Ebene tiefer gehen und dich persönlich betrachten, welche deiner Bedürfnisse müssen erfüllt sein, damit du möglichst stark zur organisationalen Leistung beiträgst, damit du möglichst performant bist? Was ist dir wichtig?

[0:05:13.6] **S2:** Ich bin sehr stark bedacht darauf, möglichst wenig Dinge zu tun, die unsinnig sind, unnötig sind. Also man sagt so schön in Neudeutsch so „waste" vermeiden, also unnötige Tätigkeiten vermeiden. Also Projekt Exzellenz könnte man dazu vielleicht auch sagen. Aber einfach Tätigkeiten vermeiden, die nicht unbedingt notwendig sind. Das ist für mich sozusagen der wichtigste Aspekt. Und der zweitwichtigste Aspekt ist, die Tätigkeiten, die dann übrigbleiben, so effizient wie möglich erledigen zu können.

[0:06:00.6] **S1:** Verstanden. Und wie gelingt dir das?

[0:06:03.8] **S2:** Mal so, mal so, muss ich sagen, weil nicht alles liegt ja auch in deiner eigenen Gestaltungsfreiheit und eigenen Hoheit, sondern es ist ja sehr stark auch geprägt davon, was wird dir zur Verfügung gestellt. Das fängt bei so Kleinigkeiten wie Arbeitsmitteln an, das geht weiter mit IT Systemen. Funfaktor - für einen Teil davon bin ich selber verantwortlich. [Lacht] Also das ist halt sehr stark geprägt davon, was dir von der Organisation auch an Arbeitsmitteln zur Verfügung gestellt wird. Und als Arbeitsmittel würde ich jetzt auch so was wie Prozesse ansehen. Genau.

[0:06:43.9] **S1:** Okay, gibt es noch andere Faktoren auf der Bedürfnisseite, wo du sagst, das brauche ich um performant zu sein? Bspw. auch körperliche Bedürfnisse.

[0:07:06.9] **S2:** Tja, was mir tatsächlich wichtig sind an der Stelle, sind Menschen, die meine [hält inne] Wie soll ich sagen? Meine Zielsetzung teilen. Mit denen man irgendwie sagen kann; wir verfolgen das gleiche Ziel und wir haben auch, sage ich mal, eine ähnliche oder gemeinsame Vorgehensweise zu erarbeiten. Das ist ein, wenn du so möchtest, bestimmter Menschenschlag vielleicht. Also ich habe ja sowieso die Theorie, dass sich Organisationen gerne Leute suchen, die ähnlich ticken wie die, die schon da sind. Deswegen findest du, wenn du länger in einer Organisation bleibst bzw. fängst an, dich einfach mit Leuten zu umgeben, die ähnlich sind, wie du ähnlich denken, ähnlich ticken. Und ich glaube, das ist wichtig für eine Organisation, um dort effizient zu sein. Auf der anderen Seite ist es auch gleichzeitig eine Riesengefahr, weil ich werde dann zwar effizienter in den Dingen, wie ich sie tue, aber ich bekomme keine neuen Impulse heraus, ob die Dinge, die ich tue, tatsächlich die richtigen sind, die ich tue. Jetzt schweifen wir so ein bisschen ab von den Bedürfnissen. Also in diese Metaebene. Aber so denke ich darüber. Also wenn du sagst, was brauche ich, um irgendwie effizient oder performant zu sein - das sind halt zum großen Teil Menschen, die ähnlich ticken wie ich. Aber dann natürlich auch irgendwie die Impulse von außen mal Dinge anders zu tun. Körperliche Bedürfnisse weiß ich nicht, wie die Organisation, die irgendwie mir zur Verfügung stellen sollen. Keine Ahnung. Weiß ich nicht. Schlaf genug. Das stellt irgendwie ja das Arbeitszeitgesetz irgendwie sicher. Aber das ist jetzt keine Frage der Organisation, in der ich bin.

[0:09:09.5] **S1:** Okay, danke das passt. Dann würde ich jetzt noch mal kurz mit dir über hybrides Arbeiten sprechen. Zu Beginn was ich darunter verstehe, für dich auch zum Einordnen und dann tiefer einsteigen in die Themenblöcke. [Nicken S2] Wenn ich über hybrides Arbeiten spreche und auch fürs Forschungsprojekt, verstehe ich dabei die Kombination aus der Arbeit von zu Hause, also aus dem Homeoffice, und vor Ort im Büro. Es geht mir bewusst nicht um diese dauerhafte Arbeit von zu Hause, als wir beispielsweise in der Hochphase von Corona waren, wo das ja teilweise gesetzlich auch flächendeckend angeordnet war. Sondern vielmehr um die neue Arbeitswelt, die danach entstanden ist. Da auch gleich verbunden mit der Ergänzung: Es kommt auch manchmal die Frage auf; was ist denn mit Arbeiten aus dem Zug, aus dem Café? Mir geht es jetzt, wenn wir über hybrides Arbeiten sprechen, immer um das Standardarbeitsmodell von demjenigen, mit dem ich spreche. Wenn du jetzt gleich sagen würdest, du arbeitest auch viel im Zug, dann führ das gerne mit an. Aber wenn du in der Norm eher zu Hause und im Büro arbeitest, dann wäre das dein hybrides Arbeitsmodell.

[0:10:15.9] **S2:** Okay. Und du guckst auf die einzelne Person oder schaust du dir auch Teams im Ganzen an? Also weil hybrides Arbeiten ist ja häufig auch irgendwie belegt als; ich habe eine Gruppe von Menschen, die zusammenarbeiten, ein Team oder irgendwas anderes, wo ein Teil sag ich mal vor Ort ist und ein Teil sag ich mal remote, aber zum gleichen Zeitpunkt irgendwie dabei ist.

[0:10:41.6] **S1:** Also ich spreche mit den einzelnen Leuten, die ich für meine Interviews anfrage, immer erstmal in ihrer Rolle, also bei dir dann in der Rolle als Führungskraft beispielsweise. Ich werde dich später auch noch Dinge zu deinem Team beispielsweise fragen oder um Einschätzungen bitten. Aber ich habe auch mit einigen Mitarbeitenden schon gesprochen, die dann auch eine Teamperspektive mitgeben. [Nicken] Aber per se soll es um das Hybride Arbeiten gehen, nicht die Dauer Remotler. Ich weiß, bei DP&T gibt es ein paar Dauer Remotler, die in vielen anderen Bereichen bzw. bankweit doch eher die Ausnahme sind. Genau. Dann die Eingangsfrage an der Stelle, ob du mir mal einen Einblick geben könntest, wie dein hybrides Arbeitsmodell aussieht, wo du so arbeitest, wie oft du so von welchem Ort aus arbeitest.

[0:11:42.3] **S2:** Ja, also ich würde sagen, ich habe so ein 60 / 40 Modell, 60 %, Homeoffice, 40 % Büro. Aufgrund eines entsprechenden Familienmodells ist das bei mir so, dass ich eine Woche fast immer komplett zu Hause aus dem Homeoffice arbeite. Da komme ich dann manchmal rein, wenn irgendwie da genau dann Workshops liegen oder vor Ort Termine liegen, die ich irgendwie wahrnehmen muss, die auch nicht anders zu organisieren gewesen wären. Da komme ich dann mal in Ausnahmefällen rein. Aber typischerweise bin ich jede zweite Woche dann von Dienstag bis Donnerstag in der Bank. So ist so mein Arbeitsmodus. Manchmal auch von Montag bis Donnerstag. Manchmal komme ich bis Freitag. Also das ist so ein bisschen flexibel, aber so der Grundturnus ist jede zweite Woche so drei Tage in der Bank.

[0:12:42.4] **S1:** Okay. Habt ihr grundsätzlich irgendwelche Bereichsabsprachen, an die ihr euch einmal auf der Führungsebene halten müsst oder an die sich auch dein Team halten muss? Themen, die ihr geregelt habt?

[0:12:55.1] **S2:** Nee, tatsächlich nicht. Ist auch ein bisschen lustig, weil unsere Bereichsleitungen selber auch gar nicht vor Ort sind. Teilweise, weil sie ihre Wohnsitze gar nicht in Berlin haben. [Nicken S1] Also es gibt da keine Vorgaben auf Bereichsebene oder auf den untergeordneten Führungsebenen, wie da Anwesenheitsmodelle zu machen oder zu organisieren sind. Es wird immer wieder der Wunsch herangetragen, auch aus dem Vorstand, dass man doch bitte vielleicht mal wieder darüber nachdenken sollte, öfter in die Büros zu kommen. Nee, wir geben das aber so in die Teams weiter oder wir interpretieren das so und geben das in die Teams weiter, dass die Teams sich überlegen sollen, welcher der für sie am besten geeignetste Arbeitsmodus ist. Dass wir auch sagen, es gibt einen Wert, sich gemeinsam zu treffen und gemeinsam zu sehen. Aber wie das genau ausgestaltet ist, da gibt es keine festen Vorgaben, sondern nur den Wunsch an die Teams, dass sie sich dazu Gedanken machen und entsprechend organisieren.

[0:13:59.1] **S1:** Und klappt das ganz gut, dass sie sich dann organisieren und Gedanken machen?

[0:14:05.4] **S2:** Unterschiedlich. Also ich gehe jetzt nicht rum und frag die Teams ab; haben Sie sich da Gedanken gemacht oder nicht und kontrolliere das und schaue, dass das irgendwie passiert ist, weil das sehe ich nicht als Teil meiner Aufgabe und auch nicht für nötig an. Ich weiß aber von vielen Teams, dass die sich Teamtage einrichten. Wir haben Teams, die treffen sich - die sind grundsätzlich remote aufgestellt, auch weil da Kolleginnen und Kollegen dabei sind, die gar nicht irgendwie in Berlin ansässig sind - die treffen sich dann zum Beispiel jeden zweiten Sprintwechsel abwechselnd in Berlin oder Frankfurt. Also da gibt es also unterschiedlichste Modelle, die die Teams fahren. Also manchmal sagen wir auch; hier irgendwie größeres Projekt, lass uns doch mal irgendwie jede zweite Woche für zwei Tage im Büro treffen. Alle zusammen, damit wir da irgendwie schneller vorankommen. Also die verschiedensten Modelle, die in den unterschiedlichsten Situationen da gefahren werden.

[0:15:05.5] **S1:** Okay. Sind dir HR seitig Vorgaben bekannt, die die hybride Arbeit regeln?

[0:15:12.5] **S2:** Bis auf die entsprechenden Betriebsvereinbarungen keine, nein.

[0:15:16.3] **S1:** Okay, aber dir ist bekannt, dass es Betriebsvereinbarungen gibt?

[0:15:20.1] **S2:** Ja, also Betriebsvereinbarung *Flexwork*. Dann haben wir ja alle möglichen Sachen, die da irgendwie noch mit reinspielen. Also es ist ja auch nicht die eine, sondern es ist ja geregelt in mehreren, jeweils Teilaspekte davon. Also im Wortlaut genau, kann ich's dir jetzt nicht sagen, aber ich weiß, dass es entsprechende Regelungen gibt und ich wüsste, wo ich nachgucken muss.

[0:15:41.6] **S1:** Sehr gut. Da gibt es ganz unterschiedliche Antworten. [Lacht] Es gibt auch diverse Leute, die sagen; gibt es nichts. Deswegen frage ich.

[0:15:48.2] **S2:** Das stimmt nicht, das steht da. Ich bin ein großer Freund der sfO. Ich nutze sie gerne und haue sie den Leuten um die Ohren. Wenn mir gerade danach ist [Lacht], aber deswegen weiß ich, dass da Sachen drinstehen. [Nicken S1] Meine liebste Betriebsvereinbarung ist die zu den Betriebsversammlungen, wo steht, dass an Tagen der Betriebsversammlungen oder von betrieblichen Veranstaltungen um 14:00 Feierabend ist. Das ist die beste.

[0:16:16.5] **S1:** Da gibt es ein paar Schmankerl, die glaube ich nicht alle kennen.

[0:16:22.0] **S2:** In der Tat. Deswegen muss man die alle kennen, um solche Sachen zu wissen.

[0:16:25.7] **S1:** Bei manchen Dingen ist es glaube ich gut, dass viele das nicht wissen. [Hält inne] Okay, für dich zum Gesamtüberblick. Wir haben jetzt eingangs über Arbeitsregelungen/ Policies gesprochen. Jetzt würde ich mit dir gerne intensiver über das Thema Führung sprechen und danach geht es dann auch noch mal um strukturelle Themen und Kommunikation & Kollaboration. Erstmal zur ersten Frage zwecks Führung: Wie empfindest du denn - ganz allgemein gesprochen - die Arbeit

als Führungskraft in dieser hybriden Form? Du bist ja jetzt auch lange schon bei der DKB, kennst also auch das „davor" - wie ist das jetzt in der hybriden Form zu arbeiten?

[0:17:10.4] **S2:** Wenn ich das mit einem Wort zusammenfassen müsste, ist es anstrengender. Also, es ist deutlich schwieriger, weil es muss expliziter gemacht werden. Die Leute sozusagen auf den gleichen Weg zu schicken. Also ich sage mal, dass ja Führung am Ende ist, irgendwie zuzusehen, dass man aufs gleiche Ziel hinarbeitet, dass man da die richtigen Dinge dafür tut, usw. und so fort. So, und das ist halt in einer, sage ich mal „vor-Ort-Kultur" deutlich einfacher, weil da bist du einfach präsent. Da passieren die tollen Wörter wie Wasserspendergespräche. Da triffst du dich an der Kaffeemaschine. Du redest einfach, weil man sich sieht, einfach viel, viel mehr und kommuniziert viel mehr. Und das ist für einen als Führungskraft dann deutlich einfacher, weil sich einfach viel mehr Gelegenheiten dafür ergeben. Also auch spontan oder das diffundiert so ein bisschen in die Organisation hinein. Was es beim hybriden Arbeiten oder auch beim remote Arbeiten deutlich schwieriger macht. Also man muss das viel expliziter machen. Man muss Formate teilen, man muss das aufschreiben, man muss das gut kommunizieren, man muss das gut transportiert haben und man muss es, sag ich mal, sehr explizit machen. Man muss den richtigen Zeitpunkt finden, man muss die richtige Gruppe finden usw und so fort. Deswegen sage ich; es macht die Sache anstrengender. Ich glaube aber, dass es besser wird dadurch. Jetzt sind wir beim nächsten. Ich weiß gar nicht [hält inne] das war gar nicht deine Frage, aber ich glaube, dass es besser wird dadurch, weil du dir tatsächlich Gedanken machst; was ist denn mein Ziel? Wie möchte ich das erreichen? Das Aufschreiben ist ja auch super viel. Also du kriegst da viel mehr Klarheit auch rein. Was möchte ich eigentlich erreichen und wie möchte ich es erreichen? Da bekommst du viel mehr Klarheit rein, weil du jetzt auf einmal gezwungen bist, es explizit zu tun und dir explizit darüber Gedanken zu machen, weil du es kommunizieren musst. So, das heißt, ich glaube, auf der einen Seite ist es anstrengender geworden, aber es ist besser geworden.

[0:19:29.8] **S1:** Das ist eine gute Überleitung, weil ich dich jetzt auch gefragt hätte, ob es deines Erachtens einen hybriden Führungsstil gibt? Also hast du jetzt etwas geändert, beispielsweise - du sagst ja schon Dinge werden expliziter, aber hat das auch Auswirkungen auf deinen Führungsstil? Und gibt es deiner Meinung nach so was wie einen hybriden Führungsstil?

[0:19:49.5] **S2:** Nee, würde ich nicht sagen, dass es das gibt. Nee.

[0:19:51.9] **S1:** Okay. Also hat sich nichts verändert?

[0:19:54.6] **S2:** Nee, also glaube ich nicht. Also ich bin einer, der ungern Mikromanagement betreibt und ungern Lösungen vorgibt, sondern die Leute eher dazu befähigt Lösungen zu entwickeln. Ich würde nicht sagen, dass sich das durch die Arbeitsweise geändert hat. Also vielmehr spielt mir das in die Karten, weil ich gar nicht erst in die Versuchung komme, Leute zu managen. Ich kann es nämlich gar nicht tun. Geht halt nicht.

[0:20:30.3] **S1:** Okay. Aber das heißt es unterscheidet sich jetzt nicht zur reinen Präsenzführung? [Nicken S2] Okay. Wenn man jetzt auf das Thema Leistung guckt – was für einen Einfluss würdest du sagen, hat die hybride Arbeitsweise auf deine Leistung jetzt unter der Annahme, dass eine Führungskraft ja auch noch mal andere Aufgaben und Kompetenzen hat als ein Mitarbeiter? Bist du produktiver als vor Corona, weniger produktiv, gleichbleibend?

[0:20:55.7] **S2:** Ist immer eine Frage, wie du Produktivität definierst. Wenn du Produktivität definierst als Aktionen pro Minute oder sowas, würde ich sagen, hat die hybride Arbeitsweise meine Produktivität deutlich gesteigert, weil ich einfach weniger Ablenkungen habe. Also zumindest in den Zeiten, wo ich dann tatsächlich vor Ort bin. Es gibt weniger Ablenkungen. Ich kann einfach Dinge machen und abarbeiten. Also gefühlt hat diese Produktivitätssteigerung aber gefressen, dass irgendwie alle produktiver geworden sind und viel mehr Zeug irgendwie auf dich ausgekippt wird, was nicht unbedingt sinnvolle Tätigkeiten sind. Deswegen sage ich, es ist eine Frage, wie ich Produktivität bemesse. Wenn ich das an dem Output bemesse, bin ich produktiver geworden. Wenn ich es am Outcome messe, würde ich sagen, hat sich nichts verändert zu früher.

[0:22:05.1] **S1:** Okay. Dann lass uns doch in dem Zusammenhang mal auf das Thema Workload und Arbeitsstunden schauen. Wenn ich jetzt von Workload spreche, meine ich die Anzahl an Arbeitspaketen. Was habe ich alles so auf dem Tisch liegen. Und Arbeitsstunden dann wirklich die rein zeitliche Betrachtung. Was würdest du da sagen; was für Auswirkungen hat die hybride Arbeit auf deinen Workload?

[0:22:34.3] **S2:** Schwierig. Also das Problem ist also [hält inne].. Also die Sache ist einfach. Arbeit hört nie auf, wenn ich die Stechuhr betätige und dann rausgehe. Das beschäftigt dich immer weiter. Du liest die Zeitung, du liest irgendwie Fachliteratur zu Hause im Sessel noch oder liest ein Fachmagazin. Das war ja früher schon so, das ist in der Präsenzkultur so, das ist in der hybriden Kultur. Also ich glaube, was ich bei mir beobachte ist, dass diese Grenzen immer weiter verschwimmen. Wenn ich in der Remote Arbeit bin, kann es nicht mehr so genau sagen; ist das, was du jetzt tust, schon Freizeit oder ist das noch Arbeit? Also ich persönlich habe da kein Problem mit, weil ich mir einfach auch die Freiheiten raus nehme in meiner in Anführungszeichen *Arbeitszeit* Dinge zu tun, die jetzt vielleicht nichts mit der Arbeit zu tun haben, aber trotzdem bleibt mein Output und die Outcomes, die ich produziere, die gleichen, weil ich dafür an anderen Stellen, wo eigentlich Freizeit angesagt wäre, Arbeit mache. Also die Grenze zwischen Arbeit und Freizeit, die verschwimmt so ein bisschen. Ich persönlich habe damit kein Problem, weil ich mich da immer noch gut von lösen kann. Ich kann also ganz explizit sagen für mich; nee, jetzt ist hier Schluss, jetzt ist nicht Arbeit, sondern Freizeit. Ich leg mich jetzt auf die Terrasse in die Sonne, trinke meinen Cappuccino und genieße die Sonne. Ich weiß aber von und ich kann mir das auch gut vorstellen, dass es Leute gibt, denen das sehr schwer fällt und

die dann in dieser hybriden Arbeitsform den Bezug verlieren, diesen Bezugspunkt. Wann ist sozusagen Arbeitsende und wann fängt die Nichtarbeit an? Ja.

[0:24:25.7] **S1:** [Nicken] Und wenn man jetzt auf die reinen Arbeitsstunden guckt, ist das ähnlich schwer einzuschätzen, weil es so verschwimmt, oder würdest du sagen - und jetzt haben wir seit 01.04. auch wieder offiziell eine Zeiterfassung und noch mal ein bisschen anderes Szenario - hat das hybride Arbeiten Auswirkungen positiv wie negativ auf deine Arbeitsstunden?

[0:24:46.6] **S2:** Ich halte Zeiterfassung als Mittel der Messung von Arbeit als ein völlig ungeeignetes Mittel, weil Zeiterfassung nur deine Präsenz in den Räumlichkeiten deines Arbeitgebers irgendwie erfasst. Was du dort tust und wie du das tust, wurde noch nie erfasst. Du sagst; bist du da oder bist du nicht da? Sitzt du da oder nicht? So, und das gleiche gilt natürlich auch für für hybride Arbeitsmodelle. Jetzt gerade, wo ich sagte, ich könnte jetzt natürlich hingehen und Minuten stoppen, wenn ich dann am Schreibtisch sitze und am Rechner und an der Tastatur, das ist Arbeit. Aber ist es nicht auch Arbeit, wenn ich abends in dem Sessel sitze und Magazin lese? War das vorher auch schon Arbeit? Ist das heute nur Arbeit, weil es zu Hause tue, dort, wo ich auch meine hybride Arbeit verrichte? Das sind halt einfach so Dinge, wo ich sage, es ist einfach schwieriger zu messen, wie viele Arbeitsstunden du da rein tust, wenn du sagst [hält inne].. Also auch die Frage, das ist super schwer, eine Definition zu finden von wann Arbeit aufhört ne. Und ich habe jetzt niemanden, der mir sagt, ich muss das und das zu diesem und jenem Zeitpunkt machen, sondern ich habe halt Ziele, ich habe Aufgaben und ich habe Fähigkeiten, die mich dazu befähigen, diese Ziele und Aufgaben zu bewältigen. Ich habe jetzt aber niemanden, der mir sagt; du musst das, das, das, das das in dieser und dieser Reihenfolge machen, wo ich dann irgendwie sage; okay, das mache ich und wenn ich das tue, das ist Arbeit und alles andere ist keine Arbeit. So, das hat auch so ein bisschen was mit Wissensarbeit versus, produktiver Arbeit irgendwie zu tun, oder nicht? Wissensarbeit. Also das löst das auch noch mal irgendwie, lässt dann noch mal die Grenzen verschwimmen. So, wenn du mich jetzt fragst, arbeite ich jetzt mehr als früher? Dann würde ich sagen; ich arbeite jetzt mehr. Aber ich habe auch mehr Aufgaben als früher.

[0:26:40.3] **S1:** Okay. Als Übersetzungsleistung, ob ich es richtig verstanden habe: Es muss nicht unbedingt auf hybrides Arbeiten zurückzuführen sein, sondern grundsätzlich wird alles mit jedem Jahr gefühlt mehr auf weniger Schultern verteilt? [Nicken S2] Okay.

[0:26:58.3] **S1:** Und das jetzt als Einschätzung oder auch Beobachtung für deine Mitarbeitenden. Was hat sich da verändert durch das hybride Arbeiten zwecks Workload und auch Arbeitsstunden? Unter der Annahme, dass eine Führungskraft gegebenenfalls andere Rollen und Aufgaben hat als Mitarbeitende.

[0:27:14.9] **S2:** Also ich glaube [hält inne] ich versuche das zumindest mal meinen Mitarbeitenden immer klar zu machen, dass sie da sehr darauf achten sollen, dass sie da eine Trennung zwischen

Arbeit und Freizeit hinbekommen. Ich sehe es bei mir selber, da verschwimmt das sehr stark. Aber das muss bei denen nicht der Fall sein. Da sind die Aufgabengebiete doch deutlich klarer definiert und abgetrennt. Insbesondere wenn wir bestimmte Tätigkeiten [hält inne].. bei uns sind ja auch ganz klar geregelt, in welchen Zeiten die zu erfolgen haben. Servicezeiten – da gibt es halt irgendwie Sachen, wo man zur Verfügung stehen sollte und müsste, um bestimmte Themen zu erledigen. Ich würde sagen das ist nicht aufgrund der hybriden Arbeit mehr geworden, sondern wenn dann mehr geworden, weil, wie du sagst, mehr Arbeit sich auf weniger Schultern verteilt.

[0:28:06.2] **S1:** Sowohl Workload, also thematischer Arbeitspakete/ Anzahl an Arbeitspaketen wie zeitliche Betrachtung? [Nicken S2] Ja okay, hat sich sonst durch das hybride Arbeiten an deiner Zusammenarbeit oder auch an der Abstimmung mit deinen Mitarbeitenden etwas verändert? Du hast vorhin gesagt; man muss Dinge expliziter machen, anders kommunizieren. Merkt man das auch in der Zusammenarbeit? Fühlt es sich auch da anstrengender an? Muss man irgendwie mehr gegensteuern oder hat sich das Ganze natürlich entwickelt, dieses neue Normal, wovon ja auch gesprochen wird?

[0:28:41.7] **S2:** Also natürlich hat es sich entwickelt. Es ist aber deutlich anstrengender und insbesondere bei kontroversen Themen fällt mir das immer wieder auf, dass es helfen würde, sich dafür zusammenzusetzen, weil diese nonverbale Kommunikation verloren geht. Also dieses man.. [hält inne] also man sieht sich nicht. Wenn einem sozusagen sprichwörtlich irgendwie die Haare zu Berge stehen oder irgendwie die Nackenhaare kräuseln, das sieht man durch die Kamera nicht. Das sind einfach diese Nuancen der Kommunikation zwischen Menschen, die man dann nicht wahrnimmt. Das, würde ich sagen, hat sich verändert in der Kommunikation mit den Mitarbeitern.

[0:29:31.7] **S1:** Hat das auch Auswirkungen auf dein Verhältnis zu deinen Mitarbeitenden? Bei DP&T wird ja viel eingestellt, hattet ihr auch Onboarding im hybriden Kontext usw.? Wie ist das? Wie siehst du das Thema Beziehungsarbeit da?

[0:29:49.4] **S2:** Also ich habe so ein bisschen das Gefühl, dass durch dieses hybride Arbeiten die Bindung zu einem Team oder zu einem Unternehmen deutlich schwächer geworden ist. Also, es ist einfacher - aber das ist nur ein Gefühl, das kann ich ja [hält inne] das ist meine subjektive Wahrnehmung, also ich weiß nicht, ob das nicht schon immer so war und das jetzt sozusagen nur irgendwie verstärkt zum Vorschein kommt oder wenn man, sag ich mal sensibler dafür ist, dass man dann da eher drauf guckt. Aber mein Gefühl ist schon so, dass dieser „Pull", der durch eine Gemeinschaft entsteht, manchmal fehlt und deswegen nochmal zurückkommen zu dem, was wir ganz am Anfang gesagt hatten, diese Teamtage machen und sowas. Deswegen finde ich das wichtig und sage auch den Teams; findet da bitte eine Möglichkeit, wie ihr euch zusammenfindet, ne? Wir hatten das eine Zeit lang nicht, da habe ich das gemerkt. Ist das so ein bisschen so auseinandergefasert, da sind auch irgendwie Leute sprichwörtlich unter den Bus geraten. Die waren dann einfach weg. Die

hast du nicht mehr gesehen, von der Bildfläche verschwunden und so, ne? Das ist, hat sich so ein bisschen wieder gedreht als man dann angefangen hat oder wir dann angefangen haben, wieder so ein bisschen auch darauf zu achten, dass man sich sieht. Soziale Sachen irgendwie miteinander macht. So. Das hat sich da an der Stelle tatsächlich geändert.

[0:31:25.8] **S1:** Hast du denn regelmäßige Austauschformate, die vor Ort stattfinden mit Mitarbeitenden? Sind das klassische Regeltermine etc.?

[0:31:37.5] **S2:** Ja, es kommt auf den Termin drauf an! Ich habe nicht mit [hält inne].. Ich habe ja noch eine Führungsebene unter mir und dann mache ich ja ganz viel laterale Führung. Also ich kann nicht mit allen, sind das 70, 80 Leuten bei mir, irgendwie regelmäßig. Das geht einfach nicht. Also ich habe meine Führungskräfte, ich habe meine sehr senioren Leute, mit denen ich regelmäßig spreche und ich habe so All Hands Formate. Ja, die mache ich in Person. Und auch bestimmte Leute treffe ich auch immer wieder hier in Büros. Und dann setze ich mich mit denen zusammen. Wir gehen zusammen Mittagessen. Also das sind aber eher so Ad hoc Sachen. Ja, so wirklich geplante Themen gibt es nur mit meinen direkten Führungskräften und mit meinen direkt geführten Mitarbeitern und mit so All Hands Formaten miteinander.

[0:32:33.2] **S1:** Okay. Und jetzt bei deinen direkt geführten inklusive Führungsmannschaft unter dir, wie gehst du da mit dem Thema Leistungsmessung um? Fällt dir das einfach/ schwer durch das hybride Arbeiten als in reiner Präsenzform vor Ort sein, die Leistung einzuschätzen oder auch zu messen? Wie hältst du so was nach? Wie kriegst du Arbeitsergebnisse mit? Was ist so der Weg bei euch?

[0:33:00.1] **S2:** Hm. Wir werden ja gesteuert durch die Portfolioplanung der Bank. Ja, das ist sozusagen unser Steuerungsmechanismus. Das sind ganz klare Ziele vereinbart, die auch auf die strategischen Ziele der Bank einzahlen. Und da ist es relativ einfach zu messen, wie gut erreichen wir diese Ziele? Aber das hat jetzt nichts mit Performance irgendwie zu tun, sondern nur mit Zielerreichung. Natürlich haben wir auch Zielerreichung in den Kompensationsbestandteilen der Leute drin, wo wir dann uns auch hinsetzen und sagen, ob diese Ziele erreicht worden oder nicht. Da gucken wir dann halt auch gemeinsam drauf. So und abseits dessen messe ich nichts und versuche auch nichts zu messen oder zu machen, weil mich interessiert nicht wie viel sie von XY erzeugen oder sowas. Also was ist denn sozusagen Produktivität? Und darum geht es ja im Wissensmanagement oder im Knowledge Work; was ist denn da Produktivität? Ist das jetzt Anzahl Gedanken, die ich irgendwie gefasst habe? Und wie messe ich das? Oder was ist da die Produktivität? Oder wenn ich jetzt irgendwie mit einem Entwickler spreche, ist das Anzahl Lines of Code, die er geschrieben hat. Das hat nichts mit Produktivität zu tun. Produktivität bedeutet ich habe [hält inne].. also für mich ist das, ich habe die vereinbarten Ziele in der Zeit erreicht und geschafft. Ja und dann ist es gut. Und wenn ich sie

nicht geschafft habe, dann müssen wir darüber reden, warum das der Fall ist. Haben sie sich geändert? Haben sich die Rahmenbedingungen verändert? Sind andere dazugekommen und alte weggefallen? Oder, oder, oder. So, und das ist für mich an der Stelle Produktivität. Obwohl die messe ich, die habe ich auch vorher schon gemessen. Also du merkst aber sehr subjektiv, wenn jemand nicht zur Erreichung der Ziele beisteuert. Das merkst du einfach super schnell.

[0:35:06.8] **S1:** Das ist meine Anschlussfrage, ob ihr Performance Management Fälle habt und ob du da auch sagen würdest, dass das anders ist in der hybriden Arbeit?

[0:35:13.5] **S2:** Haben wir definitiv. Aber das kommt, das ist eine ein soziales Korrektiv ist das [hält inne].. du bist in einer Gruppe und in einem Team und du merkst einfach durch Gespräche, wenn doch nichts kommt. Also zum Beispiel du bist verantwortlich für ein IT System. Und immer wenn eine bestimmte Person, sage ich mal gerade den *Chief of the Week* Hut an hat, dann passiert da nichts. Dann fängst du an zu gucken, warum passiert da nichts, dann ist die Person nicht anwesend, dann ist sie nicht da, nicht erreichbar, dann hast du so entsprechende Indikatoren dafür, dass da irgendwas nicht stimmt. Dann fängst du an, da genauer reinzugucken und dann merkst du, da ist irgendwas im Busch und dann fängst du an, Gespräche zu führen, dir das noch genauer anzugucken und dann merkst du, da passiert einfach nichts und dann hast du einen Performance Fall. Na ja, manchmal reicht es dann irgendwie, eine Ansprache zu machen, irgendwie mal zu gucken, was ist denn da so? Das ist die Art und Weise, wie wir damit umgehen. Aber du merkst es halt einfach, wenn nichts kommt zur Erreichung der Ziele. Du merkst das einfach, wenn du so eine Person da drin hast.

[0:36:16.6] **S1:** Ist das gleichbleibend, einfacher oder schwerer im hybriden Arbeiten? Zum Hintergrund: Da gibt es auch ganz unterschiedliche Theorien in der Wissenschaft, ob jetzt die Performance Cases hoch- oder runtergehen. Würdest du sagen - von deinen Beobachtungen und deiner subjektiven Meinung -, dass das mit dem hybriden Arbeiten zusammenhängt? Gab es die Performancefälle auch vorher schon? Muss man nur gut hingucken?

[0:36:40.8] **S2:** Neee, also ich glaube, sie gab es vorher schon. Sie fallen jetzt mehr auf. Im hybriden Arbeiten fallen sie mehr auf. Im Onsitework waren die Leute halt da, anwesend und du hast gesagt; ach ja, die tut ja was, weil die ist ja anwesend.

[0:36:55.7] **S1:** [Nicken] ..sitzt ja da.

[0:36:57.0] **S2:** Genau sitzt ja da, macht irgendwas. So, und jetzt auf einmal, sagst du den Leuten, die sind selbst verantwortlich für die Einteilung der Arbeitszeit. Ich gucke nicht mehr, sitzt ihr da und macht irgendwie Dinge und mache dann so einen mentalen Haken; ja, macht Dinge. Sondern ich gucke wirklich viel stärker auf die Outcomes. Also was wird geliefert? Aber nicht im Sinne von ein Output wie viele Tastenanschläge, sondern im Sinne von Arbeitsergebnis, Qualität der

Arbeitsergebnisse und so weiter und so fort. Du guckst jetzt viel genauer drauf und dann merkst du - also ein Gefühl - merkst du es schneller, wenn so eine Person untertaucht. Weil Leute die Performancefälle sind, tauchen in aller Regel unter und ab. Ja, weil es ist selten so, dass die einfach kontinuierlich schlechte Qualität liefern, weil das ist nämlich etwas, wo du gegensteuern kannst. Da kannst du fragen warum ist denn die Qualität schlecht? Und dann kommt meistens raus die Person ist willens, aber sie kann es nicht. Und dann hast du ein Skill Problem. Das kannst du lösen, das kannst du lösen mit Schulungsmaßnahmen usw und so fort. Die Performancefälle hast du immer dann, wenn die Person nicht willens ist. Und die findest du im hybriden Arbeiten einfacher raus, finde ich. Die tauchen in aller Regel ab und sind weg und nicht mehr zu sehen. Und das findest du, das merkst du relativ schnell.

[0:38:15.7] **S1:** Spannend. Danke für den Einblick. Nochmal beim Thema Leistung: Gibt es Aspekte, die du deinen Mitarbeitenden oder auch deiner Führungsebene mitgibst, wo du sagst; Achtung, darauf sollte man im hybriden Arbeiten achten. Was ist effektivitätsmindernd oder -steigernd?

[0:38:40.3] **S2:** Beim hybriden Arbeiten effektivitätsmindernd oder steigernd? Hm. Es kommt immer ein bisschen auf die Tätigkeit an, was ist sozusagen auch meine Rolle im Team, was meine Aufgabe und sowas. Und ich sage ganz gerne effektivitätssteigernd [hält inne].. also effektivitätssenkend ist es, wenn ich in einem ablenkenden Umfeld arbeite. Also zum Beispiel ich sitze irgendwo im Café, um mich herum ist Gewusel und Getobe. Also ja, ich habe tatsächlich Leute, die haben ein schönes eingerichtetes Homeoffice, aber kommen trotzdem ins Büro, weil sie gegenüber eine Schule haben, wo irgendwie ab morgens um sieben Fußball gespielt wird. Das stört die einfach. Also sich ein Umfeld zu schaffen, in dem sie tatsächlich auch ihre Arbeit natürlich ungestört arbeiten können. Oder vielleicht, wo sie Telefonate führen können, ohne dass die ganze Zeit irgendwie jemand angerannt kommt, also abgelenkt sind oder sowas. Also das würde ich den Leuten mitgeben zu sagen, darauf zu achten, dass das Setting stimmt. So, das gilt aber auch für das on site arbeiten. Auch das on site Arbeiten ist nicht ideal ausgerichtet für jeden, jeden Arbeitstag oder für jede Rolle und Ausübung einer Rolle. Also zum Beispiel ein Entwickler, der wirklich tief fokussiert an einem Problem arbeiten möchte und muss und jetzt da wirklich mal zwei Tage lang irgendwie wirklich ungestört dieses Problem knacken muss und das effizient und effektiv knacken muss, sodass das hinterher auch qualitativ hochwertig ist, was dabei rauskommt. Den würde ich sehr viel eher in ein gut eingerichtetes Homeoffice setzen als hier bei uns in die großen Großraumbüros oder auf die Fläche. Also sehr, sehr unterschiedlich und ganz ganz abhängig davon, was was ich tue und was dann gut ist.

[0:40:37.5] **S1:** Okay. Für dich noch mal zum Überblick. Wir haben jetzt viel über Führung gesprochen. Ich würde gerne noch mal - das ist meistens so ein quick and dirty Thema - über das Thema Struktur sprechen. Bin gespannt, weil DP&T da ja auch besondere Strukturen hat. Und dann noch mal zum Thema Kommunikation und Kollaboration kommen. [Nicken S2] Hat sich bei euch

strukturell jetzt wirklich zurückzuführen auf das Thema hybride Arbeiten etwas verändert? Also eure Matrix beispielsweise? Kam die auch durch das hybride Arbeiten oder sind es rein strukturelle, ggf. auch politische Entscheidungen gewesen?

[0:41:12.2] **S2:** Nö, das hat nichts mit politischen Entscheidungen zu tun, sondern das hat einfach mit der Erkenntnis zu tun, dass du zur Erbringung der Leistung, die wir erbringen müssen, einfach so viele unterschiedliche Rollen benötigst, dass du die nicht sinnvoll in einer Teamleitung führen kann. Also du hast auf einmal Dinge, die du erbringen musst, dafür brauchst du fünf verschiedene Rollen und Profile mit entsprechenden unterschiedlichen Führungsnotwendigkeiten, sage ich mal. Sodass du das nicht sinnvoll in einer Person, einem Teamleiter oder sowas bündeln kannst, ne? Der auch gleichzeitig noch die hochkomplexe Aufgabe der Koordination von Arbeit im IT Umfeld erledigt. Das ist halt einfach, wo wir gesagt haben, das geht so nicht. Also crossfunktionale Teams, die kannst du nicht mehr einem Teamleiter umhängen, das geht einfach nicht mehr. Da bräuchtest du die eierlegende Wollmilchsau und die gibt es halt relativ wenig. Daraus ist diese Matrix geboren. Das hat er mit der hybriden Arbeit überhaupt nichts zu tun.

[0:42:09.5] **S1:** Hat die hybride Arbeit irgendwelche positiven oder negativen Auswirkungen darauf?

[0:42:19.3] **S2:** Ich glaube nicht. Also ich glaube, dass sie tatsächlich weder in die eine noch die andere Richtung Auswirkungen darauf hat oder hatte. Und das müsste eigentlich genauso funktionieren, wenn du komplett on site bist oder komplett remote. Das spielt da glaube ich, also da gibt es keine verstärkenden Mechanismen in unserer Matrixstruktur aus meiner Sicht.

[0:42:43.8] **S1:** Okay, und auch andersrum gedacht [hält inne] Meine These ist, dass da Theorie und Praxis sehr weit auseinander liegen – aber es gibt Theorien, die besagen, es gibt Strukturen, Aufbauorganisatorische Strukturen, die zum Gelingen von hybrider Arbeit führen. Das ist total spannend, aber in der Praxis von dem, was man bisher so hört, scheint es nicht so zu sein, dass das hybride Arbeiten bspw. in der Matrix so viel besser funktioniert als in der Linie. Aber da einfach noch mal die Rückkopplung, ob du da noch irgendwelche Ergänzungen hättest.

[0:43:23.8] **S2:** Also würde ich auch so sehen. Ich glaube das nicht. Also man müsste jetzt die Forschung angucken, aber ich glaube einfach nicht, dass es da einen Zusammenhang gibt zwischen Organisationsformen und Arbeitsmodell. Da gibt es glaube ich andere Einflüsse, die dann deutlich stärkere Auswirkungen haben. Aber keine Ahnung.

[0:43:52.1] **S1:** Okay, deswegen auch quick and dirty Thema, weil wir jetzt gar nicht tiefer einsteigen. Das würden wir nur, wenn wir sagen, da sind Zusammenhänge. Dann sind wir schon beim letzten großen Themenblock Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit. Könntest du mir da mal einen Einblick

geben, ob und wenn ja, wie sich die Kommunikation bei euch im Team, im Bereich, sonst auch mit deiner Führungsebene durch das hybride Arbeiten verändert hat?

[0:44:21.1] **S2:** Ich hatte das eingangs ja schon mal so ein bisschen erwähnt, was so ein bisschen in der Kommunikation verloren gegangen ist, ist dieses, ich hatte mal irgendwie so ein Ding, der hat das osmotische Kommunikation irgendwie genannt. Diese Sachen müssen nicht gesagt werden oder explizit gesagt werden. Man schnappt das auf durch Gespräche, Gesprächsfetzen, die einfach ganz natürlich funktionieren. Ich sitze auf der Großraumfläche, zwei unterhalten sich, ich schnappe das auf. Ich versuche mir da selber Gedanken zu machen, mehr Informationen rauszunehmen, das weiterzutragen, wie auch immer. Also dieses, diese Art der Kommunikation, die gibt es halt einfach faktisch nicht mehr. Diese osmotische, natürliche, sich entwickelnde Kommunikation, die fällt weg und dadurch musst du halt sehr viel expliziter werden in der Kommunikation. Du musst dir überlegen, welche Formate mache ich, mit welchem Teilnehmerkreis mache ich das? Wem erzähle ich, wann was? Also das war vorher schon relevant, aber das wird umso wichtiger in einer hybriden Arbeitsweise. Und das hat sich auch verändert an der Stelle. Ich kann mich noch erinnern, wir saßen 2019 und vor Corona saßen wir immer noch da, war auch deutlich kleiner, mit Arnulf zusammen auf der Fläche und hatten All Hands. Da hatten wir alle in so in der Friedrichstraße 71 in so einem kleinen Raum auf die große Fläche geschafft. Keine Ahnung. 150, 200 Leute oder sowas, ne? Und alle hingepasst und hatten ein All Hands mit Arnulf und Moritz damals. Das ist halt, das gibt es halt nicht mehr. Erstens mal aufgrund der Größe, die wir mittlerweile erreicht haben, aufgrund der Vielzahl an Themen, die wir da zu bearbeiten haben, auch deutlich gewachsen in der Größe und zum anderen aber auch wegen der hybriden Arbeitsweise. Also wir bekommen auch gar nicht mehr alle zum gleichen Tag ins Büro rein. Das passt einfach zur Lebenswirklichkeit der Mitarbeitenden auch zusammen. Aber das wollten wir nicht sterben lassen und deswegen haben wir uns halt überlegt, wie machen wir das weiter, wie entwickeln wir das weiter? Wir haben jetzt große bereichsübergreifende All Hands tatsächlich auch mit BI zusammen, wo wir einfach die Leute über Technologiethemen auf dem Laufenden halten und was uns so bewegt, aber halt auch andere Bereiche einladen, bestimmte Themen mit rein zu tragen usw und so fort, ne. Gleichzeitig sehen wir, dass der Wunsch dafür aber auch da ist, bei den Menschen sich zu treffen. In ihrem Subökosystem sage ich mal. Also ich mache zum Beispiel bei mir in meinem Bereich ein All Hands, das deutlich kleiner ist. Und die 70 Leute, die bekomme ich noch irgendwo unter, da finden sich Räumlichkeiten. Zumal ja nicht alle kommen werden. Also 60 % Anwesenheitsquote oder sowas. Es ist schon gut so und das genießen die Leute auch. Das wollen die auch. Das versuchen wir dann immer so zu Terminen zu legen, wo sowieso Teamtage gewesen wären, also wo vielleicht auch Leute, die von außerhalb kommen, angereist kommen. Und da versuchen wir dann, diese Termine auch zu nutzen, um in größeren Gruppen zusammenzukommen. Pizza dann für alle und dann kommt man auch nochmal ins Gespräch. Kann man einfach so ein bisschen klönen. Auch mal das All Hands und hat dann entsprechende Austauschformate. Also das hat sich definitiv da

verändert. Also diese Explizitheit der Kommunikation, das ist glaube ich die größte Veränderung zwischen dem früheren Normalen und dem neuen Normalen.

[0:47:54.3] **S1:** Und die klassische, ich sag mal natürlich entstehende Kommunikation, von der du eingangs auch sprachst, die findet sicherlich auch noch statt, aber im kleineren Rahmen oder eher punktuell und nicht in diesen großen wie in der reinen Präsenzkultur existierenden Runden?

[0:48:09.1] **S2:** Also ich weiß zum Beispiel von Mitarbeitern, der eine sitzt in Südwestdeutschland, der andere hier in Berlin. Die machen sich den ganzen Tag irgendwie in Teams Meeting / Teams Kanal auf. Da steht auch allen anderen Teammitgliedern offen und dann arbeiten die da einfach nebeneinander her, quatschen miteinander, arbeiten nebeneinander her und machen da Themen. Andere machen das aber ganz anders. Also für mich als Führungskraft ist es insofern schwieriger an so was teilzunehmen, weil früher saßt du halt in Präsenzmeetings zusammen mit Leuten und hast da die ganze Zeit gesprochen. Heute sitzt du halt den ganzen Tag von morgens bis abends vor dem Bildschirm und guckst in Teams Meetings rein. Das hat sich sozusagen ins Digitale verschoben und dadurch fällt es mir persönlich sogar noch schwerer, irgendwie ins Gespräch mit Leuten zu kommen als Führungskraft, weil du die ganze Zeit durchgetaktet bist, von morgens bis abends ohne Pause dazwischen, wenn eine freie Stelle in deinem Kalender gefunden wird, gleich ins Meeting rein, egal ob du im Büro bist oder nicht. So im Büro möchtest du vielleicht auch mal eine Viertelstunde Pause dazwischen haben. Oder eine halbe Stunde Pause, um einfach mal von einem Gebäude zum anderen zu gehen oder mal einen Kaffee draußen holen zu gehen oder so was. Also das hat sich für mich zumindest ein bisschen ins Schwierige gedreht.

[0:49:28.9] **S1:** Ist ja auch eine Beobachtung, dass die Termindichte zunimmt, man eben diese Wegezeiten überhaupt nicht mehr hat. Verbunden mit neuen Themen wie was das in puncto Wissensarbeit auch auf Dauer mit der mentalen Gesundheit macht. Aber das ist wieder ein ganz anderer Aspekt der hybriden Arbeit.

[0:49:44.8] **S2:** Genau. Und ich glaube, man kann das auch nicht pauschal sagen, dass es die hybride Arbeit ist, die dann also der Auslöser sein soll. Aber es gibt halt einfach Leute, auch die sind dafür besser geeignet für dieses Arbeitsmodell als andere, die vielleicht auch größere Resilienz oder sind auch anders gepolt als andere. Das ist, glaube ich, so pauschal auf hybride Arbeit nicht zurückzuführen. Genauso wirst du Leute gehabt haben, schon früher auch immer, denen dieses Arbeitsmodell nie gepasst hat. Immer hingeschleppt haben. Hat man nur nicht erfasst, weil war halt schon immer so, da musste man mit klarkommen.

[0:50:22.7] **S1:** Die hybride Arbeit kam auch im Verbund mit digitalen Tools. Es muss auch nicht immer per se die hybride Arbeit sein. [Nicken S2] Okay. Habt ihr mit dem Switch zur hybriden Arbeit im Bereich/ bei dir in der Führungsmannschaft noch Dinge im puncto Zusammenarbeit geändert? Also

habt ihr irgendwelche Zusammenarbeitsregeln oder auch durch die digitalen Tools - viele Berichten es ist transparenter geworden, Arbeitsergebnisse werden offengelegt. Das spricht aber oft dafür, dass man auch sagt; hier ist der eine Ort der Ablage usw. Das ist jetzt sehr operativ, aber habt ihr irgendwelche Zusammenarbeitsregeln oder anders gefragt Erreichbarkeitszeiten? Braucht es so was?

[0:51:02.3] **S2:** Na ja, in der IT hast du es ein bisschen anders. Also Erreichbarkeitszeiten sind gegeben durch deine wir nennen das Service Level Agreements, die du gegenüber deinen Kunden abgibst. Also es gibt halt einfach Zeiten, in denen wir garantieren, dass jemand da ist und ans Telefon geht, wenn das Ding kaputt ist. Das ist halt so gegeben. Unsere Arbeitsergebnisse waren schon immer digitaler Natur und schon immer offengelegt, weil sie nur dann Wirkung entfaltet haben, wenn wir sie offen gelegt haben. Der Code war da, der Code ist Programm geworden, die Programme sind installiert, wurden und konnten von ihren Nutzern genutzt werden. Das heißt, die Arbeitsergebnisse waren bei uns schon immer offengelegt. Auch der Weg dorthin musste schon immer offen gelegt sein, einfach weil die Aufsicht auch geguckt hat. Hast du es getestet? Hast du es dokumentiert usw. Zeig mir das alles. Insofern hat sich da null geändert.

[0:51:56.7] **S1:** Okay. Dann noch mal ganz anders gedacht – Thema Wertschätzung und Sichtbarkeit. Das ist ja vielen Mitarbeitenden auch ganz wichtig.

[0:52:04.0] **S2:** Ja.

[0:52:04.8] **S1:** Hat sich da etwas im puncto hybridem Arbeiten geändert? Oder würdest du auch sagen, dass – hier gibt es auch unterschiedliche Meinungen – ist leichter geworden, ist schwerer geworden?

[0:52:18.5] **S2:** Einmal aus der Rolle Führungskraft., aber es ist schwerer geworden. Weil Wertschätzung hat ja ganz viel Zwischenmenschliches und Nonverbales. Auch das ist durch den Wegfall dieser persönlichen Kommunikation und durch diese Einführung des Bildschirms da zwischen zwei Menschen schwieriger geworden. Also auch diese Signale zu setzen, ist der mir gegenüber positiv gesonnen? Findet der das jetzt gut, was ich jetzt irgendwie gesagt habe? Das ist ja auch alles wertschätzend in der Kommunikation. Und ich glaube, das ist schwieriger geworden, das zu transportieren. Und ich kann mir gut vorstellen, dass das bei den Mitarbeitenden teilweise ankommt als; ich fühle mich weniger wertgeschätzt.

[0:53:01.6] **S1:** Und im puncto Sichtbarkeit: Würdest du sagen, es ist einfacher oder schwerer geworden, gerade jetzt durch Teams oder ähnliches? Kann man sich da in virtuellen Formaten hervorbringen? Fällt es dir auch einfacher, ich sag mal Talente zu sichten oder ist das eher zurück gegangen?

[0:53:16.8] **S2:** Ich glaube, das ist nicht schwieriger geworden. Nee, also die haben sich halt früher entweder durch ihre Arbeitsergebnisse hervorgetan, das hat man gesehen oder in Diskussionen hervorgehoben. Beides hat man heute auch schon. Was hat man heute noch, was hat sich nicht geändert? Die Diskussion ins Digitale verlagert, die Beiträge sind halt immer noch da oder halt nicht da. Je nachdem geht es in beide Richtungen und die Arbeitsergebnisse sieht man, wenn jemand gute Ergebnisse geliefert hat, fehlerfrei gearbeitet hat. Das sieht man heute genauso wie früher.

[0:53:48.1] **S1:** Okay. Ist es beim Thema Entscheidungsfindung anders? Hat sich da was geändert? Wie stark bindest du deine Mitarbeitenden/ deine Führungsebene in Entscheidungsfindungen ein?

[0:53:58.7] **S2:** Ich entscheide nichts selber, ich möchte nicht selber entscheiden. Ich sage immer nur; wenn ihr mich dazu zwingt zu entscheiden, dann entscheide ich das. Aber ich möchte bitte das nicht entscheiden müssen immer, weil dafür bezahlen wir euch, dass ihr diese Entscheidung bitte trefft. Ihr seid die Experten an der Stelle. [Hält inne] Das hat aber nichts mit hybriden Arbeiten zu tun. Das ist einfach mein Führungsstil an der Stelle. Ich sage halt; liebe Leute, bereitet die Entscheidungen vor. Also ich glaube, früher ist es ihnen leichter gefallen, weil sie es nicht haben aufschreiben müssen, sondern setzen sich halt ins Kämmerchen eingeschlossen und haben es auf dem Board gemalt und gesagt; hier nehmen wir. Heute müssen sie halt irgendwie das auf Papier bringen, müssen dann eine Dokumentation dazu schreiben, vielleicht eine kleine Präsentation machen und das dann machen. In Klammern hätten sie eigentlich früher auch schon machen sollen, haben sie aber nicht gemacht und jetzt müssen sie es halt tun, weil durch die Natur der hybriden Arbeit es halt einfach wichtiger ist, Dinge aufzuschreiben und für andere im Nachgang. Also hybrides Arbeiten hat ja auch viel mit asynchroner Kommunikation zu tun. Ja und dann diese Asynchronität zu bedienen im Sinne von ich muss das im Nachgang nachvollziehbar für andere machen.

[0:55:13.8] **S1:** Ich frage noch mal bewusst [hält inne] Es gibt Stimmen, die sagen; die sind immer alle rot, dauerhaft in Terminen, die kann ich nicht greifen. Seit dem hybriden Arbeiten entscheide ich öfter selber. Also die eben nicht auf die Asynchronität warten, sondern dann sagen; ja, ich binde weniger Leute ein. Das höre ich bei dir jetzt nicht raus, sondern es ist dann eher ein frühzeitiges Kommunizieren, ein Vorbereiten von Entscheidungsvorlagen oder ein Entscheidungsfindungsprozess, der im Zweifelsfall eben asynchron stattfindet. Aber er findet statt?

[0:55:46.5] **S2:** Er sollte stattfinden. Ist natürlich nie perfekt, aber das ist zumindest, wie ich darüber nachdenke und wie ich das versuche zu handhaben. Ich versuche das tatsächlich dann auch auszusitzen. Und dann sagen die Leute; oh, das dauert zu lange. Kann das mal jetzt bitte jemand entscheiden? Dann sage ich halt; ja, da sitzen die Entscheider, die sollen sich halt irgendwie einigen. Wenn sie mir sagen, sie können sich nicht einigen, dann entscheide ich. Okay, dann mache ich mir aber eine mentale Note, dass ich sie dann hinterher dazu mal irgendwie dazu bringe, irgendwie sich zu

überlegen, was sie denn brauchen, um das entscheiden zu können. Das ist ein anderes Thema. Das hat nichts mit hybriden Arbeiten und Führungskultur. Ist egal.

[0:56:26.8] **S1:** Verstehe. Dann habe ich tatsächlich schon die vorletzte Frage, und zwar, ob du mir noch mal einen Einblick geben kannst, wie die Informationsweitergabe bei euch in der hybriden Arbeit, im Team/ im Bereich usw. stattfindet?

[0:56:40.6] **S2:** Auch ganz unterschiedlich. Es kommt immer auf die Art der Kommunikation an. Wir haben natürlich unsere All Hands Formate, in denen sage ich mal, zum Beispiel auch aus Vorstandssitzungen berichtet werden. Ich habe Runden mit meiner Führungsebene, die haben dann Runden mit ihren Teams. Also es gibt da so ein bisschen so kaskadierende Sachen, es gibt aber auch All Hands Formate, wo wir, sage ich mal, nicht über die Hierarchieebene gehen, sondern über [hält inne] ja alle zusammenbringen. Netzwerke. Also ja, wir verteilen bestimmte Informationen per Email und Rundschreiben in Anführungszeichen. So hätte ich es zumindest gerne häufiger, dass wir das tun. Wir haben zentrale Ablageplätze für zum Beispiel Entscheidungen, die wir treffen. Gibt es zentrale nachlesbare Plätze, wo man mal reingucken kann, wo Sachen, wo Entscheidungen dokumentiert sind. Also unterschiedlichste Formate für unterschiedliche Informationsbedürfnisse und Informationen.

[0:57:47.0] **S1:** Okay. Und würdest du sagen, das gelingt ganz gut, Informationen weiterzugeben?

[0:57:53.0] **S2:** Ist ein Forschungsfeld für sich selber. Wie kriege ich Informationen in Organisationen effizient verteilt? Ich würde sagen, es funktioniert. Okay, ich habe jetzt noch nicht irgendwie gehört, dass da grundsätzlich jemand immer sich nicht abgeholt fühlt. Alle jammern zwar immer, sie möchten gerne immer mehr wissen und mehr eingebunden werden, abgeholt werden, aber das ist ja immer so auch so ein Spagat, den du irgendwie machen musst zwischen wann kommunizierst du genug? Und wann ist es zu viel?

[0:58:21.7] **S1:** Das ist ja auch stark abhängig vom individuellen Informationsbedürfnis.

[0:58:23.8] **S2:** [Nicken] Es ist okay, wie wir das tun. Aber du wirst immer Leute finden, die sagen, das ist viel zu wenig.

[0:58:29.1] **S1:** Okay, ja. Dann sind wir schon am Ende des Interviews. Ich habe immer noch eine Lieblings Abschlussfrage und zwar (..)

[0:58:39.6] **S2:** Schieß los, schieß los.

[0:58:41.7] **S1:** [Lacht] Und zwar, ob es noch irgendetwas gibt, was wir deiner Meinung nach nicht behandelt haben und was aber für diese Diskussion wichtig ist? Was du noch ergänzen möchtest? Sonst gebe ich dir gleich noch eine Zusammenfassung und einen Ausblick.

[0:58:53.0] **S2:** Nö. Ich glaube, wir haben das Thema ganz gut abgerundet. Also ich habe jetzt nichts, wo ich sagen würde; och, das ist ganz offensichtlich, das hätten wir jetzt irgendwie noch mal besprechen müssen. Aus meiner Sicht.

[0:59:05.1] **S1:** Okay. Wunderbar. Dann würde ich erstmal schon mal kurz die Aufnahme beenden.

(..) Ausblick und Verabschiedung

Aufnahme beendet.

Appendix 2.5 German transcript of interview – HR professionals

Interview im Rahmen des Forschungsprojektes
Teilnehmer*innen: Name des Teilnehmers, Annika Hesse
Datum des Interviews: 03.05.2024

(Aufnahme beginnt)

[0:00:00.0] **S1:** In meinem Forschungsprojekt geht es ja um die zwei großen Stellschrauben: Organisationale Leistung – was könnten Einflussfaktoren sein oder was könnten Implikationen zwischen organisationaler, übergeordneter Leistung und hybrider Arbeit sein. Deswegen würde ich gerne eingangs über organisationale Leistung sprechen und dir noch mal sagen, was ich unter hybrider Arbeit verstehe. [Nicken] Das ist jetzt sehr formell und wissenschaftlich, aber diverse Vorstudien und die Theorie sagen organisationale Leistung ist ein multidimensionales Konstrukt, also ein Konstrukt, was durch verschiedene Kennzahlen oder Messgrößen bestimmt werden kann und was letztlich bestimmen soll, inwiefern die Organisation mit all ihren Akteuren, Strukturen usw - also wirklich übergeordnet - performant ist und zur Zielerreichung der Organisation oder des Unternehmens beiträgt. Deswegen geht es mir nicht immer um die einzelne Mitarbeiter Leistung, außer ich frage danach, sondern dieses Gesamtkonstrukt. [Nicken] Fehlt dir da noch was? Würdest du dem erstmal so zustimmen oder zuckst du und sagst "Oh Gott, darunter hätte ich was ganz anderes verstanden?"

[0:01:22.5] **S2:** Kurze Rückfrage dazu: Verstehst du darunter zum Beispiel auch infrastrukturelle Themen wie performantes Netz, welche Rahmenbedingungen dir zur Verfügung gestellt werden? [Nicken] Alles klar, dann verstehe ich das Richtige darunter.

[0:01:33.4] **S1:** Ja, also sämtliche Akteure, Strukturen, wie du sagst, auch Infrastruktur. [Nicken] Okay, sehr gut. Dann als anschließende Frage; jetzt in unseren eigenen Bereich blickend und vor allen Dingen auf deine Rolle blickend: Welchen Einfluss haben denn deiner Meinung nach Mitarbeitende auf diese organisationale Leistung? Also haben sie den? Haben sie den nicht?

[0:01:57.5] **S2:** Sie haben ihn schon in gewisser Weise, weil ich sag mal zum einen die Infrastruktur Themen muss der Arbeitgeber grundsätzlich zur Verfügung stellen für performante Systeme. Aber wenn ich alleine im Homeoffice/ Flexwork in meinem Netzwerk sozusagen arbeite, habe ich auch als Mitarbeiter Einfluss darauf, inwiefern die Netzwerkqualität da ist. Also habe ich ein leistungsfähiges WLAN ja/ nein. Das kann, dafür kann ich nur sorgen. Oder aber ich muss die Entscheidung treffen, dass dann Flexwork für mich keine Lösung ist, sondern dass ich dann doch eher im Büro tätig bin. Ja, also von daher ja, Mitarbeiter hat schon Einfluss darauf.

[0:02:45.5] **S1:** Ja okay, nur zur Sicherheit: Organisationale Leistung, aber auch in dem Sinne, dass wir alle irgendwie am Unternehmenserfolg partizipieren. Also wenn wir jetzt z.B. Zielvereinbarungen haben und so?

[0:02:57.9] **S2:** Natürlich, also als Mitarbeiter ist natürlich auch wichtig und relevant, dass ich zum einen die Unternehmensziele kenne, dass ich die Bereichsziele kenne, dass ich auch die Teamziele kenne und darauf meine, also meine Arbeit, tatsächlich auch ausrichte. Also ja, auch darauf genau.

[0:03:13.6] **S1:** Okay, dann jetzt tatsächlich deine ganz persönliche Meinung: Welche deiner Bedürfnisse müssen denn erfüllt sein, damit du möglichst stark zur Unternehmensleistung beiträgst?

[0:03:26.0] **S2:** Hm. Meine persönlichen Ziele. Für mich ist halt relevant, dass ich zum einen die Unternehmensziele kenne, dass die sind mir aber transparent gemacht worden, weil ich kann darauf zugreifen und in Confluence nachlesen. Was sind unsere Unternehmensziele? Ich brauche natürlich auch die Ziele, wo will denn der Bereich HR hin, wie was zahlt die Tätigkeit des Bereiches quasi auf das große ganze Thema ein, also auf die Unternehmensziele? Und dann natürlich im Rahmen meiner persönlichen Zielvereinbarung auch die Ziele, die ich zum einen für mein eigenes Team, für das Produkt, aber auch für das Chapter sehe.

[0:04:04.8] **S1:** Okay.

[0:04:05.8] **S2:** (..) auch anderes woran ich meine Arbeit ausrichten kann, um dann tatsächlich daraus die Vision für das Produkt Businesspartner ableiten zu können und dann auch entsprechend das Team steuern zu können. Genau das sind für mich schon relevante Punkte. Relevante Punkte um gut arbeiten zu können, sind für mich aber auch infrastrukturelle Themen. Also dass ich die Tools, die mir zur Verfügung gestellt werden, dass die leistungsfähig sind, dass ich die entsprechend nutzen kann und dass sie mich nicht ausbremsen in meinem Daily Business, in dem sie abstürzen etc. Bzw. die Performance einfach nicht stimmt. Genau.

[0:04:48.7] **S1:** Okay, danke. Dann hätten wir schon mal diesen Themenblock „Organisationale Leistung". Dann würde ich gerne einmal kurz über hybrides Arbeiten sprechen, eher als Info. Unter hybrider Arbeit - jetzt im Rahmen dieses Forschungsprojektes - möchte ich mich konkret auf die Kombination aus Arbeit von zu Hause, viele sprechen auch von Homeoffice, und vor Ort im Büro beschränken. Also es geht mir bewusst nicht um dieses dauerhafte Arbeiten von zu Hause, was man ja beispielsweise zur Hochphase hatte, wo es auch flächendeckend teilweise angeordnet war, sondern vielmehr jetzt um die neue Arbeitswelt, die danach entstanden ist und in der wir uns aktuell befinden. Das vielleicht kurz vorab zum Setting und deswegen gleich verbunden mit der Frage in deine Richtung, wie denn dein hybrides Arbeitsmodell aussieht, wie es klassischerweise aussieht oder ob du auch irgendwelche Ausnahmen hast, wo du sagst, weiß ich nicht an irgendwelchen anderen Orten, in

irgendwelchen anderen Ländern arbeitest. Das wäre für mich aber eher eine Ausnahme, würde ich mal von ausgehen. Und wie es sonst so grundsätzlich bei dir geregelt ist zwischen Arbeit von zu Hause und im Büro.

[0:05:49.5] **S2:** Ähm, also bei mir ist es so geregelt, dass ich versuche zwei Tage die Woche mindestens ins Office zu gehen. Manchmal sind es auch drei Tage, die ich im Office bin. Kommt halt immer auf die Belange an, was es erfordert. Also Belange sind beispielsweise, dass es Präsenzmeetings sind, die nicht verschiebbar sind oder aber, dass das Team die Bedürfnisse hat, einen weiteren Tag im Team zusammen zu sitzen bzw dass die Dinge es auch erfordern. Also wenn wir halt Workshops beispielsweise haben, wo es darum geht zusammen Arbeitsformen zu besprechen etc. macht es halt einfach mehr Sinn, das tatsächlich auch in Präsenz zu machen. Aber grundsätzlich sind meine Bürotage zwei Tage die Woche und die anderen Tage arbeite ich aus dem Homeoffice. Flexibel und genau so gestaltet sich tatsächlich bei mir das Thema Flexwork.

[0:06:44.7] **S1:** Ja, wunderbar. Dann eher eine ganz allgemeine Frage: Kannst du mir einmal kurz grob erläutern, welche Vorgaben HR seitig überhaupt mitgegeben werden bei der DKB, die die hybride Arbeit irgendwie regeln?

[0:07:00.4] **S2:** Wenn man neu in der DKB anfängt bzw neuer Mitarbeiter im Haus ist, dann ist innerhalb des Onboardings auch relevant, dass du das Thema, „dass du aktiv an Flexwork teilnehmen möchtest", anmelden musst. Das erfolgt über SuccessFactors und nehme ich nicht aktiv an Flexwork teil, dann steht mir dieses Arbeitsmodell tatsächlich auch nicht zur Verfügung.

[0:07:25.5] **S1:** Okay. (..) Andere Frage jetzt wirklich rein persönliche Meinung: Wie würden denn Regelungen für die hybride Arbeit aussehen, die du aus deiner HR Funktion heraus gestalten würdest? Also würdest du das, du hast ja jetzt gesagt „man kann an Flexwork teilnehmen: Ja/ nein"; mehr wird ja DKB seitig bisher nicht geregelt; würdest du mehr regeln, wenn du es ganz alleine entscheiden dürftest aus deiner Funktion heraus? Oder sagst du, das ist das Mindestmaß jetzt und das passt so?

[0:08:01.4] **S2:** Ich finde, es ist zeitgemäß und das ist das Mindestmaß. Ich finde es wichtig, dass man andere Regelungen, wie oft man sich im Büro trifft, nach wie vor ins Team die Entscheidung geben sollte, also dass man als Arbeitgeber das nicht vorgibt. Ich finde es wie gesagt nicht mehr zeitgemäß. Und wir wollen ja auch weiterhin attraktiv bleiben als Arbeitgeber. Und deshalb ist das aus meiner Sicht ein sehr, sehr gutes Angebot. Und ich denke auch aus Arbeitgeber Perspektive, dass man als Arbeitgeber durchaus das Vertrauen in das Team geben darf, dass das Team daran interessiert ist, sich mindestens einmal bis zweimal die Woche im Office zu treffen, weil das ja auch mehrwertig ist für das Team, wenn man sich persönlich trifft. Es ist einfach etwas anderes, wenn die Tür offen steht und man durchgehen kann und mit jemand sprechen kann, als wenn ich die Hemmschwelle habe, jemanden anrufen zu müssen über MS Teams. Und von daher ja, ich würde nicht mehr regeln, außer diese

Regelung, die wir aktuell im Haus haben, dass ich quasi als Mitarbeiter aktiv den Button klicken muss „Ja, ich möchte gerne an Flexwork teilnehmen".

[0:09:10.5] **S1:** [Nicken] Kennst du irgendwelche abweichenden Regelungen innerhalb einzelner Teams oder Bereiche, jetzt aus deiner Betreuung heraus oder auch nicht aus den eigenen Betreuungsbereichen, sondern aus den anderen Betreuungsbereichen deiner Mitarbeitenden zum Beispiel heraus, dass da irgendwas bekannt ist, also dass die noch mehr regeln als dieses Mindestmaß, was erstmal grundsätzlich die Arbeitgeberin mitgibt.

[0:09:29.1] **S2:** Ähm. Soweit mir als Kenntnis vorliegt, gibt es einige Bereiche bzw Bereiche/ Regionen, wo es schon eine Regelung gibt, dass mindestens einen Tag pro Woche ins Office gekommen werden soll. Ein oder zwei Tage kann auch zwei Tage sein, aber dass es nicht unbedingt nur das Team entscheidet, sondern dass das auch vorgegeben wird von den Führungskräften. Genau.

[0:09:57.3] **S1:** Okay. Gibt es grundsätzlich noch Feedback zum Thema Hybrides Arbeiten? Irgendwie aus dem Haus oder gab es Feedback und wenn ja, wie sah das aus? Oder ist das gar nicht mehr Thema und schon so Normalität?

[0:10:11.0] **S2:** Genau das wollte ich gerade sagen. Bisher habe ich eigentlich eher positives Feedback vernommen, dass es normal ist, dass es auch mittlerweile gar nicht mehr wegzudenken ist, dass hybrides Arbeiten erfolgen kann in unserer Organisation, dass wir das anbieten. Mal auch darauf geschaut, wie viele Mitarbeitenden haben wir, die woanders wohnen, obwohl der Arbeitsort Berlin ist und sie somit die Möglichkeit haben, auch Mitarbeiter der DKB zu sein, weil wir einfach das Thema flexibles Arbeiten anbieten, also orts flexibles Arbeiten anbieten. Und von daher ist das aus meiner Sicht nicht mehr wegzudenken. Es gibt natürlich auch Mitarbeitende, für die das kein Modell ist. Die sind dann aber auch häufiger im Büro und für sie ist es halt auch wichtig, dass sie einen grundsätzlichen Arbeitsplatz haben. Aber ich würde sagen, für die Masse der Organisation ist das ein sehr gutes Arbeitsmodell, was wie gesagt, nicht mehr wegzudenken ist.

[0:11:08.5] **S1:** Okay, das klingt doch gut. Was würdest du denn sagen, was für einen Einfluss hybrides Arbeiten oder die hybride Arbeitsweise auf die Leistung von Mitarbeitenden hat? Sind sie produktiver als Vor-Corona, wo wir alle komplett präsent waren? Sind sie weniger produktiv? Woran könnte das liegen? Wie gesagt, muss nicht messbar sein. Erfahrungen? Beobachtungen?

[0:11:30.0] **S2:** Also ich sag mal, wie gesagt, gefühlt und das was du sagst auch beobachte. Ich würde sagen, so teils teils. Auf jeden Fall sind aus meiner Sicht die Mitarbeiter definitiv produktiver im Homeoffice. Warum sind sie das? Weil du dich fokussieren kannst, konzentrieren kannst. Du wirst nicht abgelenkt. Es gibt aber auch Mitarbeitende, die sind weder im Büro noch zu Hause produktiv. Die würde ich da jetzt gerne mal ausschließen wollen. Ich würde mich eher auf die fokussieren, die

halt sowohl im Büro als auch im Homeoffice produktiv sind. Aber was sind für mich Faktoren, wo man sagen könnte, die Produktivität sinkt? Die Produktivität sinkt aus meiner Sicht, weil die Meetinganzahl deutlich angestiegen ist, also wir sozusagen von morgens bis abends in Meetings hängen und du eigentlich nur noch wirklich Arbeitsproduktivität erzeugen kannst, wenn du nicht mehr im Meeting bist und das meistens nach der Arbeitszeit ab 18:00. Ist man da dann noch wirklich produktiv? Würde ich gerne in Frage stellen. Also eher so die Taktung der Meetings ist, glaube ich, eher da so ein bisschen das Problem. Aber grundsätzlich, wenn ich keine Meetings habe, einen Fokustag habe, bin ich als Mitarbeiter aus meiner Sicht produktiver als im Büro. (..) Das war ein bisschen abschweifend, oder?

[0:12:50.2] **S1:** Alles gut. Würdest du das auch für die Rolle der Führungskraft so unterschreiben? Also was hat da hybrides Arbeiten für einen Einfluss? Und sind sie produktiver, weniger produktiv? Oder gleiches Szenario wie für Mitarbeitende? Also können da Rollen und unterschiedliche Aufgaben eine Rolle spielen, weil eine Führungsrolle ja vielleicht anders ist als ein Mitarbeiter?

[0:13:11.1] **S2:** Absolut. Ich glaube, da ist auch noch mal zu unterscheiden: Was habe ich für ein Mindset? Also bin ich eine Führungskraft, die das Gefühl hat, produktiv zu sein, wenn sie ihre Mitarbeitenden sieht? Dann würde ich eher sagen, sie ist nicht produktiver, weil sie sich die ganze Zeit die Frage stellt aus dem Homeoffice heraus, was machen meine Mitarbeitenden? Ich sehe sie nicht. Wenn ich aber das richtige Mindset habe, bin ich aus meiner Sicht auch als Führungskraft sehr produktiv, weil ich habe unabhängig davon - ist der Mitarbeiter im Büro ja/ nein - Touchpoints mit den Mitarbeitenden und kann ja trotzdem meiner Führungsrolle gerecht werden. Aber wie gesagt, Mindset-Thema würde ich gerne damit beantworten. Ja.

[0:13:52.1] **S1:** [Nicken] Es soll jetzt grundsätzlich auch noch mehr um die die Führungsrolle gehen. Welche Aspekte werden denn an dich in deiner HR Rolle herangetragen oder welche beobachtest du, die sich im Hinblick auf die Führung im Haus durch das hybride Arbeiten verändert haben?

[0:14:11.0] **S2:** Ich würde sagen, dass sich das konkret verändert hat bei den, also bei der geteilten Führung. Wenn ich jetzt beispielsweise Chapter Lead bin, in dieser Rolle - oder Expertise Lead - wenn ich ausschließlich das Thema Mitarbeiterführung als meinen Fokus habe, dann hat es sich schon verändert, dass ich diese Mitarbeitenden Gespräche eher deutlich ins Büro verlege, weil es halt wichtig ist, im Rahmen dieser Gespräche meine Mitarbeitenden zu sehen und zu sehen, was macht es mit ihm, wie ist die Körpersprache? Diese Art Gespräche führe ich eher weniger virtuell. Da lege ich den Fokus schon sehr auf das Thema, dass das in Präsenz stattfindet. Also muss tatsächlich meine Mitarbeitenden Gespräche auch gut planen. Wenn es aber darum geht, über Zusammenarbeitsmodelle zu sprechen, Workshopformate durchzuführen, dann kann ich die durchaus auch hybrid führen. Das heißt, ich muss dafür nicht ins Büro kommen. Aber Stichwort disziplinarische Führung - Mitarbeitergespräche führen

eher immer in Präsenz oder auch was das Thema Performancemanagement betrifft. Wenn ich einen Performancefall habe, dann versuche ich schon, mein Fokus darauf zu legen, dass ich diesen Performancefall öfter im Büro sehen möchte, weil ich will halt auch sehen, wie agiert er mit den anderen Kollegen, wie agiert er, wenn ich ihm über die Schulter gucke? Da fordert es auch mich in der Führungsrolle mehr Flexibilität zu haben und dann auch öfter im Büro zu sein, um eben auch genau dann nah an diesen Kolleginnen zu sein.

[0:15:50.4] S1: Kurzer Exkurs, weil du gerade Performancemanagement ansprichst: Gibt es Performance Cases, die aus dieser hybriden Arbeit heraus rühren? Dass man jetzt wirklich sagt „Oh Gott, dadurch, dass wir mehr Hybrid arbeiten oder nicht mehr so präsent sind, entstehen wirklich Problematiken, Herausforderungen" oder sind die ähnlich wie in der Präsenzform da?

[0:16:09.4] S2: Ich würde sagen, die würden auch in der Präsenzform entstehen. Weil wenn es Mitarbeitende gibt, die einen Performancethema haben, haben sie dieses Thema sowohl als auch. Ich glaube, es ist eher herausfordernder, das als Führungskraft auch erkennen zu können. Würde ich aber die Gegenfrage stellen wollen; erkenne ich es, wenn ich den Mitarbeitenden mehr sehe? Nein, ich erkenne es eher, indem ich Ziele setze, Ziele verfolge und regelmäßig am Team dran bin, um zu checken, wo steht das Team eigentlich? Und da wird mir so Performance tatsächlich auch präsent. Aber wie gesagt, würde es das verändern, wenn ich im Büro bin und wenn ich mich im Büro aufhalte? Nein, ich denke, ich würde es nicht eher wahrnehmen, sondern es ist wieder ein Mindset Thema. Wie führe ich ein Team auch in der hybriden Welt? Ja.

[0:17:00.3] S1: Verstanden. [Nicken] Okay, dann würde ich mit dir gerne mal über das Thema Workload und Überstunden sprechen. Durch die Interviews davor habe ich gemerkt, dass ich gerne noch mal ausführen würde, was ich damit meine. Wenn ich jetzt vom Thema Workload spreche, würde ich gerne von Themen, Arbeitspaketen usw., die auf dem Tisch landen, sprechen. Also was nehme ich als Mitarbeiter oder auch Führungskraft alles auch noch entgegen. Wie hoch ist meine To Do Liste, aber auch der mental load? Nach wie viel fühlt es sich an? Und dann noch mal in der Abgrenzung das Thema Überstunden, wirklich als Zeit. Was für ein Saldo baue ich auf? Weil ich würde gleich unterschiedliche Fragen stellen und teilweise wurde Workload eins zu eins mit Überstunden quasi beantwortet. Ich würde aber gerne genau die Differenzierung abbilden – inhaltliche Arbeitspakete, generell Anzahl an Arbeitspaketen mental, wie fühlt sich das an? Und dann noch mal die reine zeitliche Betrachtung. Das vielleicht kurz vorab. Nun die Frage: Welche Auswirkungen meinst du, hat die hybride Arbeit auf den Workload von Mitarbeitenden?

[0:18:05.6] S2: Hm, da würde ich auf jeden Fall sagen, dass sich der Workload erhöht hat. Warum hat er sich erhöht? Weil durch die hybride Arbeit. [Hält inne] Ich persönlich empfinde, dass wir eine höhere Schnelligkeit haben, eine höhere Geschwindigkeit sich entwickelt hat, einfach schon in der

Taktung der Termine, weil ich habe nicht mehr die Wege, die ich zurück lege. Ich muss zum einen nicht mehr reisen, ich habe keine Wege, um von einem Besprechungsraum in den anderen zu switchen. Ich klicke halt einfach Termin verlassen und klicke wieder am nächsten Termin teilnehmen. Und von daher sind für uns alle die Arbeitspakete mehr geworden. Weil du halt gefühlt in den acht Stunden, die uns zur Verfügung stehen, auch mehr Pakete reingepresst bekommst. Weil wir halt einfach alle schneller zusammenarbeiten. Und es ermöglichen ja auch teilweise die Tools, die wir haben, dass wir schneller miteinander arbeiten können. Von daher ja, aus meiner Sicht hat sich der Workload erhöht. Hat er sich erhöht durch das hybride Arbeiten? Würde ich auch eher ein Fragezeichen dran machen. Er hat sich eher erhöht, aus meiner Sicht, mit zunehmender Digitalisierung.

[0:19:16.3] **S1:** Ja, danke. Das ist eine wertvolle Ergänzung. Und beim puncto Überstunden oder eher Arbeitsstunden? Würdest du sagen, die haben sich erhöht/ verringert?

[0:19:34.5] **S2:** Hm, ich würde sagen, dass sich das Thema Überstunden auf jeden Fall erhöht hat. Gerade auch bei der Arbeit im Homeoffice, weil der Übergang sehr fließend ist. Und ich habe halt keinen Weg mehr, den ich zurücklegen muss. Ich habe morgens keine Anreise mehr. Das heißt also, ich kann früher am Arbeitsplatz sitzen und kann später gehen. Von daher, ja, aus meiner Sicht hat sich das Thema Überstunden erhöht und der Grad ist sehr, sehr schmal. Das Zerfließen zwischen dem Thema Arbeitswelt und wie heißt es so schön, diese Work Life Integration. Also das ist halt sehr, sehr schmal. Dieser Grad und alleine auch dieses Thema Arbeitsplatz. Habe meinen Laptop aufgeklappt, kann diesen Arbeitsplatz verlassen, habe aber immer noch das Handy, wo ich ja trotzdem dann noch Arbeiten tätige. Gebe ich das als Überstunden an? Nicht wirklich. Aber zumindest eins ist, glaube ich, dieser Grad. Sehr schmal.

[0:20:32.4] **S1:** Nur zum Verständnis; ist deine „These", dass viele die Zeit, die sie pendeln / für Arbeitswege aufbringen, wie auch immer, eins zu eins in Arbeitszeit umwidmen, wenn man im Homeoffice ist?

[0:20:42.9] **S2:** Korrekt. So würde ich das auch darstellen. Also habe ich zum Beispiel eine Stunde Fahrzeit ins Büro und ich fange diese Stunde früher an zu arbeiten, habe ich eine Stunde mehr, die mir am Tag zur Verfügung steht. Morgens wie auch abends. Genau. Ja.

[0:20:57.1] **S1:** Okay, verstanden. Jetzt für die Führungskräfte andersrum: Würdest du da sagen, dass es analog der Mitarbeitenden eine ähnliche Zunahme an Workload eben bedingt durch Digitalisierung usw. und auch da der Punkt Überstunden gibt? Oder ist das durch die Führungsrolle noch mal anders?

[0:21:14.8] **S2:** Hm, also das Thema Workload würde ich sagen, hat sich genauso verändert bei den Führungskräften wie auch bei den Mitarbeitenden. Zum Thema Überstunden würde ich das genauso auch unterschreiben, dass auch da die Anfahrt oder der Anfahrtsweg ja wegfällt, ich halt dem zu Folge

früher erreichbar bin, länger an Arbeitsplatz sitze. Auch da würde ich sagen trifft genau das gleiche zu.

[0:21:42.1] **S1:** [Nicken] Gut, dann würde ich gern noch mal zu den Themen Sichtbarkeit und Wertschätzung sprechen. Was würdest du sagen: Hat sich überhaupt was verändert in den Punkten Sichtbarkeit und Wertschätzende für Mitarbeitende im Zuge der hybriden Arbeit im Vergleich zur reinen Präsenzkultur?

[0:22:02.2] **S2:** Hm, auch da würde ich sagen, ist das wieder ein Mindset Thema. Habe ich das Gefühl, nur dann gesehen zu werden, wenn ich im Büro bin? Oder was ist dann tatsächlich das Ergebnis, was gesehen wird und was eine Wertschätzung hervorruft? Also zum einen Mindset bei Mitarbeitenden, aber auch Mindset bei der Führungskraft. Aus meiner Sicht hat das keine negative Auswirkung, dass wir hybrid arbeiten auf das Thema Wertschätzung, weil die Ergebnisse liefere ich ja trotzdem. Und wenn meine Führungskraft in der Präsenzwelt schon keine Wertschätzung ausgesprochen hat, dann wird sie das in der hybriden Welt nicht machen oder umgedreht. Und ich glaube, hier, wie gesagt, ist es eher ein Mindset Thema. Wie definiere ich für mich das Thema Führung? Wie definiere ich für mich das Thema Mitarbeiterwertschätzung, Förderung, Entwicklung der Mitarbeitenden. Das ist für mich der Aspekt, der aber keine Auswirkung auf das Thema Hybridität hat.

[0:23:01.1] **S1:** Okay. Und was würdest du oder wie berätst du Führungskräfte? Was würdest du sagen, welche Aspekte sollen Führungskräfte beachten, wenn sie hybrid führen? Also was würdest du sagen ist effektivitätsteigernd oder vielleicht auch mindernd, wovor man ein bisschen warnt? Gerade Führungskräfte, die jahrelang Präsenzkultur gewohnt sind, und dem vielleicht auch ein bisschen kritisch gegenüberstehen, was würdest du herausheben beim Thema hybrides führen?

[0:23:25.3] **S2:** Wichtig für das Thema hybrides führen wie aber auch führen in der Präsenzkultur sind halt einfach Ziele, die ich mit dem Team vereinbare. Regelmäßige Touchpoints vereinbare, wo ich die Ziele tracken kann, aber nicht in Form von kontrollieren, sondern eher zu sagen das ist der Weg, wo wir hinwollen. Was braucht ihr, um das Ziel zu erreichen? Eher auch locker transparent zu machen das ist Rolle der Führungskraft und dem Team, diese Themen nicht abzunehmen, aber zumindest den Weg versuchen zu ebnen, dass sie zum Ziel kommen und das Ziel erreichen. Und das kann ich sowohl in der Präsenzkultur als auch in der hybriden Welt. Und wichtig ist dabei aus meiner Sicht, regelmäßige Touchpoints mit den Mitarbeitenden zu haben, im Team wie auch in den Einzelgesprächen, um da nah dran zu sein und das Team sich nicht selbst zu überlassen, sondern das Team dabei zu unterstützen, erfolgreich zu sein.

[0:24:21.7] **S1:** Als Rückfrage noch mal: Sind das [hält inne] geht es da vor allen Dingen um die Regelmäßigkeit und das überhaupt Touchpoints stattfinden? Oder würdest du auch sagen virtuelle

Touchpoints oder eher Präsenz Touchpoints? Oder ist das wieder je nach Teamstruktur / Führungspersönlichkeit etc. zu gestalten?

[0:24:41.2] **S2:** Das ist aus meiner Sicht eine Zusammenarbeitsform, die das Team gemeinsam gestalten sollte mit der Führungskraft. Und da zählen für mich Präsenztermine sowohl als auch Remotetermine ein. Um aber eine gute Führungskraft zu sein, brauche ich nicht unbedingt Präsenztermine. Ich sollte mit meinem Team vereinbaren, was für sie wichtig ist, was sie für sich brauchen. Genau.

[0:25:06.0] **S1:** Okay, danke. Dann würde ich jetzt tatsächlich das Themenfeld so ein bisschen ändern wollen. Richtung Teamstruktur, auch Richtung Aufbau Orga. Frage wäre, inwiefern sich die Struktur - wirklich Aufbau Orga - in den Bereichen oder Teams im Haus, ich weiß, die sind auch sehr unterschiedlich, durch das hybride Arbeiten verändert hat? Ob du sagst, da gab es irgendwelche, vor allen Dingen eben durch das hybride Arbeiten begleitet, Transformationen/ Umstrukturierungen?

[0:25:49.9] **S2:** Ich würde nicht unbedingt sagen, dass hybrides Arbeiten eine Strukturänderung hervorrufen, sondern es für dieses Thema der Strukturänderung eher andere Herausforderungen gab, die mit der Strukturänderung gelöst wurden. Aber was das Thema Zusammenarbeit betrifft, finde ich, macht es die hybride Welt deutlich einfacher, weil beispielsweise, wenn ich jetzt auch mal auf Matrixstrukturen schaue, wenn ich für ein Produkt/ Projekt arbeite, dann ist es für mich einfacher, mich einfach in die Termine einzuwählen und Teil eines Teams zu sein, was hybrid zusammenarbeitet, als es möglicherweise in der Vergangenheit war. Ich musste mit meinem Stuhl nicht umziehen, ich musste nicht in ein anderes Büro wechseln, sondern ich wechsle halt einfach den Kanal, wenn ich so will. Oder ich gehe in einen anderen Termin hinein. Also zum Thema Zusammenarbeit oder virtuelle Zusammenarbeit ist dadurch einfacher geworden, ohne dabei tatsächlich mein Arbeitsort zu verändern, meine Führungskraft zu verändern oder mein Aufgabenpaket zu verändern.

[0:26:56.7] **S1:** Verstanden. Das ist ja quasi eine Verbindung: Hybrides Arbeiten hat auch einen positiven Einfluss auf Strukturen. Andersrum gefragt; würdest du sagen, dass Teamstrukturen einen Einfluss auf das Gelingen von hybridem Arbeiten haben? Und wenn ja, wie könnten diese Strukturen aussehen, also was ist da positiv/ negativ? Oder sagst du, das ist völlig unabhängig voneinander?

[0:27:21.2] **S2:** Aus meiner Sicht haben Teamstrukturen keine negativen Auswirkungen auf das hybride Arbeiten, weil es ist aus meiner Sicht wieder das Thema Mindset. Bin ich offen dem gegenüber, was brauche ich für eine Zusammenarbeit? Ich brauche Regeln für die Zusammenarbeit, die ich vorher als Team definiert habe. Egal wie meine Teamstruktur aussieht, ist es ein Produktteam? Ist es ein Prozessteam? Ist es ein hierarchisch geführtes Team? Ich brauche Regeln der Zusammenarbeit und die sind unabhängig davon, ob ich hybrid zusammenarbeite. Das wäre für mich eine Form der Vereinbarung – treffen wir uns immer in Präsenz und arbeiten unsere Themen Präsenz

ab oder arbeiten wir in einer hybriden Form zusammen, dass auch Kollegen dazugeschaltet werden? Und wir können uns trotzdem alle sehen in einem virtuellen Raum oder im Präsenzraum?

[0:28:11.9] **S1:** Okay, also letztlich geht es mehr um Absprachen zwecks Kommunikation und Kollaboration anstelle von wirklich reiner Aufbauorga/ organisatorischen Strukturen.

[0:28:24.5] **S2:** Die organisatorischen Strukturen bilden einen Rahmen, die bilden Leitplanken. Aber wie ich diese Leitplanken fülle, sind Regeln, die das Team vereinbaren muss, miteinander. Und das wiederum hat keine negativen Auswirkungen auf die hybride Zusammenarbeit, wenn das im Team definiert ist, wie sie zusammenarbeiten wollen.

[0:28:41.4] **S1:** [Nicken] Okay, perfekte Überleitung. Es soll nämlich jetzt um Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit gehen. Da die Eingangsfrage: Welche Aspekte werden an dich in deiner HR Rolle herangetragen, die sich im Hinblick auf die Kommunikation innerhalb der Teams, aber auch teamübergreifend innerhalb der Bereiche, durch das hybride Arbeiten verändert haben? Positiv wie negativ.

[0:29:07.2] **S2:** Es steht und fällt wie so oft mit dem Thema: Was habe ich für eine Führungskraft? Beobachte ich immer wieder. Und es gibt gerade auch in den aktuellen Zeiten, wo das Thema Kommunikation sehr, sehr wichtig ist und wo Kommunikation dazu beitragen kann; bin ich verunsichert oder bin ich nicht verunsichert, hat das schon einen sehr, sehr großen Aspekt. Und es gibt schon aus meiner Sicht, ich weiß jetzt keine konkreten Fälle, aber ich könnte mir vorstellen, dass es schon Mitarbeitende gibt, die sich auch abgehängt fühlen. Sieht man ja auch immer wieder im Pulse Check, dass sie sich halt nicht gut kommunikativ abgeholt fühlen, die dann gegebenenfalls im Flexwork sich darüber Gedanken machen wo stehe ich denn jetzt, wie geht es für mich weiter etc. Und wenn es da keine gute Einbindung im Rahmen der Kommunikationsthemen durch die Führungskraft gibt, dann hat es natürlich keine positive Auswirkung. Würde ich aber wieder in Frage stellen: Ist das anders, wenn ich dann in Präsenz bin? Weil wenn die Führungskraft keine gute Art der Kommunikation hat oder das nicht ihre Kernkompetenz ist, hat sie das sowohl in der hybriden Welt als auch in der Präsenzwelt nicht.

[0:30:23.7] **S1:** Okay und von der Kommunikation aus Richtung Zusammenarbeit geschaut. Was würdest du sagen, wie hat sich das im Haus verändert? Hat sich das überhaupt verändert durch das hybride Arbeiten, also auch da wieder innerhalb der Teams, aber auch vielleicht team übergreifend innerhalb der Bereiche? Gibt es da Veränderungen durchs hybride Arbeiten?

[0:30:48.3] **S2:** Ich würde sagen, nicht unbedingt durch das hybride Arbeiten, sondern durch veränderte Strukturen, die wir haben. Hat sich die Kommunikation verändert? Wenn ich jetzt auf die eine oder andere Matrix schaue, dann sind die Kommunikations Touchpoints auf jeden Fall mehr

geworden. Aus meiner Sicht unterstützt das hybride Arbeiten das eher. Also ich muss nicht mehr die Mitarbeitende alle im Büro haben, um mit ihnen in Austausch zu treten oder aber Meetingformate zu organisieren. Dort bin ich einfach flexibler. Wenn es halt darum geht, schnell die Leute zusammen zu rufen, dann kann ich das auch tun und sogar viel besser und schneller in der hybriden Welt, als wenn ich darauf warten muss, dass alle tatsächlich im Büro sind. [Hält inne] Also von daher eher positive Auswirkung. Wenn ich auch mal an unseren eigenen Bereich denke, wie schnell es jetzt möglich ist, uns alle für ein All Hands zusammen zu bekommen. Wir müssen alle nicht mehr im Büro sein, sondern dieses All Hands kann halt auch ad hoc mal stattfinden und wir brauchen nicht wochenlang, um dort einen gemeinsamen Termin zu finden.

[0:31:51.8] **S1:** [Nicken] Jetzt bei diesem ganzen Wechsel und auch fortlaufendem Arbeiten im hybriden Modell weg von der Präsenzkultur, gab es da irgendwelche Themen, die HR seitig begleitet wurden? Also Workshops oder grundsätzlich mehr Beratungsvolumen, was Ihr HR seitig begleiten oder proaktiv anregen musstet, abbilden musstet, vielleicht auch angefragt wurdet?

[0:32:22.2] **S2:** Also wir wurden schon häufiger angefragt, inwiefern wir beraten können, was das Thema Teamregeln betrifft. Also sprich braucht ein Team tatsächlich Teamregeln, kann ich als Führungskraft diese nicht vorgeben. Und da ist dann schon wichtig, dass wir aus unserer Beratungsrolle heraus dort auch die Führungskräfte befähigen, dass es nicht darum geht, dass die Führungskraft Regeln vorgibt, sondern dass es halt gemeinsam erarbeitet wird. Sowas wird ganz anders vom Team angenommen. Und da hat sich das Bild aus meiner Sicht schon verändert. Hat es einen Einfluss auf das Thema hybrides Arbeiten? Aus meiner Sicht ja, weil gerade auch das Thema hybrides Arbeiten braucht halt gewisse Regeln, an die sich das gesamte Team halt auch hält. Also sprich vielleicht als Beispiel genannt; es gibt halt die feste Regel, dass jeder im Team am JF teilnimmt. Die Jour Fixe werden moderiert, damit es auch zu einem Ergebnis kommt. Es wird ein Protokoll dazu geben. Der Moderator ist auch derjenige, der fürs Protokoll verantwortlich ist. Es werden Ergebnisse festgelegt. Also da gibt es schon mehr Regeln, als es das vor dem hybriden Arbeiten gab aus meiner Sicht.

[0:33:37.4] **S1:** Das waren jetzt die Aspekte, wo Bereiche vielleicht auch sagen wir, wie könnt ihr uns denn unterstützen, was könnt ihr mit anregen/ begleiten. Manche Bereiche sind ja sehr autark unterwegs. Gibt es da Themen, die du kennst, wo du sagst, Bereiche oder Teams haben selbstständig Veränderungen oder Anpassungen vorgenommen? Beispielsweise im Puncto Zusammenarbeit, Regeln, Erreichbarkeitszeiten usw. Weitere Bespiele in den Betreuungsbereichen; können auch Negativbeispiele oder eben sehr gesteuerte/ regulierte Beispiele sein.

[0:34:22.3] **S2:** [Nicken] Also ich weiß, dass so in diesen Einheiten, die beispielsweise das Thema Kundenbetreuung oder Ansprechpartner im Team sicherstellen, dass die sich schon darauf einteilen,

dass sie halt, weiß ich nicht eine Team Erreichbarkeit von beispielsweise acht bis 18:00 haben und sich dann darauf das Team in irgendeiner Form eingeteilt hat. Da gibt es schon einige Bereiche, die das halt sicherstellen. Es gibt ja Kolleginnen, die halt sehr gerne sehr früh arbeiten und es gibt halt Kollegen, die halt eine Weile brauchen, um in den Tag zu starten. Die haben dann halt die Abdeckung oder die Erreichbarkeit eher zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt. Aber das würde ich tatsächlich sagen, gab es aus meiner Sicht auch schon vor dem hybriden Arbeiten. Aber jetzt gestaltet sich das natürlich noch ein bisschen einfacher, weil ich die Reisezeit nicht mehr habe.

[0:35:12.1] **S1:** Ja, gibt es auch Bereiche, die das nachträglich, also jetzt mit dem hybriden Arbeiten eingeführt haben? Weil im Büro sieht man ja, wenn jemand dann auch wirklich arbeitsfähig ist, also in dem er vor Ort ist.

[0:35:29.9] **S2:** Kann ich dir tatsächlich nicht sagen. Habe ich noch nicht beobachtet. Sagen wir mal so.

[0:35:37.2] **S1:** Okay. Dann hätte ich noch eine vorletzte Frage: Ein wichtiges Thema vieler Mitarbeiter ist auch das Thema Partizipation, gerade in Entscheidungsfindungsprozessen usw. Würdest du sagen, dass sich da Veränderungen ergeben haben? Hat es sich erschwert/ vereinfacht, für die Mitarbeitenden an Entscheidungsfindungen zu partizipieren?

[0:36:11.8] **S2:** Ich finde, es hat sich deutlich verbessert, in Entscheidungsprozessen mit eingebunden zu werden. Und ich glaube auch vereinfacht, weil durch das hybride Arbeiten kriege ich halt wieder schneller auch diverse Workshops organisiert, weil ich nicht darauf angewiesen bin, ich brauche mich um keine Raumbuchung zu kümmern. Ich brauche mich nicht darum zu kümmern, dass alle tatsächlich vor Ort sind, sondern ich kann dort flexibler die Leute zusammenbringen. Das hat sich in jedem Fall verändert, einhergehend aus meiner Sicht auch mit der Weiterentwicklung der Arbeit. Weil, blicken wir zurück - vor dem Thema Weiterentwicklung der Arbeit im Rahmen von Digitalisierung oder auch von hybridem Arbeiten - war es ja eher wichtig, dass Führungskräfte die Entscheidung getroffen haben, und dann ist es halt top down passiert und alle mussten die Entscheidung irgendwie mittragen. Mittlerweile hat sich das auch weiterentwickelt, dass Partizipation sehr wichtig ist, weil auch erkannt wurde, auch das ist ein Mindset Thema, da haben Mitarbeiter daran partizipiert, an Entscheidungen oder an Weiterentwicklung von Themen, dann werden sie ganz anders angenommen und gelebt. Und ich glaube, das hat sich schon sehr stark verändert. Und auch durch die hybride Welt lässt sich das einfach besser umsetzen.

[0:37:31.5] **S1:** Okay, danke. Dann sind wir tatsächlich insofern am Ende des Interviews angekommen, dass ich dich abschließend nur gerne noch fragen würde, ob wir irgendetwas nicht behandelt haben, ob wir, ob du mir noch irgendwas mitgeben möchtest, was du für die Diskussion. Wie leistungsfähig sind wir im hybriden Arbeiten irgendwie noch mit ergänzen möchtest? Als offene

Frage zum Schluss - neben den Themen, an denen wir schon so vorbeigekommen sind wie Kommunikation, Kollaboration, Regelungen/ also Rahmenwerk, was HR auch vorgibt und Führung. Das waren so die großen Themenfelder. Irgendwas was du noch ergänzen willst, dir auf der Seele brennt oder wo du vielleicht auch sagst; ach, ich hätte gedacht, da kommt jetzt eine Frage.

[0:38:13.9] **S2:** Also was ich ganz wichtig finden, auch mit Blick darauf, dass ich die hybride Arbeit als sehr, sehr wichtig und sehr weiterführend finde, braucht es glaube ich trotzdem mehr Achtsamkeit bei dem Thema, weil wir durch dieses Hybride Arbeiten hat wie gesagt eine sehr hohe Taktung haben und ich glaube auch unser Hirn sehr überstrapazieren. Also sprich dieses, du bist halt immer an einem Muskel, den du bis zur Unendlichkeit strapazierst, ohne dort Ruhepausen zu gönnen. Und ich glaube, grundsätzlich ist das ein Thema wo die Organisation, auch die Gesellschaft, ein bisschen mehr drauf wieder achten sollte, dass es zu einer Normalität kommt, dass dadurch der Workload gegebenenfalls wieder reduziert wird oder gestrafft wird, weil die Erwartungshaltung, dass du prompt eine Antwort bekommst, dass du das Thema quasi in einem Service Level beantwortest, das halt glaube ich ganz schwer wieder zurückdrehbar ist. Aber dass wir halt nicht in die Gefahr laufen, dass dieses Thema hybrides Arbeiten wieder abgeschafft wird oder mit diesen ganzen Tools gemeinsam zu arbeiten, sondern dass es halt irgendwie einen Weg gibt, dass es so gewisse Regeln gibt, dass du, weiß ich nicht nur so und so viele Termine am Tag haben kannst oder was auch immer. Aber zumindestens, dass das Hirn die Möglichkeit hat, wieder so eine Art Ruhepausen zu haben. Also dieses Thema Achtsamkeit, tatsächlich Resilienz, was auch immer. Ich glaube, das ist ein ganz wichtiges Thema im Rahmen von Hybriden Arbeiten. [Nicken] Ja, habe ich auch letztens einen ganz spannenden Artikel gelesen, genau zu diesem Thema. Und da war eine sehr schöne Analogie verglichen mit dem Thema Fußballer versus Wissensarbeit. Das halt der Fußballer immer darauf achtet, im Rahmen seines Trainings diesen Muskel nicht überzustrapazieren, weil er sonst an Spieltagen nicht mehr leistungsfähig ist. Und das Thema Wissensarbeit, dass wir das Thema Hirn immer weiter strapazieren und uns wenig Ruhezeiten gönnen, sozusagen.

[0:40:33.3] **S1:** Was ja dann in absoluter Zukunftsperspektive die Produktivitäts- oder Effektivitätssteigerung, die wir gerade annehmen, leider Gottes irgendwann eher negativ beeinflussen würde.

[0:40:45.5] **S2:** Genau. [Nicken]

[0:40:48.1] **S1:** Vielen lieben Dank, Ulli. Dann würde ich aber so als Kernbotschaft mitnehmen - gib mir da gerne noch mal Feedback, ob ich das richtig zusammenfasse - ,dass es ganz viele positive Aspekte gibt. Im Wesentlichen sind es Mindset Fragen, ob das die Führungsrolle selber angeht, aber auch die Mitarbeitenden. Ob ich die Optionen, die mir auch eine virtuelle Zusammenarbeit bietet, eben beispielsweise auf mich aufmerksam zu machen, Ergebnisse zu liefern, andersrum als Führungskraft;

bin ich wertschätzend, hat nicht unbedingt was mit hybridem Arbeiten zu tun, sondern das kann ich in Präsenz sein, aber auch virtuell. Dass man das entsprechend für sich nutzt und diese positiven Rahmenbedingungen schafft. Das ist aber eben auch auf die Rahmenbedingungen ankommt. Es kommt auch auf Zusammenarbeitsformen an, gewisse Regeln mit Augenmaß und perspektivisch gerade hinten raus, der Aspekt der Achtsamkeit, der ja dauerhaften, ressourcenschonenden, eigentlich virtuellen Arbeit durch den erhöhten Workload. Das sind so die Kernfaktoren, die zwar gerade alle wie gesagt richtig austariert sehr positiv sind und um das aber eben dauerhaft auch positiv zu erhalten, muss man auch mal schauen, dass der Workload auch auf Dauer im Rahmen bleibt. Das würde ich mal so als Zusammenfassung aus unserem Gespräch auch mit sehr vielen positiven Aspekten, aber eben Mindset Fragen, mitnehmen.

[0:42:06.4] **S2:** Absolut. Ich hätte noch eine Ergänzung zum Thema Führung und Sichtbarkeit. Auch das ist, finde ich, ein ganz wichtiger Aspekt und unterstreicht auch das Thema, wie wichtig die Trennung von fachlicher und disziplinarischer Führung ist. Dass ich auch Mitarbeitenden habe, die eher sehr introvertiert sind und introvertiert gleich leise. Und dass ich davon wegkomme, dass nur weil jemand introvertiert und leise ist, er kein Leistungsträger ist, sondern eher nur die lauten. Also dass ich auch die Leisen sehe. Aber das ist für mich halt auch ein Mindset Thema. Das kann ich in der virtuellen Welt wie aber auch in der in der Präsenzwelt, wenn ich das richtige Mindset als Führungskraft habe. Aber auch das ist aus meiner Sicht wichtig, dass auch die leisen Kolleginnen gehört und gesehen werden.

[0:42:53.7] **S1:** [Nicken] Wahrscheinlich auch da sehr individuell. Dem einen kommt dann ein Präsenzmeeting tatsächlich auch entgegen und wer anders fühlt sich vielleicht in einem virtuellen Format auch noch ein bisschen wohler, je nach Thema. Okay. Gut. Vielen lieben Dank.

[0:43:07.9] **S2:** Genau. [Nicken]

[0:43:09.0] **S1:** Wie gesagt, sind wir tatsächlich am Ende. Haben wir gut gemanagt mit der Zeit. Danke für deine Zeit, dass du dir die genommen hast und deine Einblicke. Ich würde gleich die die Aufnahme beenden. Noch mal mit Blick nach vorn: Es gibt dann ein Transkript zu unserem Gespräch. Hier brauche ich sicherlich noch ein bisschen für bis das steht. Das würde ich dir dann auch noch mal schicken, dass du es dir, wenn du möchtest - es ist absolut kein Muss, aber wenn du möchtest - auch durchlesen kannst. Und wie gesagt, zu dem Zeitpunkt kannst du auch immer noch sagen „Oh Gott, ich möchte doch nicht mehr teilnehmen."

(..) Ausblick und Verabschiedung

Aufnahme beendet.

Appendix 2.6 German transcript of interview – employees

Interview im Rahmen des Forschungsprojektes
Teilnehmer*innen: Name des Teilnehmers, Annika Hesse
Datum des Interviews: 22.05.2024

(Aufnahme beginnt)

[0:00:00.0] **S1:** Wie besprochen würde ich gerne vorab mit dir einmal zu zwei Begriffsdefinitionen sprechen. Damit wir dasselbe Verständnis haben und dazu würde ich gerne einmal mit dem Thema organisationale Leistung starten: In meinem Forschungsprojekt geht es ja wie erläutert um Einflussfaktoren und auch Implikationen von hybrider Arbeit auf die übergeordnete organisationale Leistung und Achtung; das wird jetzt sehr wissenschaftlich formell. Aber in der Theorie und in Vorstudien spricht man bei organisationaler Leistung von einem multidimensionalen Konstrukt, also etwas, was durch verschiedene Kennzahlen/ Messgrößen bestimmt wird und was letztlich bestimmen soll, inwiefern die Organisation mit ihren Akteuren und Strukturen - also wirklich übergeordnet - möglichst performant ist und zur Zielerreichung des Unternehmens beiträgt. Mir ist an der Stelle noch mal ganz wichtig; es geht wirklich um diese übergeordnete Komponente. So das wissenschaftliche Verständnis. Würdest du der Definition zustimmen? Fehlt dir da noch irgendwas?

[0:01:14.5] **S2:** Passt sehr gut.

[0:01:15.0] **S1:** Dann jetzt ganz persönliche Frage und Meinung: Welchen Einfluss haben denn deiner Meinung nach Mitarbeitende auf die organisationale Leistung?

[0:01:37.7] **S2:** Na ja, ich finde das Wichtigste ist ja erst mal die Einstellung. Das heißt wie stehe ich zum Unternehmen, wie viel Spaß macht mir meine Arbeit, wie sind meine Kollegen. Also das habe ich aus jahrelanger Erfahrung mitgenommen. Das ist eigentlich das Wichtigste, dass man diesen Job gerne macht, dafür brennt und mit den Kollegen auch gut klar kommt. Und alles andere ergibt sich. Da kann drei, vier Mal umstrukturiert werden. Das muss meiner Meinung nach passen. Und natürlich, dass man vielleicht auch, ich meine, das ist jetzt auch so ein Thema; früher war es halt wichtig, wo ist mein Arbeitsplatz, wo sitze ich, wo ist mein Schreibtisch, wo ist mein Container, das ist ja jetzt alles nicht mehr. Da zählen dann so Dinge wie zum Beispiel kann ich im Homeoffice arbeiten? Kann ich das flexibel für mich nutzen? Ich glaube, das sind so neue Sachen, aber dieses Arbeitsumfeld muss halt passen, finde ich. Ja, also für mich zumindest.

[0:02:36.8] **S1:** Okay, das wären jetzt Aspekte, die für dich wichtig sind um performant zu sein, richtig? [Nicken S2] Aber grundsätzlich würdest du auch sagen, dass Mitarbeitende einen Einfluss auf den Unternehmenserfolg haben?

[0:02:43.7] **S2:** Auf alle Fälle. Ja, klar.

[0:02:45.6] **S1:** Okay. Gut, dann haben wir das Thema organisationale Leistung so als Begrifflichkeit schon mal abgehakt. Dann noch mal kurz zum Thema hybrides Arbeiten, bevor wir dann richtig einsteigen [Nicken S2] Wenn ich über das hybride Arbeiten spreche, verstehe ich dabei die Kombination aus der Arbeit von zu Hause, viele sagen ja auch Homeoffice, und von vor Ort im Büro. Also es geht mir bewusst nicht um dieses dauerhafte Arbeiten, was ja teilweise in der Hochphase von Corona auch gesetzlich flächendeckend angeordnet war, sondern vielmehr um die neue Arbeitswelt, also alles, was danach entstanden ist und in der Phase, in der wir uns aktuell befinden. Das kurz vorab und dann die Eingangsfrage an dich, ob du mir mal einen Einblick geben kannst, wie dein hybrides Arbeitsmodell aussieht, wie oft du so im Büro bist, wie oft du von zu Hause arbeitest?

[0:03:33.7] **S2:** Ja. Also bei mir ist es so, dass es wirklich dadurch, dass ich [hält inne] das hängt ja doch mit Corona zusammen. Also das ganze Thema hat ja in der DKB nochmal Fahrt aufgenommen, das heißt, wir haben ja vorher schon angefangen vor Coruna flexibel zu arbeiten. Aus dem Cafe, von zu Hause, das war ein riesen Aufschrei. Das muss man natürlich alles erst mal organisieren. Also nicht nur rein IT technisch, sondern auch, dass man sich untereinander abstimmt. Da nahm das so ein bisschen Fahrt auf und durch Coruna ist das natürlich noch mal mehr geworden, weil wir dann komplett von zu Hause aus arbeiten durften. Dadurch habe ich damals oder ich mit meinem Mann beschlossen wir ziehen aus Berlin weg, wir ziehen zurück in die Heimat, weil dadurch ist halt die Möglichkeit gegeben. Ich muss ja jetzt nicht jeden Tag mit dem Zug rein und das ist bei mir eben der Grund - ich habe einen ziemlich weiten Anfahrtsweg, also von mindestens anderthalb Stunden. Und wir haben die Regelung bei uns so im Team oder im Fachbereich, dass wir sagen, es gibt einen festen Tag in der Woche, da sollten alle da sein. Zum Team Jour Fixe, dass wir auch alle mal zusammensitzen und uns zusammenfinden. Das ist Dienstag jede Woche. Letztes Jahr war das noch flexibel. Einmal war es Dienstag, einmal Mittwoch, einmal Donnerstag; ist natürlich dann auch herausfordernd, dass immer wieder so einzutakten. Jetzt ist Dienstag fix. Das heißt, ich fahre eigentlich nur Dienstag rein. Also es sei denn, es ist jetzt irgendwas. Wir hatten jetzt eine wichtige Prüfung, dann war ich auch mal mehrere Tage da, aber in der Regel ist es Dienstag.

[0:04:57.9] **S1:** Okay, aber einmal wöchentlich fahrt ihr wirklich rein? [Nicken S2] Okay. Und würdest du sagen, das klappt ganz gut? Also halten sich da auch alle/ viele dran?

[0:05:08.7] **S2:** Ja, also was den Austausch angeht, klappt das sehr gut. Es ist jetzt halt nur kein effizienter Arbeitstag. Ja, aber das muss man ja auf die gesamte Woche sehen. Ich glaube, früher hat

man halt sich öfter gesehen und geschnattert. Man muss sich auch daran gewöhnen, wieder im Büro zu sitzen mit drei, vier Leuten. Wir haben ja auch die Termine, die sind ja teilweise immer noch virtuell und also nur weil ich vor Ort bin, habe ich ja dann mit anderen Leuten Termine, muss man sich halt irgendwie dann organisieren. Ja.

[0:05:35.6] **S1:** Okay, dann ganz andere Frage: Ist auch nicht schlimm, wenn du jetzt sagst, da ist dir nichts bekannt. Sind dir HR seitig Vorgaben bekannt, die das hybride Arbeiten regeln?

[0:05:53.3] **S2:** Nein. Aber das Thema mit dieser Anwesenheit pro Woche ist jetzt auch keine Pflicht. Aber es wird gewünscht und da weiß ich auch nicht, wo das herkommt. Es ist halt so die Frage, weil ich denke dann auch manchmal, na ja, bei vielen geht dann Dienstag plötzlich nicht, keine Ahnung. Kinder müssen zum Sport oder so könnte, ich auch Mittwoch reinkommen. Aber es bringt mir ja nichts, weil die anderen auch nicht da sind. Es ist also auch so ein bisschen abgestimmt auf den Kalender. Wir sollen uns ja vorher eintragen. Das heißt, eigentlich ist der Mittwoch dann anderen Fachbereichen vorbehalten. Also so Sachen, wo das jetzt herkommt, keine Ahnung. Und ich weiß auch, dass das schon überprüft wird bei uns, ob wir da sind oder nicht. Also wenn ich jetzt drei Wochen nicht da wäre..

[0:06:39.1] **S1:** Inwiefern wird das überprüft? Also wer überprüft das?

[0:06:42.4] **S2:** Na ja, das kommt dann vom Chef. Das ist so eine Kultur, die sich ergeben hat. Also eigentlich ist ja so, wenn ich jetzt nicht reinkomme, müsste ich ja gar nichts schreiben, außer wir haben an dem Tag auch Jour Fixe, dann nehmt mich halt remote dazu. Aber viele schreiben dann halt, ich komme nicht rein, weil ich Schnupfen habe oder ich komme nicht rein, weil mein Kind krank ist. Also man fühlt sich immer genötigt irgendwas zu sagen. Also sich zu rechtfertigen. Zumindest ist es so, mich hat jetzt noch keiner persönlich angesprochen, aber ich habe dann halt auch mal gesagt, da waren zwei Wochen hintereinander, es ging wirklich nicht anders. Habe auch gefragt und meine Chefin meinte; ja, ist okay, wenn du das vorher sagst, aber damit merkst du ja schon, du musst dich schon irgendwie rechtfertigen.

[0:07:23.0] **S1:** Okay, verstanden.

[0:07:25.4] **S2:** Ja.

[0:07:27.5] **S1:** Ganz allgemein gefragt: Wie empfindest du denn das Arbeiten in dieser hybriden Form?

[0:07:40.6] **S2:** Ich persönlich finde es super. Ich arbeite jetzt ja auch schon seit 2008 in der Bank, habe jetzt auch schon einige Jahre miterlebt, wo die Kinder noch klein waren. Jetzt sind [hält inne] ich habe Zwillinge, sind jetzt zehn. Am Anfang hätte mir das glaube ich super geholfen und diese stressige Zeit; also ich sehe das auch bei meinen Kollegen jetzt, das ist schon ein Vorteil. Man kann sich besser

organisieren. Ich habe auch mein eigenes Büro zu Hause, muss ich sagen. Also ich sitze jetzt nicht irgendwo am Esstisch, das macht ja auch was aus. Das heißt, ich gehe in mein Büro, mein Mann geht in sein Büro, wir essen zusammen gegen 12:00. Ich kann meinen Tag anders gestalten. Ich kann früh noch mal Sport machen. Das wäre vorher gar nicht gegangen. Also dieser Stress, schon allein für mich, immer mit der Bahn zu fahren, das ist ja in Berlin schon gestresst, wenn du auf Arbeit ankommst. Und ich genieße das auch mal wieder reinzufahren. Aber diese negativen Aspekte sind alle weggefallen und auch gerade wenn mal ein Kind krank ist, ist ja jetzt nicht mehr so, aber man kann eben anders agieren. Das war ja früher wirklich so, da hast du überlegt, wer bleibt zu Hause? Das gab es halt nicht. Jetzt kannst du zu Hause bleiben, wenn das Kind nicht doll krank ist und irgendwie noch arbeiten. Hat auch wieder andere Nachteile. Aber ich, also für mich persönlich, mir tut es mental auch total gut.

[0:08:53.0] **S1:** Das klingt gut. Was würdest du sagen, was für einen Einfluss hat dieses hybride Arbeiten auf deine Leistung? Also viele sagen ja, sie sind irgendwie produktiver, weniger produktiv jetzt auch im Vergleich zu vor Corona. Gleichbleibend? Wie würdest du das so einschätzen?

[0:09:10.8] **S2:** Also ich würde sagen gleichbleibend. Wenn es dann aber so Phasen gibt wie jetzt diese Prüfung, die wir hatten, da kannst du zu Hause mehr leisten. Dann liest du das erstmal in Ruhe und das ist ja der Job, den wir machen, da musst du dich ja wirklich konzentrieren. Du musst dich reinlesen, du musst irgendwas rechnen. Also das bringt halt nichts, wenn du da so eine Geräuschkulisse hast. Ja und was halt ist, ich kann auch mal Abends arbeiten. Also ich kann dann auch mal eine Überstunde machen oder irgendwas. Ich finde, wenn ich verglichen mit früher [hält inne] dann bin ich halt nach Hause gefahren, ne? Und dann gab es ja zu Hause nichts. Ist vielleicht jetzt auch ein Aspekt. Es gibt auch Kollegen, die glaube ich, immer noch nicht von zu Hause arbeiten, das sind ganz wenige, aber gibt es. Also ist schwierig, dann kannst du halt nicht leisten. Also man ist ja auch für den Arbeitgeber immer verfügbar, wenn man so will. Ob man das jetzt macht oder ausnutzt, sei jetzt dahingestellt, aber das ist was anderes. Ob man effizienter ist? Glaube ich schon.

[0:10:13.9] **S1:** Okay. Dann würde ich jetzt tatsächlich gerne mit dir mal mehr über das Thema Führung sprechen. Auch da immer die ja, je nachdem was du antworten möchtest oder ob du überhaupt Beispiele hast. Für viele war es ja manchmal auch verbunden mit einem Wechsel von Führungskräften. Aber würdest du sagen, es hat sich an dem Führungsstil bzw an der Zusammenarbeit mit deiner direkten Führungskraft durch das hybride Arbeiten irgendwas verändert?

[0:10:47.5] **S2:** Ja ein schwieriges Thema, weil ich mit meiner Führungskraft neu gestartet bin. In dieses Hybride arbeiten. Ansonsten würde ich sagen [hält inne] wenn ich mir überlege mit meinem alten Chef davor, da bin ich dann reingegangen, das hat sich schon verändert. Also erstmal muss sich die Führungskraft erstmal neu, glaube ich, ausrichten. Weil das merke ich schon, du siehst dich halt

nicht. Also entweder ruf ich an oder sie ruft an. Wir haben ja auch regelmäßig Jour Fixe, also noch mal Einzel Jour Fixe in der Woche, wo man sich auf alle Fälle trifft. Jetzt muss man dazu sagen, dass ich mit meiner Führungskraft sehr eng miteinander arbeite. Also wir hören uns fast jeden Tag, kannst du sagen. Gut, das ist ja jetzt auf Teamleiter Ebene. Auf Fachbereichsleiterebene wurde das dann schon ein bisschen dünner und die sieht man dann halt nicht. Ich meine, es war schon vorher so, wenn die ihre Termine haben, die flitzen über den Flur und sagen Guten Morgen. Hatte man vorher auch keinen Kontakt, aber ich würde sagen also im Team auch so allgemein mit den anderen Kollegen hat man viel Kontakt.

[0:11:57.1] **S1:** Okay, aber das klingt ja positiv, denn man hört auch oft, dass es sich negativ verändert hat und dass man sich nicht mehr so oft hört. Manch einer ist, vielleicht auch Typfrage, total isoliert im Homeoffice ohne soziale Kontakte. Das klingt bei euch jetzt nicht so, aber auch bedingt durch gewisse Formate, wo man dann eh seine Touchpoints hat.

[0:12:14.2] **S2:** Wir hatten auch eine Kollegin, die hat dann damals auch aufgehört. Das habe ich aber nicht mehr miterlebt. Die war wirklich allein und es macht auch noch was aus, wenn du keine Familie zu Hause hast, gezwungen bist in Corona zu Hause, ne? Und es ist typenabhängig, da hast du vollkommen recht. Ich kann heutzutage per Teams schreiben, per Outlook schreiben oder ich nehme einfach mal den Hörer in die Hand und rufe mal schnell durch. Mich fragen ja auch viele, die vor Ort arbeiten; geht doch gar nicht remote und so, das ist doch viel zu unpersönlich. Aber man sieht sich ja. Also ich habe mich total daran gewöhnt. Klar ist was anderes, wenn du den live siehst, im Kleid, im Anzug oder was auch immer. Das ist schon mal schön. Auch jemand so mitzubekommen, aber ich finde das nicht schlimm. Also man sieht sich ja das. Habe ich mich dran gewöhnt? Ja.

[0:13:02.6] **S1:** Würdest du sagen, jetzt bist du ja auch schon lange in der Bank, dass es auch von Vorteil ist , wen man schon eine Vertrauensbasis/ Beziehung zu den anderen Kollegen auch von früher hatte, wo alle immer im Büro waren?

[0:13:24.7] **S2:** Definitiv ja. Also wenn man jetzt neu reinkommt, alle nicht kennt.. Onboarding virtuell, dann fühlt sich das vielleicht auch noch mal ein bisschen distanzierter an? Definitiv das. Da reden wir so bestimmt einmal die Woche so untereinander, also mit den Kollegen drüber. Und das glaube ich schon, weil wir haben auch viele Werkstudenten und so, ich weiß nicht, ob die da so reinkommen. Kann ich dir auch nicht sagen, aber mein Gefühl ist, dass ich definitiv einen Vorteil habe. Ich kenne auch ganz viele in der Bank. Ich scheue mich nicht, irgendjemanden anzurufen. Das ist natürlich was anderes. Man hat nur eine Ebene geändert. Aber letztendlich hast du die Kontakte, wenn du sie pflegst.

[0:13:50.1] **S1:** Okay. [Husten] Entschuldigung. Dann würde ich jetzt gerne tatsächlich noch mal über das Thema Workload und Überstunden sprechen. Da vielleicht noch mal in der Abgrenzung: Wenn ich

von Workload spreche, meine ich Arbeitspakete; was habe ich alles auf dem Tisch, was gibt man mir vielleicht noch irgendwie rüber. Das kann auch mentaler Workload sein. Und dann danach noch mal bei Überstunden wirklich die reinen Arbeitsstunden. Dann als Eingangsfrage: Welche Auswirkungen hat denn das hybride Arbeiten auf deinen Workload? (6)

[0:14:28.0] **S2:** Also direkt auf das Thema Überstunden bezogen, weiß ich gar nicht, ob es jetzt an dem hybriden Arbeiten liegt. Ich habe auf alle Fälle mehr Überstunden als früher. Ich bin aber auch immer noch in Teilzeit, bin aber auch hochgegangen irgendwann mal. Also ich würde schon sagen, ich mache mehr Überstunden. Es liegt aber auch daran, dass mir die Arbeit Spaß macht. So blöd wie es klingt, muss man natürlich ein bisschen aufpassen, ist ja trotzdem Arbeit und trotzdem Stress. Also auch Familienzeit, die verloren geht. Für mich ist aber immer noch das Thema, dass man ja auch zumindest die Überstunden abbummeln kann. War jetzt ein bisschen schwierig, weil wir gerade eine Prüfung hatten, da ging es nicht. Aber ich habe das jetzt auch zeitnah nachgeholt, weil ich weiß wie wichtig das für einen selber ist. Auch, dass man da mental gesund bleibt. Und insofern finde ich es nicht schlimm.

[0:15:23.3] **S1:** Woran liegt das, dass du mehr Überstunden machst? Du hast vorhin gesagt, der Laptop ist ja auch zu Hause; man hat auch die Möglichkeit abends den Laptop aufzuklappen, oder wie ist das mit mit deinen Fahrzeiten? Gerade viele, die so lange Zugfahrten haben, arbeitest du da schon?

[0:15:38.6] **S2:** Ich arbeite eigentlich schon in der Bahn. Ich mache mir ehrlich gesagt darüber keine Gedanken. Also es ist so, ich fange früh an - ist ja nicht wie früher, da fährst du hin und wusstest, du haust um 17:00 ab, weil die Kinder abholen musst.

[0:15:51.6] **S1:** Ja.

[0:15:52.1] **S2:** Jetzt ist halt so ich arbeite. Und wenn ich dann noch Zeit habe, dann arbeite ich halt weiter. Viele Kollegen wissen auch gar nicht, dass ich nur 30 Stunden arbeite. Die rufen dann halt um 17:00 noch mal an, das ist so ein bisschen schwierig, das irgendwie den Leuten zu sagen. Aber ich muss ja nicht rangehen, weil ich kann mich ja auf abwesend stellen. Gut, das hält manche immer noch nicht ab. [Lachen] Aber eigentlich passieren diese Überstunden nur, wenn wirklich ein Paket gerade ansteht, wie zum Beispiel diese Prüfung. Die war super wichtig. Wir haben aber auch schon vor der Prüfung Berichte schreiben müssen. Das war also [hält inne] es geht eigentlich schon seit anderthalb Jahren, dass das wichtig ist. Und jetzt gerade? Sortieren wir uns neu und bummeln die Überstunden ab. Also jetzt kann man mal so ein bisschen durchatmen. Das ist in unserem Fachbereich ziemlich schwierig gewesen, weil wir wirklich immer wieder so eine Riesenpakete hatten. Also ich glaube, bei anderen Kollegen ist es wahrscheinlich schlimmer als bei mir. Aber ich bin bisher mit meiner Arbeitszeit so klar gekommen und das sind jetzt auch nicht massig Überstunden. Also dass die aus dem Ruder laufen.

[0:16:52.0] **S1:** Hält sich noch im Rahmen?

[0:16:53.3] **S2:** Würde ich schon sagen. Ja.

[0:16:55.0] **S1:** Und reiner Workload? Wenn man jetzt so an Arbeitspakete denkt? Viele berichten auch; wir sind alle nur durchgetaktet in Teams Meetings – gerade im Vergleich zu früher, wo man mindestens mal in Berlin zwischen der Taubenstraße und Charlotte auch Wegezeiten zwischen Meetings hatte, zum Beispiel.

[0:17:24.5] **S2:** Also ich würde sagen, ich schaff mehr. Ja, wir haben viel auf dem Tisch, aber es lässt sich [hält inne] also die Termine, finde ich, sind auch okay. Wir haben einen Jour Fix die Woche mit dem Team und einen Einzel Jour Fixe, finde ich persönlich okay. Was meine Chefin sagt, weiß ich nicht, die wird wahrscheinlich, die muss ja mit jedem diese Show führen. Ist natürlich was anderes, aber ist ja auch ihre Aufgabe. Aber für mich ist das okay. Also ich habe jetzt nicht das Gefühl, dass das zu viel ist, dass zu viel auf dem Tisch liegt. Noch schaffe ich das sehr gut. Und wenn, dann ist es so, das hat jetzt auch nichts mit dem hybriden Arbeiten zu, dann muss man das auch sagen. Jetzt ist es bei anderen Kollegen anders. Wir stimmen uns schon untereinander ab. Also wenn wenn was ist, soll ich halt auch sagen, wenn es zu viel ist. Hatte ich bisher einmal, da hat eine Kollegin auch während der Prüfung meine Arbeit mit gemacht, damit ich das nicht machen muss und so. Also es klappt alles.

[0:18:24.5] **S1:** Klingt ja gut und gesund. Okay,Thema Sichtbarkeit und Wertschätzung: Hat sich da irgendwas durchs hybride Arbeiten verändert? Fühlst du dich durch deine Führungskraft gesehen/ gewertschätzt?

[0:18:38.7] **S2:** Durch meine direkte Führungskraft? Ja. [Nicken]

[0:18:42.3] **S1:** Und Fachbereichsleitung zum Beispiel?

[0:18:44.9] **S2:** Ja, die sind gefühlt noch weiter weg als vorher, weil man sie wirklich nicht sieht. Also es sei denn, es sind brennende Themen, dann sind sie halt auch mit im Termin drin. Aber meistens erfolgt das ja auf unser prozessualen Arbeitsebene. Das heißt, ich habe eigentlich wirklich wenig Kontakt zur Fachbereichsleitung oder zum Bereichsleiter und das war schon früher anders. Und wenn man sich nur auf dem Flur getroffen hat auf einen Schnack, das fällt weg. Mich stört es jetzt nicht, aber wenn es jetzt darum geht, sich auch mal zu profilieren oder zu zeigen, was man kann, ist schwierig.

[0:19:18.4] **S1:** Also habt ihr da auch keine regelmäßigen Termine oder so mit der Ebene?

[0:19:22.7] **S2:** Naja, wir haben so einen Bereichs JF, da sind dann 70 Leute drin. Das haben wir auch alle zwei Wochen. Da spricht aber auch nur die Fachbereichsleiterin im Jour Fixe. Im Team ist es anders. Da sagt ja so jeder so ein bisschen, was er macht, was er gerade auf dem Tisch hat, was er für

Probleme hat, so das was wirklich auffällt, was wirklich wichtig ist. Und da kriegst du schon mit, was die anderen auch machen und kriegst auch von anderen was mit. Das finde ich halt besser im Fachbereich. Aber ich weiß nicht, ob die Fachbereichsleiterin weiß, was ich den ganzen Tag mache. Muss sie ja nicht im Detail, aber ich glaube nicht.

[0:20:02.4] **S1:** Okay, verstanden. Dann würde ich gern noch mal kurz über das Thema Teamstruktur sprechen und danach über Kommunikation und so kollaboratives Zusammenarbeiten. Dann wären wir tatsächlich mit den großen Themenblöcken auch schon durch. Zum Thema Teamstruktur: Hat sich das Arbeiten bei euch im Team durch das hybride Arbeiten verändert?

[0:20:33.3] **S2:** Das kann ich dir nicht mal sagen, da müsste ich jetzt überlegen. Also gefühlt nicht.

[0:20:39.7] **S1:** Okay. Und kannst du mir noch mal ein paar Einblicke geben, wie euer Team aufgebaut ist? Also arbeitet ihr rein in der Linie? Habt ihr noch irgendwelche crossfunktionalen Strukturen, Projekte?

[0:20:50.4] **S2:** Genau. Also wir hatten ein Projekt, das ist ja jetzt abgeschlossen, aber jeder hatte halt seinen normalen Job und nebenbei noch ein Projekt. Dieses Projekt hat aber 80 % der Arbeitszeit eingenommen, kannst du sagen, weil das, was wir im Projekt gemacht haben, auch wiederum die Arbeit ist, die wir jetzt weiterführen. Das hat sich so ein bisschen vermischt. Also wir hatten viele Kollegen, die in diesem Projekt drin waren, nicht alle, aber ich würd mal so sagen, 80 %, also eigentlich war das Projekt unsere Hauptaufgabe in den letzten Jahren. Und das ist auch noch mal was anderes. Arbeitest ja auch anders, weil du eben zu einer gewissen Zeit liefern musst.

[0:21:29.4] **S1:** Absolut, ja. Okay, aber sonst habt ihr keine große Umstrukturierung oder ähnliches durchlebt?

[0:21:37.2] **S2:** Das war alles vorher. Seitdem? Nee. Und ich überlege ob die Aufteilung jetzt anders ist? Ne, kann ich jetzt auch nicht sagen. Eigentlich macht jeder seinen Job so wie er vorher gedacht war. Genau. Aber die Umstrukturierung war vor Corona.

[0:22:01.1] **S1:** Dann würde ich jetzt auch mal annehmen, wenn das vorher war und auch durchs hybride Arbeiten jetzt kein Bedarf war, das noch mal anzupassen, würde ich erst mal davon ausgehen, dass das hybride Arbeiten keine Auswirkungen auf eure Strukturen hatte? So rum gedacht.

[0:22:14.8] **S2:** So rum nicht.

[0:22:15.9] **S1:** Okay, gut, Teamstruktur geht auch immer fix. Gefühlt sind die meisten Umstrukturierungen in der DKB nicht durchs hybride Arbeiten gekommen.

[0:22:26.8] **S2:** Ja, genau.

[0:22:29.8] **S1:** Dann sind wir schon beim Thema Kommunikation und Kollaboration. Nimmst du irgendwelche Auswirkungen durch das hybride Arbeiten auf eure Kommunikation im Team wahr? Was hat sich da so geändert? Das können Tools sein, das können irgendwelche Abstimmungen sein. Was hat sich so in eurer Kommunikation geändert? Oder ist alles wie immer, wie früher?

[0:23:01.6] **S2:** Ich überlege gerade, wie es früher war. Also klar, früher hat auch jeder seinen Job gemacht und ist dann, wenn irgendwas war, ins nächste Büro gegangen. Jetzt nehme ich halt den Hörer in die Hand oder schreibe kurz; wann können wir telefonieren? Es läuft eigentlich immer auf ein Telefonat hinaus, es sei denn, ich muss was verschriftlichen. Dann hätte ich es aber auf Arbeit, also vor Ort auch gemacht, dass man es irgendwie safe hat. Aber an sich, manchmal muss man sich an die eigene Nase fassen, das gebe ich zu, dass man auch so eher den Kontakt hält. Manchmal verabrede ich mich auf einen Kaffee oder irgendwas. Ich denke dann immer, ich habe eigentlich gar keine Zeit dafür, aber ja, das ist halt auch wichtig, gerade mit mit jüngeren Kollegen auch mal sich auszutauschen, sie kennenzulernen. Das ich das einmal die Woche irgendwie zumindestens mache. Dann suchst du dir natürlich auch nur die Leute raus, die du besonders magst. Das ist immer so.

[0:23:55.0] **S1:** Wäre aber glaube ich früher auch so gewesen.

[0:23:57.5] **S2:** Ja, genau. Was vielleicht schon noch mal was anderes ist: Du bist immer nur bilateral unterwegs, ne? Wenn du auf dem Flur geschnattert hast, hören ja immer noch fünf Leute zu.

[0:24:07.3] **S1:** Stimmt. [Nicken]

[0:24:08.4] **S2:** Weiß ich nicht, ob das ein Thema ist, Aber mir fehlt das nicht. Daran kann man sich ja halt auch gewöhnen, glaube ich.

[0:24:18.4] **S1:** Okay. Und puncto Zusammenarbeit. Was hat sich da geändert? Habt ihr zum Beispiel auch irgendwelche Zusammenarbeitsregeln, irgendwelche Erreichbarkeitszeiten? Hast du da noch Einblicke für mich?

[0:24:39.4] **S2:** Naja, also Erreichbarkeit ist schwierig, weil wir kaum irgendwie Leute haben, die uns anrufen. Das war früher schlimmer, da haben viele aus den Standorten angerufen. Das geht aber wenn ich jetzt nur mit meinen 30 Stunden arbeite, stelle ich nicht das Telefon am Abend um. Ja, also weiß ich nicht. Dann ruft vielleicht jemand um 16:00 an, aber der kann auch bis morgen warten. Also so kriegsentscheidend ist das jetzt bei mir nicht. Aber wenn wir jetzt im Urlaub sind, klar, das hatten wir ja vorher auch. Vertretungsregelungen, über Telefon umgestellt, so Sachen.

[0:25:13.0] **S1:** Habt ihr Regelungen zwecks Ablage und so? Also weiß jeder, wie man jetzt mit OneDrive und Teams und so arbeitet? Weißt du, zum Beispiel, was deine anderen Kolleg*innen machen oder macht jeder seine Spezialistenfunktion, dass man das eigentlich auch gar nicht so wissen muss?

[0:25:39.6] **S2:** Ne, das einzige [hält inne] wir haben auf der Confluence Seite unser Jour Fixe, da wird alles halt eingetragen. Also erstmal was wir so an Themen haben, was jetzt so vom Team her besprochen wird, so dass man das aus den letzten Wochen noch mal Revue passieren lassen kann. Ansonsten haben wir eine Ordnerstruktur, die haben wir irgendwann mal entwickelt. Die ist aber auch nur in bestimmten Themenbereichen wichtig, dass du wirklich Ordner 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in der gleichen Reihenfolge hast. Ansonsten gleiche Ordnerstruktur wie vorher, wo man sich halt überlegt hat, was ist sinnvoll?

[0:26:14.6] **S1:** Arbeitest du viel mit deinem persönlichen OneDrive oder legt ihr immer alles irgendwo ab, dass jeder darauf Zugriff hätte?

[0:26:24.5] **S2:** Grundsätzlich hat ja jeder Zugriff auf die Ordner. Aber halt nicht über OneDrive. Dann geben wir schon eine Berechtigung für den Ordner. Das ist dann so, wenn wir Abstimmungen haben oder so, dann nutzen wir OneDrive, das jeder unterschreiben kann, dann wird das schon so initiiert. Aber es könnte mehr sein.

[0:26:48.9] **S1:** Okay. Was benötigst du von deinen Teamkollegen, um deine Arbeit erfolgreich umzusetzen?

[0:27:04.8] **S2:** Meinst du jetzt inhaltlich, was ich brauche?

[0:27:07.6] **S1:** Sowohl als auch. Was benötigst du von deinen Kollegen? Das kann auch zwischenmenschlich sein. Brauchst du eine gute Basis? Wie auch immer.

[0:27:18.0] **S2:** Verlässlichkeit und Verbindlichkeit, dass sich derjenige auch meldet. Das war aber schon immer so. Es gibt eben Bereiche, da schreibst du, da kriegst du zwei Wochen keine Antwort. Das finde ich schwierig. Komme ich auch mit klar, aber muss halt immer wieder hinterher. Das finde ich in der engen Zusammenarbeit total wichtig, dass man eben weiß, derjenige meldet dann was zurück oder ich kriege eine Antwort, auch eine ehrliche Antwort. Ich weiß es nicht oder ich weiß es. Das finde ich ganz wichtig. Und ansonsten haben wir halt auch das Thema auf der Arbeit geschuldet, dass ich viele Kollegen mit anrufen muss, dass wir irgendwas auswerten müssen oder so und da weiß ich schon, den kann ich anrufen, der kann mir das heute machen, der andere kann das morgen machen. Also jeder ist so ein bisschen vom anderen abhängig. Auch gerade die jungen Kollegen rufen mich oft an und fragen Mensch, wie ist denn das? Kannst du mir das zeigen? Weil sie halt schon noch von mir lernen müssen. Und das finde ich, ist aber ein ordentlich gesundes Maß. Also ich habe genauso viele Fragen umgekehrt zu anderen Dingen.

[0:28:12.8] **S1:** Ja okay, gut. Wie funktioniert bei euch Informationsweitergabe im Team? Also wenn es jetzt irgendwelche wichtigen Infos gibt.

[0:28:23.2] **S2:** Eigentlich ziemlich gut. Und entweder wird eine Email weitergeleitet oder über einen Chat was geschrieben. Wenn es jetzt nur so grobe Sachen sind wie IT Ausfall oder so das geht dann über fünf Kanäle hier, dann kommt eine Email, das ist manchmal ein bisschen viel, dann über den Chat, dann habe ich mir schon über Confluence noch eine Info eingestellt. Manches rutscht auch durch, aber das war auch früher so, also ja. Also ich habe schon das Gefühl, wenn einer irgendwas mitkriegt, dann versucht er uns das mitzuteilen.

[0:28:55.1] **S1:** Okay, das klingt ja gut und nicht nach Isolation im Homeoffice.

[0:28:59.2] **S2:** Definitiv nicht.

[0:29:01.5] **S1:** Okay, dann habe ich eine vorletzte Frage: Wir sind tatsächlich sehr gut in der Zeit. Hast du deiner Meinung nach die Option, dich in Entscheidungsfindung?

[0:29:50.6] **S2:** Ja, in meinen Themengebieten kann ich mich einbringen.

[0:30:02.7] **S1:** Dann sind wir jetzt tatsächlich schon am Ende des Interviews. Und da habe ich noch eine Abschlussfrage an dich. Und zwar, ob es noch irgendetwas gibt, was wir nicht behandelt haben und das deiner Meinung nach wichtig für die Diskussion ist.

[0:30:58.2] **S2:** Eigentlich nicht. Mir ist nur nochmal wichtig, dass ich hybrides Arbeiten super finde und es bei uns gut funktioniert (..)

(..) Ausblick und Verabschiedung

Aufnahme beendet.

Appendix 2.7 Translated transcript of interview – general management

As explained in Chapter 3, the transcripts were written and processed in German. To simplify the flow and comprehension for the readers, one transcript per target group was translated into English and added to the appendix.

Interview as part of the research project
Participants: Name (of interviewee), Annika Hesse
Date of interview: 19.06.2024

(Recording starts)

[0:00:12.3] **S1:** I will always give you an overview of where we are in the interview and would like to start with two definition questions before we then combine the two topics. The first topic right at the beginning is organisational performance. As I said, my research is about the factors influencing and implications of hybrid work on overarching organisational performance. For my research project, I have now brought a definition with me – based on my previous literature research and preliminary studies, I personally understand organisational leadership – initially very generally – as a multidimensional construct that can be determined by various key figures and metrics and ultimately should also determine the extent to which the organisation, with its actors and structures, performs as well as possible. So my deliberately generic focus. Various key figures, metrics, target achievement of the company. So the question for you: Would you agree with that? Is something missing?

[0:01:21.2] **S2:** [Pauses] I think it's generic enough to somehow do justice to the facets of organisational performance, the way I think about it. So you just have many different aspects that go into it. So what I'm thinking about right now is organisational performance. It can probably always be seen in the context of a company. So that can be on the one hand - depending on what my vision or my mission or my strategy is as a company, it can be different. For some, let's say, it's very much linked to stock values, for others it's perhaps linked to the charitable benefits they somehow develop. So that's also a question; how do I define organisational performance in the context of a particular company? And I think this model, as you have just briefly outlined it, can certainly depict that too. In this respect, I think it is generic enough. Maybe even a bit too generic to do justice to this whole range of topics. But your aim is to substantiate this and to somehow corroborate these facts with the corresponding hypotheses and to recognise and work out the interplay of the individual factors. In this respect, I think

it is a good approach. I think you can definitely do it that way, without me having dealt with this topic in more detail.

[0:03:02.1] **S1:** Is also deliberately kept generic at first, knowing that it is context- and company-specific. And then in my research project, I really look at DKB in the context of the financial services industry and in a company-specific way. [Nod S2] Okay, then immediately connected to the question, in your opinion, what influence do employees have on the organisational performance of a company?

[0:03:35.8] **S2:** I'm just wondering whether I should say the decisive factor or a decisive factor. I think that at DKB it is the decisive factor if you look at manufacturing industries or manufacturing companies with large machine parks, which also create value differently. But I think in a bank or in an insurance company, in other words, financial services, the staff is the decisive... [pauses] Yes, the decisive factor for organisational performance. Well, from my point of view or the way I think about it, they are very, very closely related. Of course, you can always say that if I'm a bank, then I'm managed by net interest income and net commission income and I know what. And that is very much dependent on how I somehow act on the money market or something like that. But in the end, I believe it is the customers who lead to success and the customer experience is very much shaped by the decisions and actions of the employees in the financial services company. In this respect, I would say that in the bank and in DKB, it is definitely the people/the employees who have the greatest influence on this.

[0:04:58.3] **S1:** And if we now go one level deeper and look at you personally, which of your needs must be met so that you contribute as much as possible to organisational performance, so that you perform as well as possible? What is important to you?

[0:05:13.6] **S2:** I am very keen to do as few things as possible that are nonsensical, unnecessary. So, as they say, avoid 'waste', in other words, avoid unnecessary activities. So, you could perhaps also call it project excellence. But simply avoid activities that are not absolutely necessary. That is the most important aspect for me, so to speak. And the second most important aspect is to be able to complete the remaining activities as efficiently as possible.

[0:06:00.6] **S1:** Got it. And how do you manage that?

[0:06:03.8] **S2:** Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. I have to say that not everything is within your own creative freedom and sovereignty, but it is very much influenced by what is made available to you. It starts with such little things as work equipment, and continues with IT systems. Fun factor - I'm responsible for some of that myself. [Laughs] So it's very much influenced by what the organisation provides you with in terms of work equipment. And I would now also consider something like processes to be work equipment. Exactly.

[0:06:43.9] **S1:** Okay, are there any other factors on the needs side that you say you need to perform well? For example, physical needs as well.

[0:07:06.9] **S2:** Well, what is actually important to me at this point are people who share my [pauses] how should I put it? My objective. With whom you can somehow say; we are pursuing the same goal and we also have, let's say, a similar or common approach to develop. That's one, if you like, particular breed of people maybe. I have a theory that organisations like to look for people who tick like the ones who are already there. That's why you find, if you stay in an organisation for a long time or start, you simply surround yourself with people who are similar to you, who think and tick similarly. And I think that's important for an organisation to be efficient there. On the other hand, it is also a huge danger at the same time, because I then become more efficient in the things I do, but I don't get any new impulses as to whether the things I do are actually the right things for me to do. Now we are digressing a bit from the needs. So into this meta-level. But that's how I think about it. So when you say, what do I need to be somehow efficient or productive - these are just mostly people who tick similarly to me. But then, of course, also somehow the impulses from outside to do things differently. I don't know how the organisation is supposed to somehow provide me with physical needs. No idea. I don't know. Get enough sleep. Somehow the Working Hours Act ensures that. But that's not a question for the organisation I'm in.

[0:09:09.5] **S1:** Okay, thanks, that's fine. Then I would like to talk to you again briefly about hybrid working. First of all, my understanding of it, for you to take note of, and then I'll go into the topic blocks in more detail. [Nodding S2] When I talk about hybrid working and also for the research project, I understand it to mean the combination of working from home, i.e. from the home office, and on-site in the office. I am deliberately not talking about working from home on a permanent basis, when we were at the peak of the Corona pandemic, for example, where in some cases it was also ordered by law across the board. Rather, I am talking about the new world of work that emerged afterwards. And I should add that the question sometimes arises as to what about working from the train, from the café? When we talk about hybrid working, I am always referring to the standard working model of the person I am talking to. If you were to say right now that you also work a lot on the train, then feel free to add that. But if you tend to work at home and in the office, then that would be your hybrid work model.

[0:10:15.9] **S2:** Okay. And do you look at the individual person or do you also look at teams as a whole? Because hybrid working is often also somehow defined as; I have a group of people who work together, a team or something else where some of them I'll say are on site and some I'll say are remote, but are somehow involved at the same time.

[0:10:41.6] **S1:** So, I always speak to the individual people I ask for my interviews in their role first, so in your case, in your role as a manager, for example. I will also ask you about your team later on or ask for your assessment. But I have also already spoken to some employees who then also provide a team perspective. [Nodding] But per se it should be about hybrid working, not the duration of remote working. I know that at DP&T there are a few long-term remote workers, who are more of an exception in many other areas or across the bank. Exactly. Then the initial question at this point, whether you could give me an insight into what your hybrid working model looks like, where you work, how often you work from which location.

[0:11:42.3] **S2:** Yes, so I would say I have a 60/40 model, 60% home office, 40% office. Due to a corresponding family model, it works for me so that I almost always work completely from home for a week. Then sometimes I come in when workshops or on-site appointments that I somehow have to attend are scheduled at that exact time, and that couldn't have been organised any differently. In those exceptional cases, I come in. But typically, I'm at the bank every other week from Tuesday to Thursday. That's how I work. Sometimes it's Monday through Thursday. Sometimes I come in until Friday. So it's a bit flexible, but the basic schedule is three days at the bank every other week.

[0:12:42.4] **S1:** Okay. Do you basically have any departmental agreements that you have to adhere to at the management level or that your team has to adhere to? Topics that you have regulated?

[0:12:55.1] **S2:** No, actually not. It's also a bit funny because our division managers are not even on site. Partly because they don't even live in Berlin. [Nod S1] So there are no guidelines at the divisional level or at the subordinate management levels on how to organise or organise attendance models. The wish is repeatedly expressed, including by the board, that people should perhaps think again about coming to the offices more often. No, but we pass this on to the teams or we interpret it and pass it on to the teams, so that the teams should consider which working method is best for them. That we also say that it is valuable to meet and see each other. But how exactly that is organised, there are no fixed guidelines, only the wish that the teams think about it and organise themselves accordingly.

[0:13:59.1] **S1:** And does it work quite well for them to organise themselves and think about it?

[0:14:05.4] **S2:** It varies. I don't go around asking the teams whether they have thought about it or not and checking to see if it has happened somehow, because I don't see that as part of my job and I don't think it's necessary. But I know from many teams that they set up team days. We have teams that meet – they are basically remote, also because some of the colleagues are not based in Berlin at all – they then meet every other sprint change, for example, alternately in Berlin or Frankfurt. So there are a wide range of models that the teams use. So sometimes we also say; here, with a larger project, let's meet in the office for two days every other week. All together, so that we can somehow make faster progress. So the most diverse models are used in the most diverse situations.

[0:15:05.5] **S1:** Okay. Are you aware of any HR requirements that regulate hybrid work?

[0:15:12.5] **S2:** None, no, except for the corresponding company agreements.

[0:15:16.3] **S1:** Okay, but you are aware that there are company agreements?

[0:15:20.1] **S2:** Yes, the company agreement on *flexwork*. Then we have all kinds of things that somehow come into play. It's not just one thing, but it's regulated in several, each with partial aspects of it. So I can't tell you exactly how it's worded right now, but I know that there are corresponding regulations and I know where to look.

[0:15:41.6] **S1:** Very good. There are quite different answers. [Laughs] There are also various people who say there is nothing. That's why I ask.

[0:15:48.2] **S2:** That's not true, it's right there. I'm a big fan of the sfO. I like to use it and throw it in people's faces. When I feel like it [laughs], but that's how I know there are things in it. [Nod S1] My favourite company agreement is the one about company meetings, where it says that on days when company meetings or company events are taking place, the working day ends at 2:00 p.m. That's the best one.

[0:16:16.5] **S1:** There are a few delicacies that I don't think everyone knows about.

[0:16:22.0] **S2:** Indeed. That's why you have to know them all, to know such things.

[0:16:25.7] **S1:** I think it's good that many people don't know about some things. [Pauses] Okay, for you to get the full picture. We've now talked about work arrangements/policies at the beginning. Now I would like to talk to you in more detail about the topic of leadership and then we will also talk about structural topics and communication & collaboration. First of all, the first question regarding leadership: How do you feel – generally speaking – about working as a manager in this hybrid form? You have been at DKB for a long time now, so you also know what it was like 'before' – what is it like to work in this hybrid form now?

[0:17:10.4] **S2:** If I had to summarise it in one word, it's more exhausting. Well, it's significantly more difficult because it has to be done more explicitly. To send people down the same path, so to speak. So I'll say that yes, leadership is ultimately about somehow ensuring that you're working towards the same goal, that you're doing the right things to achieve it, etc. and so on. Well, and that's just much easier in an, let's say, 'on-site culture,' because you're simply present there. That's where the great words like water cooler conversations happen. That's where you meet at the coffee machine. You just talk a lot more and communicate a lot more because you see each other. And that's much easier for a manager because there are simply many more opportunities for it. So it also happens spontaneously or it diffuses a bit into the organisation. Which makes it much more difficult when working hybrid or

remotely. So you have to do it much more explicitly. You have to share formats, you have to write it down, you have to communicate it well, you have to have transported it well and you have to do it, I'll say, very explicitly. You have to find the right time, you have to find the right group, etc. and so on. That's why I say; it makes things more exhausting. But I think it makes it better. Now we come to the next one. I don't know [pauses] that wasn't your question at all, but I think it makes it better because you are actually thinking about it; what is my goal? How do I want to achieve it? Writing it down is also a great deal. So you get a lot more clarity into it. What do I actually want to achieve and how do I want to achieve it? You get a lot more clarity into that because you're suddenly forced to do it explicitly and think about it explicitly because you have to communicate it. So, that is, I think, on the one hand, it has become more exhausting, but it has gotten better.

[0:19:29.8] **S1:** That's a good segue because I would have asked you now whether you think there is such a thing as a hybrid leadership style? So have you changed something now, for example – you say things are becoming more explicit, but does that also have an impact on your leadership style? And in your opinion, is there such a thing as a hybrid leadership style?

[0:19:49.5] **S2:** No, I wouldn't say that there is. No.

[0:19:51.9] **S1:** Okay. So nothing has changed?

[0:19:54.6] **S2:** No, I don't think so. I'm not one to micromanage and I don't like to prescribe solutions, but rather to empower people to develop solutions. I wouldn't say that the way I work has changed that. Rather, it plays into my hands because I don't even get tempted to manage people. I just can't do it. It's not possible.

[0:20:30.3] **S1:** Okay. But that means it's no different from pure face-to-face management? [Nod S2] Okay. If we now look at the topic of performance – what influence would you say the hybrid way of working has on your performance now, assuming that a manager also has different tasks and skills than an employee? Are you more productive than before Corona, less productive, the same?

[0:20:55.7] **S2:** It always depends on how you define productivity. If you define productivity as actions per minute or something like that, I would say that hybrid working has significantly increased my productivity because I simply have fewer distractions. At least during the times when I'm actually on site. There are fewer distractions. I can just get things done. But it feels like this increase in productivity has somehow eaten away at the fact that everyone has become more productive and a lot more stuff is somehow dumped on you that isn't necessarily meaningful work. That's why I say it's a question of how I measure productivity. If I measure it by output, I've become more productive. If I measure it by outcome, I'd say nothing has changed from before.

[0:22:05.1] **S1:** Okay. Then in that context, let's look at the topic of workload and working hours. When I talk about workload, I mean the number of work packages. What do I have on my desk. And working hours is really just a matter of time. What would you say; what impact does hybrid work have on your workload?

[0:22:34.3] **S2:** Difficult. So the problem is [pauses]... Well, the thing is simple. Work never stops when I punch the time clock and then go out. It keeps you busy. You read the newspaper, you somehow read technical literature at home in your armchair or read a trade magazine. That was the case in the past, it's the case in the presence culture, it's the case in the hybrid culture. So I think what I observe in myself is that these boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred. When I'm working remotely, I can no longer say for sure whether what I'm doing now is leisure time or still work. Personally, I don't have a problem with that because I also take the liberty of doing things during my, quote, *working hours* that may not have anything to do with work, but my output and the outcomes I produce remain the same because I do work in other areas where leisure time would actually be scheduled. So the line between work and leisure time blurs a bit. Personally, I don't have a problem with that because I can still disengage from it quite easily. So I can say quite explicitly for myself; no, now it's over, now it's not work, but leisure time. I'm going to lie down on the terrace in the sun, drink my cappuccino and enjoy the sun. But I know from experience, and I can well imagine, that there are people for whom this is very difficult and who then lose their bearings, this point of reference, in this hybrid form of work. When is the end of work, so to speak, and when does non-work begin? Yes.

[0:24:25.7] **S1:** [Nodding] And if you look at the pure working hours, it's similarly difficult to estimate because it's so blurred, or would you say - and now that we've officially had time tracking again since April 1st and it's a bit of a different scenario - does hybrid working have a positive or negative impact on your working hours?

[0:24:46.6] **S2:** I think time tracking as a means of measuring work is a completely unsuitable tool because time tracking only somehow records your presence on your employer's premises. What you do there and how you do it has never been recorded. You say; are you there or are you not there? Are you sitting there or not? Well, the same applies to hybrid working models, of course. Right now, when I said that I could of course go and stop the minutes when I'm sitting at my desk and at the computer and at the keyboard, that's work. But isn't it also work when I sit in the armchair reading a magazine in the evening? Was that also work before? Is it only work today because I'm doing it at home, where I'm also doing my hybrid work? These are just the kind of things where I say it's just more difficult to measure how many hours of work you put in when you say [pauses]... So the question is, it's really hard to find a definition of when work ends, right? And now I don't have anyone telling me to do this or that by this or that time, but I do have goals, I have tasks and I have abilities that enable me to accomplish these goals and tasks. But now I don't have anyone to tell me; you have to do this, this,

this, this in this and this order, where I then somehow say; okay, I'll do that and when I do it, it's work and everything else is not work. Well, that also has something to do with knowledge work versus productive work, doesn't it? So that also somehow resolves that, then blurs the boundaries again. So, if you ask me now, do I work more than I used to? Then I would say; I work more now. But I also have more tasks than I used to.

[0:26:40.3] **S1:** Okay. As a translation, if I understand it correctly: It doesn't necessarily have to be due to hybrid working, but basically, it feels like everything is being spread over fewer shoulders with each passing year? [Nod S2] Okay.

[0:26:58.3] **S1:** And that now as an assessment or also an observation for your employees. What has changed there as a result of hybrid working in terms of workload and also working hours? Assuming that a manager may have different roles and tasks than employees.

[0:27:14.9] **S2:** Well, I think [pauses] I always try to make it clear to my employees, at least, that they should pay close attention to maintaining a separation between work and leisure time. I see it in myself, where it becomes very blurred. But that doesn't have to be the case for them. Their areas of responsibility are much more clearly defined and separated. Especially when we do certain activities [pauses]... with us, there are also very clear rules about when they have to be done. Service times – there are just things where you should and would have to be available to deal with certain issues. I would say that this has not increased due to hybrid work, but if it has increased, it is because, as you say, more work is spread across fewer shoulders.

[0:28:06.2] **S1:** Both workload, i.e. thematic work packages/number of work packages, and temporal consideration? [Nod S2] Yes okay, has anything else changed in your collaboration or in the coordination with your employees as a result of hybrid working? You said earlier; you have to make things more explicit, communicate differently. Do you notice that in your collaboration too? Does it feel more exhausting there too? Do you have to do more to counteract it somehow, or has it all developed naturally, this new normal that we've been talking about?

[0:28:41.7] **S2:** Well, of course it has developed. But it's significantly more exhausting, and especially when it comes to controversial topics, I notice time and again that it would help to sit down together for that, because that non-verbal communication is lost. So this one... [pauses] so you don't see each other. If, so to speak, your hair stands on end or your neck hair ruffles somehow, you can't see that through the camera. These are simply these nuances of communication between people that you then don't perceive. That, I would say, has changed in communication with employees.

[0:29:31.7] **S1:** Does this also affect your relationship with your employees? At DP&T, a lot of people are hired, so did you also have onboarding in a hybrid context, etc.? What is it like? How do you see the topic of relationship building there?

[0:29:49.4] **S2:** Well, I have a bit of a feeling that this hybrid working has significantly weakened the bond with a team or a company. Well, it's easier – but that's just a feeling, I can [pauses] that's my subjective perception, so I don't know if it wasn't always like that and it's just somehow coming to the fore more now or if you're, let's say, more sensitive to it, you tend to notice it more. But my feeling is that this 'pull' that arises from a community is sometimes missing and that's why we come back to what we said at the very beginning: doing these team days and things like that. That's why I think it's important and I also tell the teams: please find a way to come together, right? We didn't have that for a while, and I noticed that. It kind of fizzled out a bit, and people literally got run over by the bus. They were just gone. You didn't see them anymore, they disappeared from the scene and all that, right? That's when things started to change a bit, when we started to pay attention to seeing each other again. Doing social things together. Like that. That's actually changed at this point.

[0:31:25.8] **S1:** Do you have regular exchange formats that take place on site with employees? Are these classic regular appointments etc.?

[0:31:37.5] **S2:** Yes, it depends on the appointment! I don't have to [pauses]... I have another level of management below me and then I do a lot of lateral management. So I can't be with everyone, there are 70, 80 people with me, somehow regularly. It's just not possible. So I have my managers, I have my very senior people, with whom I talk regularly and I have all-hands formats. Yes, I do those in person. And I also meet certain people here in the office from time to time. And then I sit down with them. We go to lunch together. But those are more ad hoc things. Yes, the only really planned topics are with my direct managers and with my directly managed employees and with each other in all hands formats.

[0:32:33.2] **S1:** Okay. And now with your directly managed inclusive management team under you, how do you deal with the topic of performance measurement? Do you find it easier or more difficult to assess or measure performance as a result of hybrid working than in a purely on-site presence? How do you keep track of something like that? How do you get work results? What is the process like for you?

[0:33:00.1] **S2:** Hm. We are guided by the bank's portfolio planning. Yes, that is our control mechanism, so to speak. Very clear targets have been agreed that also contribute to the bank's strategic goals. And it's relatively easy to measure how well we are achieving these goals. But that has nothing to do with performance, only with goal achievement. Of course, we also have target achievement in people's compensation components, where we then sit down and say whether these goals have been

achieved or not. We just look at it together. Apart from that, I don't measure anything and I don't try to measure or do anything, because I'm not interested in how much they generate of XY or something like that. So what is productivity, so to speak? And that's what knowledge management or knowledge work is all about; what is productivity there? Is it the number of thoughts I've somehow captured? And how do I measure that? Or what is productivity in that case? Or if I talk to a developer, it is the number of lines of code that he has written. That has nothing to do with productivity. Productivity means I have [pauses]... well, for me it means that I have achieved the agreed goals in the time. Yes, and then it's good. And if I haven't achieved them, then we have to talk about why that is the case. Have they changed? Have the framework conditions changed? Have others been added and old ones dropped? Or, or, or. So, and that's productivity for me at this point. Although I measure it, I've measured it before, too. So you notice very subjectively when someone is not contributing to the achievement of the goals. You notice that super fast.

[0:35:06.8] **S1:** That's my follow-up question, whether you have performance management cases and whether you would also say that it is different in hybrid work?

[0:35:13.5] **S2:** We definitely do. But that comes from the fact that it's a social corrective [pauses]... you're in a group and in a team and you just notice from conversations when nothing is happening. For example, you are responsible for an IT system. And whenever a certain person, let's say the *chief of the week*, is wearing the hat, nothing happens. Then you start to wonder why nothing is happening: the person is not present, they are not there, not available. Then you have the corresponding indicators that something is wrong. Then you start to look more closely and then you realise that something is going on and then you start to have conversations, to look at it more closely and then you realise that nothing is happening and then you have a performance case. Well, sometimes it's enough to have a word, to see what's going on. That's the way we deal with it. But you just notice when nothing is being done to achieve the goals. You just notice when you have a person like that in there.

[0:36:16.6] **S1:** Is that consistent, easier or harder in hybrid working? Background: There are also very different theories in science as to whether performance cases go up or down. Would you say - from your observations and subjective opinion - that this is related to hybrid working? Did the performance cases already exist before? Do you just have to look closely?

[0:36:40.8] **S2:** Nah, I think they were there before. They're just more noticeable now. They're more noticeable in hybrid work. In on-site work, people were just there, present, and you said: oh yes, she's doing something because she's there.

[0:36:55.7] **S1:** [Nodding]..she's just sitting there.

[0:36:57.0] **S2:** Exactly, she's sitting there doing something. So, now all of a sudden you're telling people that they are responsible for how they organise their working hours. I no longer look at whether they are sitting there doing something and then mentally tick the box that says 'yes, they are doing something'. Instead, I look much more closely at the outcomes. In other words, what is being delivered? But not in the sense of an output like how many keystrokes, but in the sense of work results, quality of work results and so on and so forth. You look much more closely now and then you notice – well, you get a feeling – you notice it faster when a person disappears. Because people who are performance cases usually disappear. Yes, because it is rare that they simply deliver poor quality continuously, because that is something you can take countermeasures against. You can ask why the quality is poor. And then it usually comes out that the person is willing but can't do it. And then you have a skill problem. You can solve that, you can solve that with training measures, etc. and so on. You always have the performance cases when the person is unwilling. And I think you find them more easily in hybrid working. They usually disappear and are gone and can no longer be seen. And you find that relatively quickly.

[0:38:15.7] **S1:** Interesting. Thanks for the insight. Back to the topic of performance: Are there aspects that you communicate to your employees or even your management level, where you say; Attention, this is something you should pay attention to in hybrid working. What increases or decreases effectiveness?

[0:38:40.3] **S2:** When working hybrid, does it reduce or increase effectiveness? Hm. It always depends a bit on the activity, what my role in the team is, so to speak, what my task is and things like that. And I like to say it increases effectiveness [pauses]... so it reduces effectiveness when I work in a distracting environment. For example, I'm sitting in a café, and there's a lot of hustle and bustle around me. Yes, I actually have people who have a nicely furnished home office, but they still come to the office because they have a school across the street where football is played from seven in the morning. That just bothers them. So, to create an environment in which they can actually work undisturbed. Or maybe where they can make phone calls without someone running up to them all the time, being distracted or something. So I would tell people to make sure that the setting is right. But that also applies to on-site work. On-site work is not ideally designed for everyone, every working day or for every role and how a role is performed. For example, a developer who really wants to and needs to work on a problem with a very narrow focus and now really needs to spend two days somehow really undisturbed working on this problem and needs to crack it efficiently and effectively so that what comes out of it is of high quality. I would much rather put them in a well-equipped home office than here in our large open-plan offices or in the open space. So it's very, very different and depends entirely on what I'm doing and what's good for that.

[0:40:37.5] **S1:** Okay. Just to recap for you. We've talked a lot about leadership now. I'd like to talk again about structure – this is usually a quick and dirty topic. I'm curious because DP&T also has special structures in this area. And then we'll come back to the topic of communication and collaboration. [Nod S2] Has anything really changed in terms of structure for you now that hybrid working has been introduced? For example, your matrix? Was that also a result of hybrid working or were they purely structural, possibly even political, decisions?

[0:41:12.2] **S2:** No, it has nothing to do with political decisions, but simply with the realisation that you need so many different roles to provide the service we have to provide that you can't reasonably lead them in one team. So, all of a sudden, you have things that you have to deliver, and for that you need five different roles and profiles with correspondingly different management needs, I would say. So you can't sensibly bundle that into one person, a team leader or something like that, right? Who also simultaneously does the highly complex task of coordinating work in the IT environment. That's just where we said it doesn't work. So cross-functional teams, you can't put them in the hands of a team leader anymore, it just doesn't work. You would need a jack of all trades, and they are relatively rare. That's where the matrix comes from. It has nothing to do with hybrid work.

[0:42:09.5] **S1:** Does hybrid working have any positive or negative effects on it?

[0:42:19.3] **S2:** I don't think so. I don't think it actually has or had an effect on it in either direction. And it should actually work the same way whether you're completely on-site or completely remote. I don't think there are any reinforcing mechanisms in our matrix structure from my point of view.

[0:42:43.8] **S1:** Okay, and also the other way around [pauses] My thesis is that theory and practice are very far apart – but there are theories that say there are structures, organisational structures, that lead to the success of hybrid work. That's totally exciting, but in practice, from what we've heard so far, it doesn't seem that hybrid work works so much better in the matrix than in the line. But there's just the feedback again, whether you have any additions.

[0:43:23.8] **S2:** I would see it that way too. I don't think so. So you would have to look at the research now, but I just don't think there's a connection between organisational forms and working models. I think there are other influences that have a much stronger impact. But I don't know.

[0:43:52.1] **S1:** Okay, that's why it's a quick and dirty topic, because we're not going to go deeper into it now. We would only do that if we say there are connections. Then we are already at the last big topic block of communication and collaboration. Could you give me some insight into whether and, if so, how communication in your team, in the department, and otherwise with your management level has changed as a result of hybrid working?

[0:44:21.1] **S2:** I already mentioned it a bit at the beginning, what got a bit lost in communication is this, I once had some kind of thing, he somehow called it osmotic communication. These things don't have to be said or explicitly stated. You pick it up through conversations, snippets of conversation that just work naturally. I'm sitting in the open-plan area, two people are talking, I pick it up. I try to think about it myself, to extract more information, to pass it on, whatever. So this, this kind of communication, it just doesn't exist anymore. This osmotic, natural, evolving communication is no longer there, and so you have to be much more explicit in your communication. You have to think about what formats you are doing, with which group of participants you are doing it. Who do I tell what and when? This was already relevant before, but it becomes even more important in a hybrid way of working. And that has also changed in this regard. I still remember, we were sitting in 2019 and before Corona we were still sitting there, it was also significantly smaller, with Arnulf together on the area and had All Hands. We had all made it into such a small room at Friedrichstraße 71 into such a large area. I don't know. 150, 200 people or something, right? And everyone fit in and had an all-hands meeting with Arnulf and Moritz back then. That just doesn't exist anymore. Firstly, because of the size we have now reached, because of the multitude of topics we have to deal with, also because of the significant growth in size and, secondly, because of the hybrid way of working. We can't even get everyone into the office on the same day. This simply fits with the reality of our employees' lives. But we didn't want to let it die, so we thought about how we would continue and how we would develop it further. We now have large cross-departmental all-hands meetings, actually with BI too, where we simply keep people up to date on technology topics and what's going on, but also invite other departments to bring certain topics into the mix, etc. At the same time, we see that people also want to meet in person. In their sub-ecosystem, I guess. So, for example, I do an All Hands in my area, which is much smaller. And I can still find space for the 70 people, we can find a venue. Especially since not everyone will come. So, 60% attendance rate or something. It's fine and people enjoy that. That's what they want. We then try to schedule these events on days when team events would have been held anyway, so where people who come from outside might also travel. And then we try to use these events to get together in larger groups. Pizza for everyone and then you can talk to each other again. You can just chat a little. And then there are the All Hands and the corresponding exchange formats. So that has definitely changed. I think the greatest change between the old normal and the new normal is the explicitness of communication.

[0:47:54.3] **S1:** And the classic, naturally occurring communication, which you also mentioned at the beginning, certainly still takes place, but on a smaller scale or rather selectively and not in these large rounds as in the pure presence culture?

[0:48:09.1] **S2:** Well, for example, I know of employees, one of them is based in southwest Germany, the other one here in Berlin. They somehow open up Teams Meeting / Teams channel all day long. It's

also open to all the other team members, and then they just work alongside each other, chat with each other, work alongside each other and discuss topics. Others do it quite differently. So for me as a manager, it is more difficult to participate in something like that because in the past you just sat in face-to-face meetings with people and talked the whole time. Today, you just sit in front of the screen all day from morning to evening and look into team meetings. It has shifted into the digital realm, so to speak, and that makes it even more difficult for me personally to somehow get into conversation with people as a manager, because you are scheduled all the time, from morning to evening without a break in between. If a free slot is found in your calendar, you are immediately pulled into the meeting, whether you are in the office or not. When you are in the office, you might want to have a quarter-hour break in between. Or a half-hour break to just walk from one building to another or get a coffee outside or something. At least for me, that has become a bit difficult.

[0:49:28.9] **S1:** It's also been observed that the density of appointments is increasing, that you just don't have these travel times anymore. This is connected to new topics such as what this does to mental health in the long term in terms of knowledge work. But that's a completely different aspect of hybrid work again.

[0:49:44.8] **S2:** Exactly. And I don't think you can make a blanket statement that it's hybrid work that's supposed to be the trigger. But there are just people who are better suited to this work model than others, who perhaps have greater resilience or are wired differently than others. I don't think that can be attributed to hybrid work across the board. Likewise, you will have had people, always, even before, who never took to this working model. Always dragging their feet. You just didn't realise it because it was always like that, you just had to deal with it.

[0:50:22.7] **S1:** Hybrid work also came with digital tools. It doesn't always have to be hybrid work per se. [Nod S2] Okay. With the switch to hybrid work, have you changed anything in the management team in terms of collaboration? So do you have any rules for collaboration or through the digital tools - many reports say it has become more transparent, work results are being disclosed. But that often suggests that you also say; here is the one place for filing, etc. This is very operational now, but do you have any rules for collaboration or, to put it another way, availability times? Do you need something like that?

[0:51:02.3] **S2:** Well, in IT you have it a bit different. So, availability times are given by your, we call them, service level agreements, which you give to your customers. So there are just times when we guarantee that someone is there and answers the phone when the thing is broken. That's just the way it is. Our work results have always been digital and always disclosed, because they only had an effect when we disclosed them. The code was there, the code became the programme, the programmes were installed, were and could be used by their users. That means that our work results have always been

disclosed. The way there also always had to be disclosed, simply because the supervisor was also watching. Did you test it? Did you document it, etc.? Show me all of that. In that respect, nothing has changed.

[0:51:56.7] **S1:** Okay. Then, thinking about it from a completely different angle – the topic of appreciation and visibility. That is also very important to many employees.

[0:52:04.0] **S2:** Yes.

[0:52:04.8] **S1:** Has anything changed in terms of hybrid working? Or would you also say that – here, too, there are different opinions – it has become easier, it has become more difficult?

[0:52:18.5] **S2:** Once out of the role of the manager, but it has become more difficult. Because appreciation has a lot to do with interpersonal and non-verbal communication. This has also become more difficult due to the loss of this personal communication and the introduction of the screen between two people. So, also, to set these signals, is the person opposite me positive? Does he like what I've just said? It's all about showing appreciation in communication. And I think that's become more difficult to convey. And I can well imagine that some of the employees feel that they are not being appreciated as much as they used to.

[0:53:01.6] **S1:** And in terms of visibility: Would you say it's easier or harder now, especially with teams or similar? Is it possible to stand out in virtual formats? Is it also easier for you to, let's say, spot talent or has that rather decreased?

[0:53:16.8] **S2:** I don't think it's become more difficult. No, well, in the past they either stood out because of their work results, you could see that, or they were highlighted in discussions. You have both of those things today as well. What else do you have today that hasn't changed? The discussion has shifted to the digital, the contributions are still there or not there. Depending on the case, it goes both ways and you can see the results of your work if someone has delivered good results, has worked without making mistakes. You can see that today just as you could in the past.

[0:53:48.1] **S1:** Okay. Is it different when it comes to decision-making? Has anything changed there? How much do you involve your employees/your management in decision-making?

[0:53:58.7] **S2:** I don't decide anything myself, I don't want to decide anything myself. I just always say; if you force me to decide, then I'll decide. But please don't make me decide that all the time, because that's why we pay you, to please make that decision. You are the experts on the job. [Pauses] But that has nothing to do with hybrid work. It's just my management style at this point. I just say; dear people, prepare the decisions. Well, I think it was easier for them in the past because they didn't have to write it down, but just locked themselves in a room and drew it on the board and said; here we go. Today they have to somehow put it on paper, then have to write a documentation about it, maybe

make a small presentation and then do it. They should have put it in brackets earlier, but they didn't, and now they have to do it because of the nature of hybrid work, it's just more important to write things down and for others to follow up. So hybrid work also has a lot to do with asynchronous communication. Yes, and then to serve this asynchrony in the sense of I have to make it comprehensible for others afterwards.

[0:55:13.8] **S1:** I'll ask again deliberately [pauses]. There are voices that say; they are always all in red, permanently in appointments, I can't get hold of them. Since hybrid working, I often decide for myself. So those who don't wait for asynchrony, but then say; yes, I involve fewer people. I don't hear that from you now, but it's more like early communication, preparing decision templates or a decision-making process that just happens asynchronously when in doubt. But it does happen?

[0:55:46.5] **S2:** It should take place. Of course, it's never perfect, but at least that's how I think about it and how I try to handle it. I actually try to sit it out. And then people say; oh, it's taking too long. Can someone please decide now? Then I say; yes, the decision-makers are sitting there, they should just agree somehow. If they tell me they can't agree, then I'll decide. Okay, but then I'll make a mental note that I'll somehow get them to think about what they need to be able to decide. That's a different topic. It has nothing to do with hybrid work and leadership culture. It doesn't matter.

[0:56:26.8] **S1:** I see. Then I actually already have the penultimate question, and that is whether you can give me another insight into how information is passed on in your hybrid work, in the team/in the department, etc.?

[0:56:40.6] **S2:** That also varies greatly. It always depends on the type of communication. Of course, we have our All Hands formats, where, let me say, for example, reports are also given from board meetings. I have rounds with my management level, who then have rounds with their teams. So there are a bit of cascading things, but there are also All Hands formats where, let me say, we don't go through the hierarchy, but rather [pauses] yes, bring everyone together. Networks. So yes, we distribute certain information by email and circulars in quotation marks. At least that's how I would like to do it more often. We have central storage places for decisions we make, for example. Are there central places where you can look up where things, where decisions are documented. So different formats for different information needs and information.

[0:57:47.0] **S1:** Okay. And would you say that you are quite successful in passing on information?

[0:57:53.0] **S2:** It's a research field in itself. How do I get information efficiently distributed in organisations? I would say it works. Okay, I haven't heard that basically someone always feels left out. Everyone always complains that they would like to know more and be more involved, but that's

always a balancing act that you have to somehow do between when do you communicate enough? And when is it too much?

[0:58:21.7] **S1:**That also depends a lot on the individual's need for information.

[0:58:23.8] **S2:** [Nodding] It's okay the way we do it. But you'll always find people who say that's not nearly enough.

[0:58:29.1] **S1:** Okay, yes. Then we've already come to the end of the interview. I still have a favourite final question, namely (..)

[0:58:39.6] **S2:** Fire away, fire away.

[0:58:41.7] **S1:** [Laughs] And namely, whether there is anything that we have not covered in your opinion but which is important for this discussion? What you would still like to add? Otherwise, I'll give you a summary and an outlook in a moment.

[0:58:53.0] **S2:** Nah. I think we've covered the topic quite well. I don't have anything to say, 'Oh, that's quite obvious, we should have discussed that again somehow.' From my point of view.

[0:59:05.1] **S1:** Okay. Wonderful. Then I would just finish the recording for now.

(Recording ended)

Summary & outlook

Appendix 2.8 Translated transcript of interview – HR professionals

Interview as part of the research project
Participants: Name (of interviewee), Annika Hesse
Date of interview: 03.05.2024

(Recording starts)

[0:00:00.0] **S1:** My research project is about two major issues: organisational performance – what could be influencing factors or what could be implications between organisational, overarching performance and hybrid work. Therefore, I would like to start by talking about organisational performance and tell you again what I understand by hybrid work. [Nodding] This is now very formal and scientific, but various preliminary studies and theory say organisational performance is a multidimensional construct, that is, a construct that can be determined by various key figures or metrics and which ultimately should determine the extent to which the organisation, with all its actors, structures, etc. - that is, at a truly overarching level - performs and contributes to the achievement of the organisation's or company's goals. That's why it's not always about the individual employee's performance, unless I ask about it, but about this overall construct. [Nodding] Do you still feel something is missing? Would you agree with that for now, or do you cringe and think 'Oh God, I would have understood something completely different by that?'

[0:01:22.5] **S2:** Just a quick follow-up question on this: Do you also include, for example, infrastructural topics such as a high-performance network, which framework conditions are provided to you? [Nodding] All right, then I understand it correctly.

[0:01:33.4] **S1:** Yes, so all the actors, structures, as you say, also infrastructure. [Nodding] Okay, very good. Then as a follow-up question; now looking at our own area and, above all, at your role: in your opinion, what influence do employees have on this organisational performance? So do they have it? Don't they have it?

[0:01:57.5] **S2:** They do have some influence, because, let's say, the employer has to provide the infrastructure for high-performance systems. But if I work alone in my home office/flexwork in my network, so to speak, as an employee, I also have some influence on the quality of the network. So, do I have a powerful Wi-Fi or not? I can only ensure that. Or I have to decide that flexwork is not a solution for me, but that I am better off working in the office. Yes, so in that sense, yes, employees do have an influence.

[0:02:45.5] **S1:** Yes, okay, just to be on the safe side: organisational performance, but also in the sense that we all somehow participate in the company's success. So if we now have target agreements and such?

[0:02:57.9] **S2:** Of course, so as an employee it is of course also important and relevant that I know the company goals, that I know the departmental goals, that I also know the team goals and that I actually align my work with them. So yes, exactly.

[0:03:13.6] **S1:** Okay, now your personal opinion: Which of your needs must be met so that you can contribute as much as possible to the company's performance?

[0:03:26.0] **S2:** Hm. My personal goals. For me, it is important that I know the company goals, but they have been made transparent to me because I can access them and read about them in Confluence. What are our company goals? Of course, I also need the goals: where does the HR department want to go, how does the work of the department contribute to the big picture, so to speak, to the company goals? And then, of course, as part of my personal target agreement, the goals that I see for my own team, for the product, but also for the chapter.

[0:04:04.8] **S1:** Okay.

[0:04:05.8] **S2:** (..) also other things that I can align my work with, in order to then actually derive the vision for the product business partner from it and then also be able to manage the team accordingly. These are exactly the relevant points for me. But for me, relevant points for being able to work well also include infrastructural topics. So that the tools that are made available to me are powerful, that I can use them accordingly and that they don't slow me down in my daily business by crashing, etc. Or that the performance is just not right. Exactly.

[0:04:48.7] **S1:** Okay, thank you. So, we have this block of topics on 'organisational performance'. Then I would like to talk briefly about hybrid working, more as information. By hybrid working – now in the context of this research project – I mean specifically the combination of working from home, which many people also refer to as home office, and on-site in the office. So I'm deliberately not talking about working from home permanently, which was the case during the peak phase, for example, when it was also partially ordered across the board, but rather about the new world of work that emerged afterwards and in which we currently find ourselves. Perhaps a brief word in advance about the setting and therefore directly linked to the question in your direction, what your hybrid working model looks like, what it classically looks like or whether you also have any exceptions where you say you don't know in some other places, in some other countries. But that would be more of an exception for me, I would assume. And how it is otherwise basically arranged for you between working from home and in the office.

[0:05:49.5] **S2:** Um, so for me it's arranged so that I try to go to the office at least two days a week. Sometimes it's three days that I'm in the office. It always depends on the requirements. For example, requirements are that there are in-person meetings that cannot be rescheduled or that the team needs to sit together as a team for another day or that things require it. So if we have workshops, for example, where we need to discuss ways of working together, it just makes more sense to actually do it in person. But basically, I work in the office two days a week and the other days I work from my home office. Flexible and that's exactly how flexwork actually works for me.

[0:06:44.7] **S1:** Yes, wonderful. Then a more general question: Can you briefly explain to me roughly what specifications HR at DKB are given that somehow regulate hybrid work?

[0:07:00.4] **S2:** When you start at DKB or are a new employee at the company, it is also relevant within the onboarding process that you register the fact that you 'want to actively participate in flexwork'. This is done via SuccessFactors, and if I do not actively participate in flexwork, then this working model is actually not available to me.

[0:07:25.5] **S1:** Okay. (..) Now a different question, purely personal opinion: What would the regulations for hybrid work look like that you would design from your HR function? So would you, you just said 'you can participate in flexwork: yes/no'; DKB has not regulated anything more than that so far; would you regulate more if you were allowed to decide on your own based on your role? Or do you say that this is the minimum now and that it's okay as it is?

[0:08:01.4] **S2:** I think it is up to date and that is the minimum. I think it is important that you should still give other arrangements, such as how often you meet in the office, to the team to decide, so that you as an employer do not dictate it. As I said, I think it is no longer appropriate. And we want to continue to remain attractive as an employer. And that's why, in my view, this is a very, very good offer. And I also think from an employer's perspective that as an employer you can definitely place your trust in the team to decide that the team is interested in meeting in the office at least once or twice a week, because it is also beneficial for the team to meet in person. It's just different when the door is open and you can walk through it and talk to someone than when I have the inhibition threshold of having to call someone via MS Teams. And so yes, I wouldn't make any more rules, except for this rule that we currently have in the company, that I, as an employee, have to actively click the button 'Yes, I would like to participate in flexwork'.

[0:09:10.5] **S1:** [Nodding] Do you know of any different regulations within individual teams or areas, now from your support or not from your own support areas, but from the other support areas of your employees, for example, that something is known, that they have even more rules than this minimum level, which the employer initially provides in principle.

[0:09:29.1] **S2:** Um. As far as I know, there are some areas or regions where there is already a regulation that at least one day a week should be spent in the office. It can be one or two days, but it's not necessarily just the team that decides, it's also prescribed by the managers. Exactly.

[0:09:57.3] **S1:** Okay. Is there any further feedback on the topic of hybrid working? Somehow from the company or was there feedback and if so, what did it look like? Or is that no longer an issue and already so normal?

[0:10:11.0] **S2:** That's exactly what I wanted to say. So far, I've actually heard mostly positive feedback that it's normal, that it's become impossible to imagine life without it, that hybrid working can be done in our organisation, that we offer it. Let's also look at how many employees we have who live elsewhere, even though their place of work is Berlin and they therefore have the option of also being DKB employees, because we simply offer the option of flexible working, i.e. location-flexible working. And from that point of view, I think it's impossible to imagine life without it. Of course, there are also employees for whom this is not an option. But then they are also in the office more often and for them it is also important to have a basic workplace. But I would say that for the majority of the organisation, this is a very good working model, which, as I said, is no longer imaginable.

[0:11:08.5] **S1:** Okay, that sounds good. What would you say about the impact of hybrid working or hybrid working styles on employee performance? Are they more productive than they were before Corona, when we were all fully present? Are they less productive? What could be the reason for this? As I said, it doesn't have to be measurable. Experiences? Observations?

[0:11:30.0] **S2:** Well, I'll say, as I said, what I feel and also observe what you say. I would say it's a bit of both. In any case, from my point of view, employees are definitely more productive in the home office. Why is that? Because you can focus, concentrate. You're not distracted. But there are also employees who are neither productive in the office nor at home. I would like to exclude them for now. I would rather focus on those who are productive both in the office and in the home office. But what are the factors that could cause productivity to decrease? In my view, productivity decreases because the number of meetings has increased significantly, so we are stuck in meetings from morning to evening, and you can only really generate work productivity if you are no longer in the meeting, and that is usually after working hours from 6:00 p.m. Are you really productive then? I would like to question that. So I think the timing of the meetings is more of a problem. But basically, if I don't have any meetings and have a focus day, I am more productive as an employee from my point of view than in the office. (..) That was a bit of a digression, wasn't it?

[0:12:50.2] **S1:** All good. Would you also say that for the role of a manager? So what kind of influence does hybrid working have on them? And are they more productive, less productive? Or the same

scenario as for employees? So can roles and different tasks play a role, because a leadership role is perhaps different from an employee role?

[0:13:11.1] **S2:** Absolutely. I think we also have to differentiate here: What kind of mindset do I have? So, am I a manager who feels productive when they see their employees? Then I would tend to say that they are not more productive because they are constantly asking themselves the question from their home office: What are my employees doing? I can't see them. But if I have the right mindset, I am also very productive as a manager from my point of view, because regardless of whether the employee is in the office or not, I have touchpoints with the employees and can still fulfil my management role. But as I said, I would like to answer the mindset question with that. Yes.

[0:13:52.1] **S1:** [Nodding] It should now also be more about the leadership role in principle. What aspects of leadership in the company have changed as a result of hybrid working that you have been confronted with in your HR role or which you have observed?

[0:14:11.0] **S2:** I would say that this has changed specifically in the case of, well, shared leadership. If, for example, I am now a chapter lead in this role – or an expertise lead – if I focus exclusively on the topic of employee management, then it has certainly changed in that I tend to move these employee meetings clearly into the office, because it is important to see my employees in the context of these meetings and to see what it does to them, what their body language is like. I tend to conduct these types of meetings less virtually. I really do focus on the fact that it takes place in person. So I do have to plan my employee appraisals well. But when it comes to discussing collaboration models or running workshop formats, I can definitely do that in hybrid form. That means I don't have to come into the office for that. But when it comes to disciplinary management – employee appraisals tend to always be in person, as does performance management. If I have a performance issue, then I do try to focus on the fact that I would like to see this performance case in the office more often, because I also want to see how he acts with the other colleagues, how he acts when I look over his shoulder. This also requires me to be more flexible in my leadership role and to be in the office more often in order to be close to these colleagues.

[0:15:50.4] **S1:** Just a brief digression, because you just mentioned performance management: Are there performance cases that arise from this hybrid work? That you now really say, 'Oh God, the fact that we are working more hybrid or are no longer as present is really creating problems, challenges,' or are they similar to those in the face-to-face form?

[0:16:09.4] **S2:** I would say that they would also arise in the presence form. Because if there are employees who have a performance issue, they have this issue both as and. I think it's more challenging to be able to recognise that as a manager. But if I were to ask the counter question; do I recognise it when I see the employee more? No, I'm more likely to recognise it by setting goals,

pursuing goals and regularly checking in with the team to see where they actually stand. And that's where performance actually becomes apparent to me. But as I said, would it change when I'm in the office and when I'm in the office? No, I think I wouldn't be more aware of it, but it's a mindset issue again. How do I lead a team in the hybrid world? Yes.

[0:17:00.3] **S1:** Got it. [Nodding] Okay, then I'd like to talk to you about the topic of workload and overtime. From the interviews before, I realised that I would like to elaborate on what I mean by that. When I talk about workload, I would like to talk about topics, work packages, etc. that end up on the table. So what do I, as an employee or manager, also take on? How long is my to-do list, but also my mental load? After how much does it feel? And then again, in the demarcation of the topic of overtime, really as time. What kind of balance do I build up? Because I would ask different questions right away and sometimes workload was answered one-to-one with overtime, so to speak. But I would like to map exactly the differentiation – content-related work packages, general number of work packages mentally, how does that feel? And then again the pure temporal consideration. Maybe just a brief preview. Now the question: What effects do you think hybrid work has on employees' workload?

[0:18:05.6] **S2:** Hm, I would definitely say that the workload has increased. Why has it increased? Because of hybrid work. [Pauses] Personally, I feel that we have a higher pace, a higher speed has developed, simply because of the timing of appointments, because I no longer have the distances I travel. On the one hand, I no longer have to travel, and I don't have to switch from one meeting room to another. I just click on Leave appointment and click on Join next appointment. And that's why the workloads have increased for all of us. Because you feel like more packages are being crammed into the eight hours we have available. Because we all just work together faster. And some of the tools we have also make it possible for us to work with each other faster. So yes, from my point of view, the workload has increased. Has it increased due to hybrid working? I would also rather put a question mark on that. It has increased, in my view, with increasing digitalisation.

[0:19:16.3] **S1:** Yes, thank you. That's a valuable addition. And in terms of overtime or rather working hours? Would you say they have increased/decreased?

[0:19:34.5] **S2:** Hm, I would say that the issue of overtime has definitely increased. Especially when working from home, because the transition is very fluid. And I just don't have a commute anymore. I no longer have to travel in the morning. So that means I can sit at work earlier and leave later. So, yes, from my point of view, the issue of overtime has increased and the degree is very, very narrow. The blurring between the world of work and, as it's called, this work-life integration. So that's just very, very fine. This degree and also this topic of the workplace alone. I've opened my laptop, I can leave this workplace, but I still have my mobile phone, where I still do work. Do I report that as overtime? Not really. But at least one thing, I think, is this degree. Very fine.

[0:20:32.4] **S1:** Just to be clear; is your 'thesis' that many people who commute to work spend the time they spend commuting one-to-one in working hours when they work from home?

[0:20:42.9] **S2:** Correct. That's how I would put it, too. For example, if I have an hour's commute to the office and I start working that hour earlier, I have an extra hour available to me during the day. In the morning as well as in the evening. Exactly. Yes.

[0:20:57.1] **S1:** Okay, I see. Now for managers, the other way around: Would you say that, analogous to employees, there is a similar increase in workload due to digitalisation, etc., and that there is also the issue of overtime? Or is it different again because of the management role?

[0:21:14.8] **S2:** Hm, so I would say that the workload issue has changed just as much for managers as it has for employees. On the subject of overtime, I would say the same, that the journey to work is no longer necessary, and I can therefore be reached earlier and sit at my workplace for longer. I would say that the same applies here too.

[0:21:42.1] **S1:** [nodding] Good, then I would like to talk again about the topics of visibility and appreciation. What would you say: Has anything changed at all in terms of visibility and appreciation for employees in the course of hybrid work compared to a pure presence culture?

[0:22:02.2] **S2:** Hm, here too, I would say that it is a mindset issue again. Do I have the feeling that I am only seen when I am in the office? Or what is actually the result, what is seen and what generates appreciation? So on the one hand, it's the mindset of the employees, but on the other hand, it's the mindset of the manager. In my view, the fact that we work in hybrid form has no negative impact on the issue of appreciation, because I still deliver the results. And if my manager has not expressed appreciation in the face-to-face world, then he or she will not do so in the hybrid world, or vice versa. And I believe that, as I said, it is more of a mindset issue here. How do I define the topic of leadership for myself? How do I define the topic of employee appreciation, support, and employee development for myself? That's the aspect for me, but it has no effect on the topic of hybridity.

[0:23:01.1] **S1:** Okay. And what would you do or how would you advise managers? What would you say, what aspects should managers consider when they lead hybridly? So what would you say increases effectiveness or perhaps also reduces it, what would you warn against a little bit? Especially managers who have been used to a culture of presence for years and perhaps are a bit critical of it, what would you emphasise when it comes to hybrid leadership?

[0:23:25.3] **S2:** Important for hybrid leadership, but also for leadership in a presence culture, are simply goals that I agree with the team. Agree on regular touchpoints where I can track the goals, not in the sense of controlling, but rather saying, this is the way we want to go. What do you need to achieve the goal? It's also important to make it transparently clear that it's the role of the manager and

the team not to take these issues away from them, but at least to try to pave the way for them to reach the goal and achieve the goal. And I can do that in both the presence culture and the hybrid world. And in my view, it's important to have regular touchpoints with employees, both in teams and in one-on-one meetings, to be close to them and not to leave the team to its own devices, but to support the team in being successful.

[0:24:21.7] **S1:** As a follow-up question: Are the [pauses] are you mainly concerned with the regularity and whether touchpoints take place at all? Or would you also say virtual touchpoints or rather face-to-face touchpoints? Or is that again to be designed depending on the team structure / leadership personality etc.?

[0:24:41.2] **S2:** In my view, this is a form of collaboration that the team should shape together with the manager. And for me, this includes both face-to-face and remote appointments. But to be a good manager, I don't necessarily need face-to-face appointments. I should agree with my team what is important to them, what they need for themselves. Exactly.

[0:25:06.0] **S1:** Okay, thank you. Then I would actually like to change the subject a bit now. In the direction of team structure, also in the direction of structure organisation. The question would be to what extent the structure - really structure organisation - in the departments or teams in the company, I know they are also very different, has changed due to hybrid working? Whether you can say that there were any transformations/restructuring, especially as a result of hybrid working?

[0:25:49.9] **S2:** I wouldn't necessarily say that hybrid working causes a structural change, but rather that there were other challenges for this topic of structural change that were solved with the structural change. But as far as collaboration is concerned, I think the hybrid world makes it much easier because, for example, when I now look at matrix structures when I work for a product/project, it is easier for me to simply dial into the appointments and be part of a team that works together hybridly than it possibly was in the past. I didn't have to move my chair, I didn't have to move to a different office, I just switch channels, if you will. Or I go into a different appointment. So in terms of collaboration or virtual collaboration, it has become easier without actually changing my place of work, changing my manager or changing my task package.

[0:26:56.7] **S1:** Got it. That's kind of a connection: hybrid working also has a positive influence on structures. To put it the other way around, would you say that team structures have an influence on the success of hybrid working? And if so, what could these structures look like, i.e. what is positive/negative? Or do you say that they are completely independent of each other?

[0:27:21.2] **S2:** From my point of view, team structures have no negative impact on hybrid working because, in my view, it's the mindset issue again. Am I open to it, what do I need for collaboration? I

need rules for collaboration that I have defined as a team beforehand. No matter what my team structure looks like, is it a product team? Is it a process team? Is it a hierarchically managed team? I need rules of cooperation and they are independent of whether I work together in a hybrid way. That would be a form of agreement for me – do we always meet in person and work through our topics in person or do we work together in a hybrid way, with colleagues also being connected? And we can still all see each other in a virtual room or in a face-to-face room?

[0:28:11.9] **S1:** Okay, so ultimately it's more about agreements for the purpose of communication and collaboration instead of really pure organisational structures.

[0:28:24.5] **S2:** The organisational structures provide a framework, they form guard rails. But how I fill these guard rails, these are rules that the team has to agree on, with each other. And that, in turn, has no negative impact on hybrid collaboration if the team has defined how they want to work together.

[0:28:41.4] **S1:** [nodding] Okay, perfect segue. Because we're now going to talk about communication and collaboration. So, the initial question: What aspects of your HR role have been brought to your attention that have changed as a result of hybrid working, in terms of communication within teams, but also across teams within departments? Both positive and negative.

[0:29:07.2] **S2:** As so often, it stands and falls with the question: What kind of manager do I have? I keep observing. And especially in the current times, when the topic of communication is very, very important and where communication can contribute; am I insecure or am I not insecure, that is a very, very important aspect. And in my view, I don't know of any specific cases, but I could imagine that there are already employees who feel left out. You can see again and again in the Pulse Check that they don't feel well supported by communication, and then, in flexwork, they may wonder where they stand now, what's next for them, etc. And if there is no good integration by the manager in the context of communication topics, then of course it has no positive effect. But I would question again: is it any different when I am present? Because if the manager does not have a good way of communicating or if that is not their core competence, they do not have it in the hybrid world or in the face-to-face world.

[0:30:23.7] **S1:** Okay, and from the point of view of communication in terms of collaboration. How would you say that has changed in the company? Has it changed at all due to hybrid working, both within teams and perhaps also across teams within departments? Have there been any changes due to hybrid working?

[0:30:48.3] **S2:** I would say not necessarily because of hybrid working, but because of the changed structures we have. Has communication changed? If I look at one or the other matrix now, the communication touchpoints have definitely increased. From my point of view, hybrid working tends to

support that. I no longer have to have all my employees in the office to exchange ideas or organise meeting formats. I'm simply more flexible there. If it's just a matter of quickly getting people together, then I can do that, and much better and faster in the hybrid world than if I have to wait for everyone to actually be in the office. [Pauses] So, from that point of view, it's been more of a positive impact. If I think about our own area, how quickly it is now possible to get us all together for an All Hands. We no longer all have to be in the office, but this All Hands can also take place ad hoc and we don't need weeks to find a common date.

[0:31:51.8] **S1:** [Nodding] Now with all this change and also ongoing work in the hybrid model, moving away from the culture of being present, were there any topics that HR provided support for? In other words, workshops or generally more consulting volume, which you had to support or proactively encourage, map, or perhaps were asked about?

[0:32:22.2] **S2:** Well, we have been asked more often how we can advise on the subject of team rules. In other words, if a team actually needs team rules, I as a manager cannot prescribe them. And so it is important that we, in our advisory role, also empower managers to work out these rules together, rather than the manager dictating them. The team takes a much more positive approach to something like that. And in my view, the picture has already changed in that regard. Has it had an impact on hybrid working? From my point of view, yes, because the topic of hybrid working in particular needs certain rules that the entire team adheres to. So, to give an example, there is a fixed rule that everyone in the team takes part in the JF. The jour fixe are moderated so that there is a result. There will be a protocol for this. The moderator is also the one who is responsible for the protocol. Results are defined. So, from my point of view, there are more rules than there were before hybrid working.

[0:33:37.4] **S1:** These were the aspects where areas might also say, how can you support us, what can you help to initiate/accompany. Some areas are very self-sufficient. Are there any topics that you know of where you can say that areas or teams have independently made changes or adjustments? For example, in terms of cooperation, rules, availability times, etc. Further examples in the care areas; these can also be negative examples or very controlled/regulated examples.

[0:34:22.3] **S2:** [Nodding] Well, I know that in these units, for example, those that deal with customer care or who are the point of contact for the team, they make sure that they schedule themselves so that, I don't know, the team is available from eight a.m. to six p.m., for example, and then the team has scheduled itself in some way. There are already some areas that ensure that. There are colleagues who like to work very early and there are colleagues who need a while to start the day. They then have the cover or availability at a later point in time. But I would actually say, from my point of view, that this was already the case before hybrid working. But now it's a bit easier, of course, because I no longer have the travel time.

[0:35:12.1] **S1:** Yes, are there also areas that have introduced this retrospectively, i.e. now with hybrid working? Because in the office, you can see when someone is really able to work, i.e. when they are on site.

[0:35:29.9] **S2:** I can't actually tell you. I haven't observed that yet. Let's put it that way.

[0:35:37.2] **S1:** Okay. Then I have a penultimate question: An important topic for many employees is also the topic of participation, especially in decision-making processes, etc. Would you say that there have been changes there? Has it become more difficult/easier for employees to participate in decision-making?

[0:36:11.8] **S2:** I think it has improved significantly to be involved in decision-making processes. And I also think it's been simplified because hybrid working means I can organise various workshops more quickly because I don't have to rely on it, I don't have to worry about booking a room. I don't have to worry about everyone actually being there, but I can bring people together more flexibly. In any case, that has changed, and in my view it goes hand in hand with the development of work. If we look back – before the topic of further development of work in the context of digitalisation or hybrid working – it was more important that managers made the decision, and then it just happened top down and everyone had to somehow support the decision. In the meantime, this has also developed further, in that participation is very important, because it has also been recognised, and this is also a mindset issue, that when employees participate in decisions or in the further development of topics, they are accepted and lived in a completely different way. And I think that has changed a lot. And the hybrid world also makes it easier to implement.

[0:37:31.5] **S1:** Okay, thank you. Then we have actually come to the end of the interview, in that I would just like to ask you if there is anything we have not covered, if there is anything you would like to give me, anything you would like to add to the discussion. How efficient are we in hybrid working? As an open question at the end – in addition to the topics that we have already touched on, such as communication, collaboration, regulations/i.e. frameworks, what HR also specifies and leadership. These were the big topics. Is there anything else you want to add, is there something that is on your mind or where you might say; oh, I would have thought there would be a question now.

[0:38:13.9] **S2:** Well, what I find very important, also with regard to the fact that I find hybrid work very, very important and very advanced, I think it still needs more attention on the topic, because as I said, hybrid work has a very high cadence and I also think it puts a lot of strain on our brains. So, in other words, it's like a muscle that you keep straining to the point of exhaustion without giving it a break. And I think that, in principle, this is an issue where the organisation, and society too, should pay a little more attention to ensuring that a normalcy is achieved, that the workload is reduced or streamlined if necessary, because the expectation that you will get a prompt response, that you will

answer the question at a certain service level, is something that I think is very difficult to reverse. But that we don't run the risk of this topic of hybrid working being abolished again or of working with all these tools together, but that there is somehow a way that there are certain rules so that you, I don't know, can only have so many appointments in a day or whatever. But at least the brain has the opportunity to have some kind of rest again. So this topic of mindfulness, actually resilience, whatever. I think it's a very important topic in the context of hybrid work. [Nodding] Yes, I also read a very interesting article recently on exactly this topic. And there was a very nice analogy compared to the topic of footballer versus knowledge work. That the footballer always takes care not to overstrain this muscle during his training, because otherwise he will no longer be able to perform on match days. And the topic of knowledge work, that we keep straining our brains more and more and give ourselves little time to rest, so to speak.

[0:40:33.3] **S1:** Which, in the absolute future perspective, would unfortunately have a rather negative effect on the increase in productivity or effectiveness that we are currently assuming.

[0:40:45.5] **S2:** Exactly. [Nodding]

[0:40:48.1] **S1:** Thank you very much, Ulli. But then I would take with me as a core message - feel free to give me feedback again on whether I'm summarising this correctly - that there are a lot of positive aspects. Essentially, it's a question of mindset, whether it's the leadership role itself or the employees. Whether I use the options that virtual collaboration offers me, for example, to draw attention to myself, to deliver results, or whether I use them the other way around as a manager; if I am appreciative, it doesn't necessarily have to do with hybrid working, but I can be appreciative in person or virtually. That you use it for yourself and create these positive conditions. But it also depends on the framework conditions. It also depends on forms of collaboration, certain rules with a sense of perspective and perspective, the aspect of mindfulness, which is actually virtual work that is permanent, resource-efficient due to the increased workload. These are the core factors, which, as I said, are all very positive when properly balanced, but in order to maintain them in the long term, you have to make sure that the workload remains manageable. That's what I would take away from our conversation, which had a lot of positive aspects but also mindset questions.

[0:42:06.4] **S2:** Absolutely. I would like to add something about leadership and visibility. I think that's also a very important aspect and it also underlines the importance of separating professional and disciplinary leadership. That I also have employees who are rather very introverted and introverted equals quiet. And that I get away from the idea that just because someone is introverted and quiet, they are not a high performer, but rather only the loud ones. So that I also see the quiet ones. But for me, that's also a mindset issue. I can do that in the virtual world as well as in the in-person world if I have

the right mindset as a leader. But I also think it's important that the quiet colleagues are heard and seen.

[0:42:53.7] **S1:** [Nodding] Probably very individual there, too. Some people actually prefer a face-to-face meeting, while others may feel a bit more comfortable in a virtual format, depending on the topic. Okay. Good. Thank you very much.

[0:43:07.9] **S2:** Exactly. [Nod]

[0:43:09.0] **S1:** As I said, we're actually at the end. We've managed the time well. Thank you for your time and for taking it and for your insights. I would stop recording in a moment. Looking ahead again, there will be a transcript of our conversation. I'll probably need a little more time to get that ready. I would then send it to you as well, so that you can read it if you want – it's not at all mandatory, but if you want – you can read it. And as I said, at that point you can still say, 'Oh God, I don't want to participate anymore.'

(Recording ended)

Summary & outlook

Appendix 2.9 Translated transcript of interview – employees

Interview as part of the research project
Participants: Name (of interviewee), Annika Hesse
Date of interview: 22.05.2024

(Recording starts)

[0:00:00.0] **S1:** As discussed, I would like to talk to you in advance about two definitions. So that we have the same understanding and I would like to start with the topic of organisational performance: As explained, my research project is about the factors influencing and implications of hybrid work on overarching organisational performance and attention; this is now becoming very scientifically formal. But in theory and in preliminary studies, organisational performance is referred to as a multidimensional construct, i.e. something that is determined by various key figures/measurables and which ultimately should determine the extent to which the organisation with its actors and structures - i.e. really overarching - is as high-performing as possible and contributes to the company's goal achievement. It is very important to me at this point; it is really about this overarching component. At least that's the scientific understanding. Would you agree with the definition? Do you feel like something is missing?

[0:01:14.5] **S2:** It fits very well.

[0:01:15.0] **S1:** Now a very personal question and opinion: In your opinion, what influence do employees have on organisational performance?

[0:01:37.7] **S2:** Well, I think the most important thing is attitude. That is, how do I feel about the company, how much fun I have at work, what my colleagues are like. That's what I've learned from years of experience. Actually, the most important thing is to enjoy your job, be passionate about it, and get along well with your colleagues. And everything else falls into place. You can restructure three or four times. In my opinion, it has to fit. And of course, you might also, I mean, that's another topic now; in the past, it was just important to know where my workplace was, where I sat, where my desk was, where my container was, but that's all no longer the case. Then things like, for example, can I work from home? Can I use it flexibly for myself? I think these are new things, but I think this working environment has to be right. Yes, at least for me.

[0:02:36.8] **S1:** Okay, so these are aspects that are important for you to perform well, right? [Nodding S2] But basically, you would also say that employees have an influence on the company's success?

[0:02:43.7] **S2:** Absolutely. Yes, of course.

[0:02:45.6] **S1:** Okay. Good, then we've got that out of the way regarding organisational performance as a concept. Then, just a quick word about hybrid working before we get into it properly. [Nod S2] When I talk about hybrid working, I mean the combination of working from home and working on site in the office. So, I am deliberately not talking about permanent working, which was partly ordered by law across the board during the peak phase of Corona, but rather about the new world of work, in other words, everything that has emerged afterwards and in the phase in which we currently find ourselves. That in brief, and then the initial question for you: can you give me an insight into what your hybrid working model looks like, how often you are in the office and how often you work from home?

[0:03:33.7] **S2:** Yes. Well, for me it's really because of the fact that I [pauses] that has to do with Corona. The whole topic has picked up speed again at DKB, that is, we had already started working flexibly before Corona. From the café, from home, that was a huge outcry. Of course, you have to organise all of that first. Not just from an IT point of view, but also in terms of coordinating with each other. That picked up a bit of speed and of course, due to Corona, it has increased even more because we were then allowed to work from home full-time. That's why I decided back then to move out of Berlin with my husband, to move back home, because it just gives you the option. I don't have to take the train in every day and that's the reason for me – I have a fairly long commute, so at least an hour and a half. And we have a rule in our team or department that we say there is a fixed day in the week when everyone should be there. For the team jour fixe, that we all sit together and get together. That's Tuesday every week. Last year it was still flexible. One time it was Tuesday, another time Wednesday, another time Thursday; of course, it's also challenging to keep track of it all the time. Now Tuesday is fixed. That means I actually only go in on Tuesday. Well, unless there's something going on. We had an important exam now, then I was there for several days, but usually it's Tuesday.

[0:04:57.9] **S1:** Okay, but you actually go in once a week? [Nod S2] Okay. And would you say that works quite well? So does everyone/many stick to it?

[0:05:08.7] **S2:** Yes, so as far as the exchange is concerned, it works very well. It's just not an efficient working day. Yes, but you have to look at it over the whole week. I think in the past we just saw each other more often and chatted. You also have to get used to sitting in the office again with three or four people. We also have appointments, some of which are still virtual, and just because I'm on site, I have appointments with other people, so you just have to organise yourself somehow. Yes.

[0:05:35.6] **S1:** Okay, then a completely different question: It's not a problem if you say you don't know anything about it. Are you aware of any HR requirements that regulate hybrid working?

[0:05:53.3] **S2:** No. But the topic of this weekly attendance is not mandatory either. But it is desired and I don't know where that comes from either. It's just the question, because I sometimes think, well, for many people Tuesday is suddenly not possible, I don't know. Children have to go to sports or something, I could also come in on Wednesday. But it's of no use to me because the others aren't there either. So it's also a bit coordinated with the calendar. We're supposed to sign up beforehand. That means that Wednesdays are actually reserved for other departments. So things like that, where that comes from, I don't know. And I also know that they're already checking whether we're there or not. So if I weren't there for three weeks...

[0:06:39.1] **S1:** How is that checked? So who checks it?

[0:06:42.4] **S2:** Well, it's up to the boss. It's a culture that's developed. Actually, if I don't come in, I don't have to write anything, unless we have a jour fixe that day, then just add me remotely. But many people then write that they can't come in because they have a cold or they can't come in because their child is sick. So you always feel compelled to say something. So to justify yourself. At least that's the way it is, no one has ever approached me personally, but I just said that there were two weeks in a row when there was really no other way. I also asked and my boss said; yes, it's okay if you say that beforehand, but then you already realise that you have to justify yourself somehow.

[0:07:23.0] **S1:** Okay, got it.

[0:07:25.4] **S2:** Yes.

[0:07:27.5] **S1:** Generally speaking, how do you feel about working in this hybrid form?

[0:07:40.6] **S2:** Personally, I think it's great. I've been working at the bank since 2008, so I've already experienced a few years when the children were still small. Now [she pauses] I have twins who are ten. I think it would have been a great help to me at the beginning and during this stressful time; I can see that it is for my colleagues too. It helps you to organise yourself better. I also have my own office at home, I have to say. I don't just sit at the dining table, which makes a difference. I go to my office, my husband goes to his office, and we eat together around noon. I can organise my day differently. I can do sports again early in the morning. That wouldn't have been possible before. So the stress, just for me, always having to take the train, that's stressful even in Berlin when you arrive at work. And I enjoy going back in. But these negative aspects have all been eliminated and even if a child is sick, it's not like that anymore, but you can just act differently. That was really the case in the past, you thought about who stays at home? That just didn't exist. Now you can stay at home if the child isn't that sick and somehow still work. It also has other disadvantages. But for me personally, it's also really good for me mentally.

[0:08:53.0] **S1:** That sounds good. What impact do you think hybrid working has on your performance? A lot of people say that they're somehow more productive, or less productive now compared to before Corona. The same? How would you rate it?

[0:09:10.8] **S2:** Well, I would say the same. But when there are phases like this exam we had now, you can do more at home. Then you read it in peace and quiet and that's the job we do, you really have to concentrate. You have to read, you have to do calculations. So it's no use if you have background noise. Yes, and what can I do, I can also work in the evening. So I can also do overtime or something. I think, compared to before [pauses], then I just went home, right? And then there was nothing at home. Maybe that's another aspect. I think there are also colleagues who still don't work from home. There are very few of them, but there are some. So it's difficult, you just can't perform. So you're always available for your employer, if you will. Whether you take advantage of that or not is another matter, but that's something else. Are you more efficient? I think so.

[0:10:13.9] **S1:** Okay. Then I would actually like to talk to you more about the topic of leadership. Again, it always depends on what you want to answer or whether you have any examples at all. For many, it was sometimes associated with a change of managers. But would you say that something has changed in the leadership style or in the way you work with your direct manager as a result of hybrid working?

[0:10:47.5] **S2:** Yes, a difficult topic, because I started over with my manager. Into this hybrid work. Otherwise, I would say [pauses] when I think about my old boss before that, I went in, it has already changed. So first of all, I think the manager has to realign himself first, Because I've noticed that you don't see each other. So either I call or she calls. We also have regular jour fixes, so again individual jour fixes during the week where we definitely meet. Now it has to be said that I work very closely with my manager. So we talk almost every day, you could say. Well, that's at the team leader level. At the department head level, it was a bit thinner and you don't see them that often. I mean, it was already the case before that when they have their appointments, they rush across the hall and say good morning. If you didn't have any contact before, but I would say that in the team, in general, you have a lot of contact with the other colleagues.

[0:11:57.1] **S1:** Okay, but that sounds positive, because you often hear that it has changed negatively and that you no longer hear from each other as often. Some people are, maybe it's a personality thing, totally isolated in their home office with no social contacts. It doesn't sound like that for you, but it's also due to certain formats where you have your touchpoints anyway.

[0:12:14.2] **S2:** We also had a colleague who then quit at the time. But I didn't experience that anymore. She was really alone and it also makes a difference if you don't have family at home, forced into Corona at home, right? And it depends on the person, you're absolutely right about that.

Nowadays I can write via Teams, write via Outlook or just pick up the phone and give them a quick call. A lot of people who work on site ask me why I can't work remotely and all that, it's much too impersonal. But we see each other, so I've totally got used to it. Of course it's different when you see each other live, in a dress, in a suit or whatever. That's nice. But I don't mind seeing someone like that. So you see that. Have I got used to it? Yes.

[0:13:02.6] **S1:** Would you say, now that you've been at the bank for a long time, that it's also an advantage to have a relationship with your colleagues from before, when everyone was always in the office?

[0:13:24.7] **S2:** Definitely yes. So if you come in new now, don't know anyone... virtual onboarding, then maybe it feels a bit more distant again? Definitely that. We talk about it with our colleagues at least once a week. And I believe that, because we also have a lot of working students and such, I don't know if they come in like that. I can't tell you either, but my feeling is that I definitely have an advantage. I also know a lot of people in the bank. I'm not afraid to call anyone. That's different, of course. You've just changed one level. But ultimately, if you maintain them, you have the contacts.

[0:13:50.1] **S1:** Okay. [Coughing] Sorry. Then I would actually like to talk again about the topic of workload and overtime. Perhaps a reminder of the distinction: when I talk about workload, I mean work packages; what do I have on my desk, what might be given to me somehow. This can also be mental workload. And then, after that, when it comes to overtime, it's really just the hours worked. Then, as an initial question: What impact does hybrid working have on your workload? (6)

[0:14:28.0] **S2:** Well, in terms of overtime, I don't even know if it's because of hybrid working. In any case, I have more overtime than before. But I'm still working part-time, but I also went up at some point. So I would say I do more overtime. But it's also because I enjoy the work. As stupid as it sounds, you have to be a little careful, of course, it's still work and still stressful. So family time is also lost. But for me, the important thing is that you can at least take time off for overtime. It was a bit difficult because we just had an exam, so it wasn't possible. But I've made up for it now, because I know how important it is for you. Also, to stay mentally healthy. And in that respect, I don't think it's a problem.

[0:15:23.3] **S1:** Why is it that you do more overtime? You said earlier that you have your laptop at home; you also have the option of opening your laptop in the evening, or what about your driving times? Especially for those who have such long train journeys, do you already work then?

[0:15:38.6] **S2:** I actually do work on the train. To be honest, I don't think about it. The thing is, I start early – it's not like in the past, when you went somewhere and knew you'd have to leave at 5:00 p.m. because you had to pick up the kids.

[0:15:51.6] **S1:** Yes.

[0:15:52.1] **S2:** Now I'm just working. And if I still have time, then I just keep working. Many colleagues don't even know that I only work 30 hours. They just call again at 5:00 p.m., which is a bit difficult to somehow tell people. But I don't have to answer it, because I can set myself to absent. Well, that still doesn't stop some of them. [Laughter] But actually, this overtime only happens when there's a really big package coming up, like this exam, for example. It was super important. But we also had to write reports before the exam. So that was [pauses] it's actually been going on for a year and a half that it's important. And now? We're reorganising and working off overtime. So now you can take a little breather. That's been pretty difficult in our department because we've always had such huge workloads. I think it's probably worse for other colleagues than it is for me. But so far I've managed my working hours and it's not like I'm working massive overtime. So that it gets out of hand.

[0:16:52.0] **S1:** Is it still manageable?

[0:16:53.3] **S2:** I would say so, yes.

[0:16:55.0] **S1:** And in terms of workload, if you think about work packages? Many people also report that we are all just clocked in teams meetings – especially compared to before, when you at least had time between meetings in Berlin between Taubenstraße and Charlotte, for example.

[0:17:24.5] **S2:** Well, I would say I can do more. Yes, we have a lot on the table, but it can be [pauses] so the deadlines, I think, are also okay. We have a jour fixe with the team once a week and a one-on-one jour fixe, which I personally think is okay. I don't know what my boss says, but she probably has to run this show with everyone. It's different for her, but it's also her job. But it's okay for me. I don't feel like there's too much on the table. I'm still managing very well. And if there is, then it's like that, and it has nothing to do with hybrid working, I have to say that. Now it's different with other colleagues. We do coordinate with each other. So if something comes up, I should say so if it's too much. I've had one occasion so far when a colleague did some of my work during the audit so that I didn't have to do it and so on. So everything works out.

[0:18:24.5] **S1:** Sounds good and healthy. Okay, topic of visibility and appreciation: Has anything changed due to hybrid working? Do you feel seen/appreciated by your manager?

[0:18:38.7] **S2:** By my direct manager? Yes. [Nodding]

[0:18:42.3] **S1:** And the department head, for example?

[0:18:44.9] **S2:** Yes, they feel even further away than before because you really don't see them. Unless there are burning issues, then they are also included in the appointment. But most of the time, this is done at our procedural level. That is, I actually have very little contact with the department head or

division manager, and it used to be different. And if you just met in the hallway for a chat, that's gone. It doesn't bother me now, but when it comes to making a name for yourself or showing what you can do, it's difficult.

[0:19:18.4] **S1:** So you don't have any regular appointments or anything like that with the level?

[0:19:22.7] **S2:** Well, we have a JF area, and there are 70 people in it. We also have that every two weeks. But only the head of the department speaks at the Jour Fixe. It's different in the team. Everyone says a little bit about what they do, what they have on the table, what problems they have, so what really stands out, what's really important. And you do get to know what the others do and you also get to know something from others. I think that's better in the department. But I don't know if the head of department knows what I do all day. She doesn't have to know the details, but I don't think so.

[0:20:02.4] **S1:** Okay, I understand. Then I would like to briefly discuss the topic of team structure again and then communication and how to work together collaboratively. Then we would actually be done with the big topic blocks. Regarding team structure: Has working in a team changed for you as a result of hybrid working?

[0:20:33.3] **S2:** I can't even tell you that, I'd have to think about it now. At least not that I can feel.

[0:20:39.7] **S1:** Okay. And can you give me a few more insights into how your team is structured? So do you work purely in-line? Do you still have any cross-functional structures, projects?

[0:20:50.4] **S2:** Exactly. Well, we had a project that's now finished, but everyone just had their normal job and a project on the side. But you could say that this project took up 80% of our working hours, because what we did in the project is the work that we are now continuing. It got a bit mixed up. Well, we had a lot of colleagues who were involved in the project, not all of them, but I'd say about 80%, so actually the project was our main task in the last few years. And that's something else again. You also work differently because you have to deliver at a certain time.

[0:21:29.4] **S1:** Absolutely, yes. Okay, but otherwise you haven't gone through any major restructuring or anything like that?

[0:21:37.2] **S2:** That was all before. Since then? No. And I wonder if the division is different now? No, I can't say that either. Actually, everyone is doing their job as it was previously thought. Exactly. But the restructuring was before Corona.

[0:22:01.1] **S1:** Then I would assume that if it was before and there was no need to adjust it again due to hybrid working, I would assume that hybrid working had no effect on your structures? That's how I thought about it.

[0:22:14.8] **S2:** Not in that way.

[0:22:15.9] **S1:** Okay, good, team structure is also always fixed. It feels like most of the restructuring at DKB didn't come from hybrid working.

[0:22:26.8] **S2:** Yes, exactly.

[0:22:29.8] **S1:** Then we're already on the topic of communication and collaboration. Do you perceive any effects of hybrid working on your communication in the team? What has changed there? These can be tools, these can be any kind of coordination. What has changed in your communication? Or is everything the same as always, as it used to be?

[0:23:01.6] **S2:** I'm just thinking about how it used to be. Sure, everyone used to do their job and then go to the nearest office if something came up. Now I just pick up the phone or write a quick message; when can we talk on the phone? It actually always comes down to a phone call, unless I have to write something down. But then I would have done it at work, on site, so that it would be safe somehow. But sometimes you have to look at yourself, I admit that, to keep in touch that way too. Sometimes I arrange to meet someone for a coffee or something. I always think then that I don't really have time for that, but yes, it's also important, especially with younger colleagues, to exchange ideas and get to know them. That I do that at least once a week somehow. Then, of course, you only pick out the people you particularly like. That's always the case.

[0:23:55.0] **S1:** But I think it would have been the same earlier.

[0:23:57.5] **S2:** Yes, exactly. What is perhaps different is that you are only ever on the move bilaterally, right? If you chatter in the hallway, there are still five people listening.

[0:24:07.3] **S1:** That's right. [Nodding]

[0:24:08.4] **S2:** I don't know if that's an issue, but I don't miss it. I think you can get used to that, too.

[0:24:18.4] **S1:** Okay. And in terms of collaboration. What has changed there? For example, do you also have any rules about working together, any hours of availability? Do you have any insights for me?

[0:24:39.4] **S2:** Well, availability is difficult because we hardly ever have people calling us. It used to be worse, with a lot of people calling from the sites. But if I only work 30 hours now, I can't switch the phone over in the evening. Yeah, so I don't know. Then maybe someone calls at 4:00 p.m., but they can also wait until tomorrow. So it's not that crucial for me now. But when we're on holiday now, sure, we had that before, too. Substitution rules, switched over by phone, that kind of thing.

[0:25:13.0] **S1:** Do you have any rules about filing and such? So does everyone know how to work with OneDrive and Teams and such now? Do you know, for example, what your other colleagues are doing or does everyone have their specialist function so that you don't really need to know?

[0:25:39.6] **S2:** No, the only thing [pauses] we have our jour fixe on the Confluence page, where everything is entered. So first of all, we have an overview of the topics that are currently being discussed by the team, so that you can review the last few weeks. Otherwise, we have a folder structure that we developed at some point. But it's only important in certain subject areas that you really have folders 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in the same order. Otherwise, the same folder structure as before, where you just thought about what makes sense?

[0:26:14.6] **S1:** Do you work a lot with your personal OneDrive or do you always put everything somewhere so that everyone has access to it?

[0:26:24.5] **S2:** Basically, everyone has access to the folders. But not via OneDrive. Then we give permission for the folder. That's when we have votes or something, then we use OneDrive that anyone can sign, then it's already initiated that way. But it could be more.

[0:26:48.9] **S1:** Okay. What do you need from your team members to successfully implement your work?

[0:27:04.8] **S2:** Do you mean in terms of content, what do I need?

[0:27:07.6] **S1:** Both, and. What do you need from your colleagues? It can also be interpersonal. Do you need a good basis? Whatever.

[0:27:18.0] **S2:** Reliability and commitment, that the person also gets in touch. But that's always been the case. There are areas where you write and don't get a reply for two weeks. I find that difficult. I can live with it, but you have to keep following up. I find that totally important in close cooperation, that you know that the person will then report back or that I will get an answer, even an honest answer. I don't know or I know. I find that very important. And otherwise, we also have the issue at work that I have to call many colleagues, that we have to evaluate something or something like that, and I know that I can call him, he can do it today, the other one can do it tomorrow. So everyone is a bit dependent on the other. Especially the young colleagues often call me and ask, 'Hey, what's that like? Can you show me?' Because they still have a lot to learn from me. And I think that's a really healthy balance. I have just as many questions about other things.

[0:28:12.8] **S1:** Yes, okay, good. How do you share information within the team? So if there is any important information.

[0:28:23.2] **S2:** Actually, pretty well. And either an email is forwarded or something is written via a chat. If it's just something big like an IT outage or something like that, it goes through five channels here: an email, which is sometimes a bit much, then a chat, then I've already set up a notification via Confluence. Some things slip through, but that was the case before too, so yeah. So I do have the feeling that if someone hears something, they try to let us know.

[0:28:55.1] **S1:** Okay, that sounds good and not like isolation in the home office.

[0:28:59.2] **S2:** Definitely not.

[0:29:01.5] **S1:** Okay, then I have a penultimate question: We are actually very good on time. Do you have the option, in your opinion, to participate in decision-making?

[0:29:50.6] **S2:** Yes, I can contribute in my subject areas.

[0:30:02.7] **S1:** Then we've actually already come to the end of the interview. And I have one final question for you. Namely, whether there is anything that we have not covered that you think is important for the discussion.

[0:30:58.2] **S2:** Not really. I just want to emphasise again that I think hybrid working is great and that it works well for us (..)

(Recording ended)

Summary & outlook

Appendix 3.1 Overview of the final code structure and themes

Codes	1020
∨ degree of freedom & self-management	0
> framework/ work agreement	35
> department rules/ regulations	42
> HR function	37
> requirements for employees	38
∨ expectations towards employer/ employer appeal	0
> hybrid work as a new normal	15
∨ place	0
> equipement & infrastructure	15
> office	40
> home office	34
> individual location preferences	67
∨ time	0
> definition of working time	26
> position and distribution of working hours	27
> transparency about attendance/absence	15
> response time	3
> regular exchange	6
∨ workload & overtime	0
> increased load	79
> role based workload/ relief	8
> flexible/ hybrid working model should allow relief	18
∨ expectations & relationship with manager	0
> trust	15
> appreciation	28
> visibility of employees	23
> connection to manager/ overall employer	24
∨ managing people	0
> self assesement of managing behaviour	5
> employee-centred approach	14
> delegation	20
> controlling/ steering	26
∨ communication	0
> information	38
> rules/ agreed collaboration	86
> added value of communication in presence	20
∨ performance	0
> organisational performance	39
> understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	48
> impact of hybrid work	79
> underperformance/ low performance	21
∨ structural implications	0
> no connection to hybrid work	29

Appendix 3.2 Theme "degree of freedom and self-management" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote	Target group
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Some units need someone on-site at all times. If I think of the lawyers, for example, someone always has to be on site because a lot of things are still done by post. That doesn't mean, for example, that everyone has to be there three days a week, but at least one or two people have to be there every day to ensure that this mailbox is available, because a lot of things are still done by post.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Each team has its own understanding—some meet weekly, others monthly or quarterly. So they are all relatively free.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Teams must ensure individuals don't become too detached. A weekly team day simplifies coordination and strengthens collaboration.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Yes, come to the office once a week. So yes, I am aware of them. There are various rules in the teams or departments. None of them are official, but unofficially there is a clear statement: we meet in the office once a week or once a month, once a quarter, depending on what it is.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	This means that in translating this into my work, the departments have a lot of freedom within the basic guidelines and can also interpret this freely for themselves. It takes more coordination than before, but it's now fully accepted.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Yes, there is a flexwork agreement. There are regulations on the subject of data protection, how I have to make sure at home that nobody here can access my internal bank information and so on. Of course, labour protection or the Working Hours Act, which also applies at home.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	This 'pull' that comes from a community is sometimes missing and that's why we come back to what we said at the very beginning, organising these team days and things like that. That's why I think it's important and I also say to the teams: please find a way to get together, right? This strengthens team dynamics and informal exchanges with other units.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	We always come to the office on Mondays. That's what the team has decided, that's what I have decided and I now share responsibility for the fact that we go to the office on Mondays.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	At least one person should always be there (on site) so that you are available for [stakeholder name].	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	There are no fixed guidelines. There is a wish that has been communicated, which has also been harmonised at two days; two office days per week.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	Yes, we have expressed the wish in the department that it should take place on our Jour Fixe day. And as a rule, everyone is actually there in person.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	In our company, each team actually defines for itself how they want to work together	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	And we have a rule in our team or in the department that we say there is a fixed day in the week when everyone should be there. For the team jour fixe, we all sit together and get together. That's Tuesday every week.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	And we have agreed to establish at least one team day per week for our department on the instructions of the manager. It used to be a rolling day. It was changed somehow every quarter. Now we have a fixed day and it works well, as everyone is there for the most part.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	There is an expectation that you will see each other in the office two days a week. Wednesdays are our department day. On which we are actually all there, unless we have something urgent that makes it impossible. So it's a relaxed approach.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	In our company, each team actually defines for itself how they want to work together	employees

degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	The team day was invaluable for team building. We found each other again after the disruptions during the Corona period. And it goes quite well - Most people are there, with one or two exceptions. But with 16 or 17 people, that's okay.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	We always have Tuesdays as a fixed office day, which is taken seriously by most people.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	department rules/ regulations	The expectation is that we see each other in the office two days a week. We usually have Wednesdays as a department day, on which we are actually all there, unless we have something urgent that makes it impossible. So it's a relaxed approach. I say these two days are for everyone, if it works, then it works. If it doesn't fit, then it doesn't. It's not like someone has to come in for four days next week because they haven't been there for a fortnight or something.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	I think it's in keeping with the times and that's the minimum. I think it's important that other rules about how often you meet in the office should still be left to the team to decide, so as an employer you shouldn't dictate that.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	It aligns with the zeitgeist, and we want to stay attractive as an employer. And that's why I think this is a very, very good offer.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	The agreement supports flexible working for all employees, but specific office or home-based arrangements are determined within teams. There are no major HR requirements.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	Overall, it looks like we have a general works agreement that basically supports flexible working and makes it possible for every single employee to work flexibly in terms of location. However, there are no clear guidelines as to how on-site, i.e. office or home-based work is to be organised. These are rules that are discussed/agreed within the team. It certainly depends on the type of work. What can I really do from home? Why do I need office work for files or similar? That sometimes varies. And depending on the team agreement, different office attendance times may be required and agreed. And certainly also in the context of where there are also certain occasions that require a mandatory on-site presence because they involve collaboration.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So there are no company regulations beyond the general works agreement that concretise it. These are more like wishes, expectations that are formulated as guidelines or directives for the respective unit. But as I said, this is really only very, very limited from what I can see.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	For example, work is limited to Germany, with a small exception for European countries, based on agreements with the works council.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	I have no knowledge of a fixed regulation or works agreement	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	Okay, predetermined rules. So I'm pretty sure that if you work in flexwork or in public, you must ensure that confidential information is not passed on externally. For example, you have to make sure that you wear a privacy screen on your iPad or laptop. I believe this is pointed out.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	That's because I've been able to organise my form of hybrid work so far without having any questions, so there was no need for further clarification, so to speak. The way I work, I've never had to get any further information and I don't think I've violated any guidelines.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So somehow there is a limit for EU countries as to how many days a year you can work there as a hybrid, so to speak. I think it's something like 30, as a dad with a daughter at home I can't use it like that anyway. Will leave the wife hanging, that's why.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	In terms of attendance times or division between work locations? No. Of course, there are various guidelines on how to behave where and where. Workplace safety etc., but that's probably not what you mean.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	I know that there are some. I have not come into contact with any. Therefore, I could not specify anything	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So also basic things like twelve-hour breaks between work. So as far as more basic labour law is concerned, I think that's a bit well known, yes, also from other experiences.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So they probably exist, but I'm not familiar with them in any depth.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	Of course, labour protection or the Working Hours Act, which also applies at home.	employees

degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	No.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So they probably exist, but I'm not familiar with them in any depth.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	There is a flexwork agreement. I have to ensure no one at home has access to internal information, and occupational health and safety rules apply	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	framework/ work agreement	So they probably exist, but I'm not familiar with them in any depth.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	On the other hand, the constellation may also give me the opportunity to buy in a better manager. We can now hire better managers without being limited to Berlin. The people are all over Germany, which means I can have them all travel here for big money for the interviews.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	We have often been asked how we can advise on the subject of team rules. In other words, if a team really needs team rules, I as a manager can't set them. And that's where it's important that we use our advisory role to empower managers so that it's not about the manager setting the rules, but that they are worked out together.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	How do I deal with it if perhaps an individual or a team does not fulfil this responsibility, this personal responsibility? Then to see what more specific regulations are needed? To what extent do I want to expand such a framework, which is generally knitted, even further? Clear rules regarding attendance, but also being excused from appointments, which is of course always a question in terms of breach of duty under the employment contract.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	An employee's place of residence is no longer tied to the place of work I don't know if that's relevant to the topic.That's a big advantage because, of course, people can now be based anywhere in the country and then travel to their place of work for important appointments. That's one thing that has become possible as a result. It wasn't possible before hybrid working, but otherwise it had no influence.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	Hybrid working also makes it possible to hire talented people who don't live here. My newest employee, who I hired, also lives in Osnabrück and if he hadn't applied, the position would probably still be vacant.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	There's already a framework in place, and if it's not working, we will enforce it.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	Responsibility should lie with both individuals and teams—requirements vary too much for a one-size-fits-all approach. On the HR side, we put a lot of things in the hands of the managers in the sense of; please manage your team in such a way that everyone is as flexible as possible, but also that cooperation does not suffer. So they are all relatively free.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	HR function	Just as office etiquette exists, remote work needs its own guidelines. Teams define their own collaboration rules, but we offer help when needed.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	In the end, everyone is still responsible for their own area of responsibility, for their own topics, and lives this responsibility sensibly.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	For some, digitalisation is purely technical, while for others, it significantly impacts hybrid work success. With one colleague, the issue of 'keeping up with technology' is really starting to play a role, and it's not even the one who's retiring, but another one who simply thinks that somehow I can't cope any more.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	But it varies within the team - the resources are used to different degrees, like teams. Some use it a lot. I would say I use it a lot and work through my tasks on it. Or sometimes I ask colleagues if they can do this or that. Others only ever work with emails. I don't know why it's about e-mails, whether it's about reworking or being able to follow up or not	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	In other words, there really is a high degree of personal responsibility here. Let's put it this way, there has to be a high degree of personal responsibility for employees in this context. On the positive side, as I said, the issue is that you are more likely to be able to do it because of the distance. However, it is up to each individual employee to decide whether they are well able to do so and how the organisation enables them to do so.	HR professionals
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	Now, all of a sudden, people are responsible for organising their own working hours.	general management
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	I'm really happy that it's now well established. Well, of course we're all young, which sounds a bit like ageism, but we're a young team. The oldest is 43, the youngest 27. The tools are used to different degrees. Some use Teams a lot, others mostly rely on emails.	employees
degree of freedom/ self-management	requirements for employees	Employees must take ownership of their work, but the organisation must empower them to do so.	HR professionals

Appendix 3.3 Theme "expectations towards employer/ impact on employer appeal" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	I would say it's already normality. There is only feedback in the sense that people are afraid that this will change in the future and that there will then be rigid requirements (..). And then there are also people who say that this is out of the question for them and then they might think about changing employers.	HR professionals
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	If I knew now that I had to go to the office three or four times a week, that wouldn't be my model. I couldn't see myself working that way." Another reinforced this sentiment, stating, "For me, the flexibility of hybrid work is the foundation that makes [organisation] a viable employer for me."	HR professionals
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	So far, I have actually heard rather positive feedback that it is normal, that it is now unthinkable that hybrid working can take place in our organisation, that we offer it.	HR professionals
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	It is now unthinkable that hybrid working would not take place in our organisation.	HR professionals
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	People are afraid this will change in the future and that rigid requirements will be introduced. Some say that if that happens, they would consider changing employers.	HR professionals
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	So I've been doing this for four years now. It's going well now. I actually prefer it. I think I've got so used to it by now that it's just me and I wouldn't have it any other way.	employees
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	And so for me, it's already the basis for me personally that [title of case study organisation] can be my employer.	employees
expectations toward employer/ impact on employer appeal	hybrid work as a new normal	It's a complete package. The attractiveness of the employer plays a major role, where you can also set yourself apart as an employer. But I also see the added value for the employee, for the employer. So I think it can work really well. It can be better than being in the office for five days. Yes, it's better.	employees

Appendix 3.4 Theme "place" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
place	equipement & infrastructure	If it hadn't been for the coronavirus, we wouldn't be where we are today, because we might not have been technically equipped to do so.	HR professionals
place	equipement & infrastructure	Infrastructure, job security, and equipment are key aspects often raised by the business.	HR professionals
place	equipement & infrastructure	All are technically the same, can participate in video conferences at home or in the office, and can answer emails and work on a second device at the same time as the video conference is taking place.	general management
place	equipement & infrastructure	(..) enough places in the office to retreat to for concentrated work.	general management
place	equipement & infrastructure	So, as trivial as it sounds, we need the technical equipment, that we don't have a landline phone, that everyone in the company has a work mobile phone. In my old company, for example, only people who worked in sales had to use their private mobile phones. This is also annoying for company communication. It's also stupid when it comes to resilience and boundaries. So, technical equipment is good for us.	general management
place	equipement & infrastructure	Half of the tools look like they're from another century. We could do a lot better with digitisation and automation.	general management
place	equipement & infrastructure	My Excel kept freezing—IT has to work for hybrid to be effective.	employees
place	equipement & infrastructure	Before COVID, there were only three laptops to sign out for home office. So technically, an awful lot has happened, of course. So you work in hybrid today, which only became possible through teams and laptops and all that.	employees
place	equipement & infrastructure	So there is something there in terms of system stability, and sometimes it's the most mundane things that do it.	general management
place	equipement & infrastructure	So this infrastructure must also be provided, and if it is not mandatory to do one or the other, how do I then hold hybrid meetings? That means that there must also be screens and an owl and whatever else is needed to make it possible.	general management
place	individual location preferences	Because some colleagues don't have the ideal working conditions at home and/or have a very short commute to the office, so I also have colleagues who are in the office 3 to 4 working days a week. But everyone can then organise it according to their personal, individual needs. I also have some employees who have young children in their family who then also appreciate the organisational aspect of working from home.	general management
place	individual location preferences	One person can't stand noise in the office at all, the other is not bothered by it at all, one person listens to music, the other can switch off so well with it and it's much easier to take this into account and also address the individual needs of employees to some extent.	general management
place	individual location preferences	Hybrid should stay hybrid—not just five days at home. You have to show the value of coming in.	employees
place	individual location preferences	I ride my bike to work—15 kilometres, an hour's ride.	employees
place	individual location preferences	I have more peace and quiet at home, and taking the train for another hour isn't worth it.	employees
place	individual location preferences	Some employees aren't thinking about the success of the work, just avoiding the office. When I say it's important, it gets arranged	general management
place	individual location preferences	There are actually reactions when you somehow have a workshop or something small. Questions come up; can't we do that digitally too? Where I immediately feel, well, the success of this work is not thought about at all, but it's just about the convenience of saying; oh no, I have to go to the office, I don't feel like it now. And then I say; pay attention, it's important to me and then it's ordered. So that happens.	general management
place	individual location preferences	Some colleagues avoid coming in, and sick notes conveniently appear before scheduled workshops.	employees
place	individual location preferences	There are still managers who are very hierarchical. They want clear rules to bring people back to the office.	HR professionals
place	individual location preferences	But they would like to see a clear statement from the board. And it is very flowery. If it is not prescribed from above, nobody has the courage to simply enforce it.	HR professionals
place	individual location preferences	We are renting out a lot of buildings because it's no longer profitable. It's also a cost issue.	HR professionals
place	individual location preferences	We need to relearn a five-day week in hybrid work—not as a rigid requirement, but as a team-driven approach based on need and efficiency. On Mondays and Fridays, we see a fluctuation of between ten and 15% in attendance, whereas on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, we see a variation of between 30 and 45%.	HR professionals

place	individual location preferences	They've (executive board) hinted at two days a week, but since it's voluntary, most teams stick to one.	employees
place	working in the home office	A day at home is more productive than two weeks in the office.	employees
place	working in the home office	At least during the times when I am actually on site. There are fewer distractions. I can just do things and get them done.	general management
place	working in the home office	It definitely helps to be able to work in peace and quiet, without being distracted at home by other colleagues sitting in the office, talking on the phone, talking, receiving visitors. No colleagues coming in to exchange ideas. This is definitely beneficial for working on topics. Hybrid working, i.e. working from home, is definitely useful in this respect.	general management
place	working in the home office	I find it easier to manage my workload because I am less distracted.	general management
place	working in the home office	I have also found that I can work with incredible focus here at home in my home office.	employees
place	working in the home office	My commute is 45 minutes each way—that's an hour and a half I get back.	employees
place	working in the home office	You have to read, do calculations—background noise doesn't help.	employees
place	working in the home office	I want to live up to expectations, and the quality has to be right because I'm much more focused here.	general management
place	working in the home office	The hybrid set-up makes you more focused, especially when working from home, because you don't have a colleague standing in the doorway distracting you. And that means you get more done and basically you pack the table a bit fuller again, because before, you felt like you were just chatting for 2 or 3 hours a week and that was working time.	HR professionals
place	working in the home office	In virtual calls, I can have notes in front of me that the other person doesn't have access to, providing an anchor for support.	HR professionals
place	working in the home office	On the other hand, working from home gives me the opportunity to isolate myself a bit. I can say, 'I want to focus on something right now,' regardless of whether it goes past 12:00 or someone is running through the offices.	HR professionals
place	working in the home office	Definitely more productive in the home office—because you can focus, concentrate, and you're not distracted.	HR professionals
place	working in the home office	I can find spaces that are usually quieter and more isolated, allowing for better concentration.	HR professionals
place	working in the home office	I have more working hours without interruptions—no phone calls, visitors, or stairwell chats.	general management
place	working in the office	It worked before, but now we have a fixed day and we have scheduled our jour fixe or a work appointment on that day, where we simply sit down together for an hour.	general management
place	working in the office	I have been to a lot of workshops in the past and that's when I noticed that in-person workshops on site are definitely a minority, with only a few hybrids in between. So there are one or two people hanging around.	general management
place	working in the office	Our team jour fixe in person. Team development measures. Team retros. Team further developments were on the agenda again this week. In person, of course.	general management
place	working in the office	For onboarding, someone always goes to the office.	employees
place	working in the office	In the office, things move faster, and everyone is there.	employees
place	working in the office	a creative exchange or quick clarifications in the corridor	general management
place	working in the office	I definitely do them face-to-face when they might be more emotional.	general management
place	working in the office	On the other hand, of course, you are in the office, you are more compact, everyone is there, things go faster, you are perhaps more efficient to the minute.	employees
place	working in the office	On Wednesdays, we block the calendar for on-site meetings.	employees
place	working in the office	In my small apartment, it can be exhausting.	employees

place	working in the office	But despite all this routine, yes, so getting up in the morning, getting dressed in something sensible and so I'm almost anti-hybrid or working from home by now. Well, I don't want to overdo it either, but it's true that I say; it's great, it's fun, you go out, you have your routine.	general management
place	working in the office	When we have workshops to discuss ways of working together, it just makes more sense to do it in person.	HR professionals
place	working in the office	And you have to tell the individual in the common interest; the best way to do that is to have very, very good induction training and a very, very good social interaction. That means, for new colleagues it is very, very important that you pay a great deal of attention to the topic of team when it comes to the necessary presence.	HR professionals
place	working in the office	For new colleagues, presence plays a crucial role in team bonding.	HR professionals
place	working in the office	In person, of course, for personal interviews.	general management
place	working in the office	But the one-on-one meetings, if they take place once a quarter, usually take place in person.	general management

Appendix 3.5 Theme "time" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
time	definition of working time	(..) time tracking only records presence, not actual work or performance. Work never stops when I punch the time clock and then go out. It keeps you busy. You read the newspaper, you read some kind of technical literature at home in your armchair or read a trade journal.	general management
time	definition of working time	So the line between work and leisure is getting a bit blurred.	general management
time	definition of working time	The question of when work ends is extremely difficult to define.	general management
time	definition of working time	If you work from home, it's obvious. Then you have to forbid yourself and say when the day is over and the door is closed. Or for people who may not have a single office. The laptop is closed and I'm not doing anything more today. So I think you really need that self-discipline.	employees
time	definition of working time	The blurring between the world of work and, as the saying goes, this work-life integration. It's a very fine line. This degree and, on its own, the topic of the workplace. I've opened up my laptop, I can leave this workplace, but I still have my mobile phone, where I still do work. Do I report that as overtime? Not really.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	What about rest periods? What about working hours? The works council has less of a protective function there than it would like.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	Back in the good old days, I came to the office, went home, and it was all much clearer. Now, the line between work and private life is increasingly blurred.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	There were many people who didn't even realise how much more they were working. Actually having to record it helps.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	Unofficially, yes. Officially, no. Nobody is keeping records, so it's not visible—for us or the works council.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	When it was the very classic times; I came to the office, went home and somehow everything was much clearer. And now there is this popular topic of how work and private life are then separated from each other. That is something we have observed, that it has led to more exhaustion overall.	HR professionals
time	definition of working time	I think it's good that working hours are tracked to provide an overview for everyone's protection.	general management
time	definition of working time	Thanks to the working time tracking, I can see at a glance that the working hours are largely being adhered to. Is it also my job to make sure of that or to say, 'Hey, let's take a long weekend sometime'?	general management
time	definition of working time	When I'm on site and come home, I wouldn't sit down again to check emails. But at home, it takes self-discipline to close the laptop and stop working.	employees
time	definition of working time	You go home from the office and then leave your laptop in your bag.	employees
time	position and distribution of working hours	I have twins, who are now ten. I think it would have been really helpful for me at the beginning, and during this stressful time; I can see that my colleagues have it too, so it's definitely an advantage. It helps you to organise yourself better. I also have my own office at home, I have to say.	employees
time	position and distribution of working hours	We have very different working hours. Some start early—at seven.	employees
time	position and distribution of working hours	The employee was able to cite the aforementioned topics in his favour, that through improved work-life integration of employees, particularly with regard to the topic of concentrated work, (..)	HR professionals
time	position and distribution of working hours	(..) to integrate my private issues even better into the framework.	HR professionals
time	position and distribution of working hours	There are colleagues who like to work very early and others who need more time to start the day.	HR professionals
time	position and distribution of working hours	If someone does come in later, leave earlier or take a longer break, a short message is sent to the team so that colleagues and I are aware. But we can handle this flexibly and it works very well.	general management
time	position and distribution of working hours	It's a luxury to do an hour of emails or a PowerPoint presentation in the evening.	general management
time	position and distribution of working hours	In the office, by 6 p.m., people were gone. Now, the chat is active until 7 or 8 p.m.	employees

ime	position and distribution of working hours	You have complete freedom; I don't care when you work, as long as the results are there.	general management
ime	position and distribution of working hours	But basically, I think it's quite good that I can decide for myself whether or not to go to the office, except for Tuesdays.	employees
ime	position and distribution of working hours	So the team finds itself at the end. And if, for example, one colleague can only work until 3:30 p.m. and starts earlier because he has to pick up his children, then the team organises itself and everyone does it individually.	employees
ime	regular exchange	Jour fixe meetings allow for open questions and shared learning, which benefits everyone.Because you don't have the office exchange; I'll come to you in three days. You can't shout that across the office because we're not in the office.	general management
ime	regular exchange	Interdisciplinary exchange has suffered, but we counter it with regular meetings and topic-specific discussions to stay up to date.	employees
ime	regular exchange	Since we're not all in the office, our weekly exchange is crucial.	general management
ime	regular exchange	We have so many regular formats every week that location doesn't really matter.	employees
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	In these units, they already organise themselves to ensure availability—for example, from eight to 18:00—by dividing shifts accordingly.	HR professionals
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	Yes, there are some in the tech sector in particular who really do say that we answer questions and are available from nine to five. Not after that. So there are clear commitments among ourselves. I think there always has to be one or two people who are active.	HR professionals
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	Well, in IT, you have it a bit different. So, accessibility times are given by your service level agreements, which you provide to your customers.	general management
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	Despite all the flexibility, it's important to know when and how we can be reached.	general management
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	We don't have official working hours, but we ensure availability from nine to five. Someone is always reachable for each topic	employees
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	Everyone shares what they're working on, what's important, and what challenges they're facing. It gives an overview of team progress.	employees
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	We block our calendars to show when we are absent and back.	general management
ime	transparency about attendance/absence	But I have always tried to keep my calendar well organised, both on site and online or when working from home. For example, I also enter when I travel by train, because then people know that I might be difficult to reach, etc.	general management
ime	response time	It's important to clearly communicate expectations between managers and employees. Do I still expect a response if working hours have already been exceeded?	HR professionals
ime	response time	If we were in the office, you wouldn't ignore a direct question, so I expect at least an acknowledgment within 24 hours.	general management

Appendix 3.6 Theme "workload and overtime" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote	Target group
workload & overtime	increased load	Because the availability of IT systems means that something is always being worked on again. In the evening…	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	You're always available for your employer. Whether you take advantage of it is another question, but it's different now. Are you more efficient? I think so	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	There is social pressure because others are doing it, and that is the expectation. So in this respect, especially with those who are newer to the profession and don't know any different, I notice that they find it more difficult to draw a clear line.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	And you probably have more appointments than before, too, I would say now, looking at your calendar. I don't know what the cause is, but back then it was really [pauses] you had maybe an appointment on site for an hour or two and then some kind of buffer again, running from office to office. So it's just faster.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	To a certain extent, that [overtime] depends on the individual—how you see yourself, your role, and what level of commitment you are willing to show at work.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	You get topics sent to you via Teams in parallel. So, in the call, you discuss one task, and at the same time, you get the next task via Teams.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	Tasks come in more quickly. You get a call, answer a question, and solve an issue on the spot. It adds up.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	You probably have more meetings than before. In the past, there was buffer time when running from office to office. Now, everything happens faster.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	So, if you ask me now, do I work more than I used to? Then I would say; I work more now. But I also have more tasks than I used to.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	Is the workload increasing because of a change in the working model, or is it increasing because we have so much input from above that needs to be processed?	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	So the pace has increased, the demands have changed.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	More tasks, more topics, also due to hybrid work, also due to technical equipment.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	(..) work density, meeting density—more work is being done.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	I already start working on the train. It's not like before when you knew you'd leave at 5:00 p.m. because you had to pick up the kids.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	I think it's great that I can use the time on the train sensibly.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	Some people work on Saturdays just because they can. They do it at home.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	The workload has increased because of hybrid work. We move faster, have tighter schedules, and no longer have the distance between appointments.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	I no longer have to travel in the morning, which means I can start earlier and leave later. The line is very, very fine.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	You can't see when someone is overwhelmed. I don't see them sighing at their desk. When working remotely, it's easier not to see the mountain of work.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	Some tools allow us to work together faster, which also increases workload.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	On the one hand, I no longer have to travel, I have no way of switching from one meeting room to another. I just click on Leave appointment and click on Join next appointment.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	(..) the work package doesn't change just because you're working from a different location.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	But in the last measurement, we were also able to determine that, in terms of the question of which fields of action we need to work on, the topic of multichannel capability of employees was actually mentioned, along with the topic of fragmented work by employees due to the different media, the topic of actual dissolution of boundaries and the topic of work intensification.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	I believe that it is a positive development for managers, too, even if it is the same, because the demands on them have also increased.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	I no longer have to travel in the morning, which means I can arrive at work earlier and leave later. So, yes, from my point of view, the issue of overtime has increased, but it is a very, very fine line.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	increased load	I would say moderate. There is overtime, but I also have the opportunity to reduce it. Then there is one day a quarter that I accumulate overtime at some point.	employees

workload & overtime	increased load	From my point of view, it is the same.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	Yes, good question. I would almost say that it is actually perhaps similar.	general management
workload & overtime	increased load	Yes, good question. I would almost say that it is actually perhaps similar.	employees
workload & overtime	increased load	I would also say unchanged.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	role based workload/ relief	Maybe that's due to the role I have—I assign appointments rather than having them set for me. That is perhaps also the privilege of being a manager.	general management
workload & overtime	role based workload/ relief	I have my mobile phone with me—that's what I'm a team leader for. (..) and I'll catch that. I try to communicate that and then it's fine.	general management
workload & overtime	role based workload/ relief	Yes, there's more coming in, but it can be solved faster through digitalisation.	employees
workload & overtime	role based workload/ relief	Managers are always working more, and for them, overtime is simply part of their salary.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	role based workload/ relief	Hybrid work allows for a higher management span, which increases workload for some managers.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	We have the same ten tasks but the option of doing them from flexwork. That takes the pressure off.	general management
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	The minutes of the board meeting must be written, and there's a strict deadline. If I can work at home tomorrow, I save myself the trip to the office, have fewer interruptions (...) that takes a load off me.	general management
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	We have a weekly team jour fixe and a one-on-one. I find it okay, but my boss has to do this with everyone. It's different for her, but that's part of the job.	employees
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	So in the best case, if it is well planned, then maybe it can even be reduced as a result.	general management
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	That way, I know if I have any association appointments or anything with external parties that I would otherwise have to travel to. So, I would say that all this travel is rather optimised and, if necessary, improved than it is now.	general management
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	Collaboration has increased because I can get a colleague to help me instantly—I can share my screen, and we can look at it together.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	When in the office, I'd think twice about leaving early. But at home, it's easier to reduce overtime when needed.	HR professionals
workload & overtime	hybrid working model should allow relief	On the one hand, greater efficiency, which I assume for the moment. Hybrid work is already suited to achieving more in a shorter time and perhaps also to organising the day in such a way that overtime can be avoided.	HR professionals

Appendix 3.7 Theme "expectations and relationship with manager" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	I think that is also very different from the needs that each individual has. Because we are all not made the same way. I think that for someone for whom direct appreciation is very important, something has been lost. If your manager does not automatically see what you achieve every day because we all sit in one place.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	(..) I say it quite often because I hope that it also has a role model effect – When I start a 1:1, I put myself on 'do not disturb' to stay fully focused. So that they feel valued, that the time really belongs to them, but also so that they might do the same and I don't see their eyes wandering.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	Just going up to someone, sitting down for a chat	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	Hybrid work risks neglecting these, even though appreciation is key to company success.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	If you do something extra, it's nice to hear. But I don't think I need it that much.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	For someone who values direct appreciation, something has been lost if their manager no longer automatically sees what they do every day.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	It's good to say thanks for a job well done. That motivates everyone	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	I know that we now also have some disciplinary managers who may speak to their employees face to face once a month. And I do think that it makes a difference when you talk to your disciplinary manager weekly. Yes, and you somehow become closer as a result.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	I think it has become more difficult to make appreciation visible.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	Once out of the role of a manager, but it has become more difficult. Because appreciation has a lot to do with interpersonal and non-verbal aspects. This has also become more difficult between two people due to the loss of this personal communication and the introduction of the screen.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	It has become heavier.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	I think it has become more difficult to make the appropriate appreciation visible. But, as I said, we have found a solution where we are trying to do so.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	Managers who didn't show appreciation in the office won't do it virtually either.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	appreciation	Yes. I don't have to demand much there, it all fits very well.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	(..) because, I must actually say, I think it's easier when you're in a hybrid to leave again, because you're just not that connected to a company.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	Hybrid work makes employees' loyalty to their managers and vice versa less strong. With digital interactions, it's easier to feel distant.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	I have built a much better relationship with those I see regularly.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	It has significantly weakened the bond to a team or organisation.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	In my opinion, the social bond suffers as a result. I think that's only natural, though, because you don't get to know your colleagues that well. At least not the new ones.	employees

expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	Networking takes discipline in a hybrid setting.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	There are tasks where it is important to have a good bond that needs time to develop and grow. I think that this is simply more difficult in the hybrid world of work.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	I think it's a big issue when it comes to onboarding. We try to be more present during onboarding phases to train people properly. What's more difficult, of course, is building a network; that requires a lot of discipline.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	Managers are less present now. Before, they'd walk around, say good morning—it created a connection	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	You don't get to know your colleagues as well. That affects team relationships and employer loyalty.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	I know a lot of people in the organisation, so I'm not afraid to call anyone. That's an advantage.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	connection to manager/ overall employer	I arrange to meet for coffee, even if I feel I don't have time. It's important, especially for younger colleagues. You have to take the initiative—reach out to colleagues, go for lunch with them. It was easier in the office when there were more natural points of contact.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	But I think what has changed, what necessarily had to change, is the relationship of trust on the part of the managers, because they just didn't see everything anymore, they really didn't go through the office and see employees A, B and C are there and they also take a break from time to time.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	(..) difficult to grasp in the hybrid.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	I think some people might have had a small problem with that at the beginning, but they necessarily had to come to terms with the fact that they had to have confidence that the work performed in the home office would be just as good as in the office. But I actually believe that a great many people have coped with this very well and in most cases, there is no difference between performance in the office and in the home office.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	Managers necessarily had to change their relationship of trust because they no longer saw everything. They used to walk through the office and see who was there and when they took breaks.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	(..) it's stronger, greater trust and less control.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	Just because you're not under observation doesn't mean you do less.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	That has changed completely and I also find it very positive that trust is given and lived and is also justified in my view and from my experience, that no one, just because they are not under observation, somehow does less. So in this respect, the topic of greater trust and less control is, in my view, the biggest change that has come about as a result of hybrid leadership.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	I'm not one to micromanage or dictate solutions, but rather to empower people to develop solutions.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	trust	Because I don't hang around on their desks micromanaging and hover over them and check every cell they fill in.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	Introverts don't get a chance to speak digitally. I always advise managers to keep an eye on those who are more inconspicuous	HR professionals

expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	I might be in an online meeting, raise my hand, and contribute. As an introvert, I have more opportunities to prepare and speak	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	Do I feel I'm only seen when I'm in the office? Or is it about the results I deliver?"	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	I also notice how my colleagues struggle (..) Which doesn't mean that they somehow have worse ideas or are dumber, but are simply more introverted. And I think that the conditions are much easier for me to be visible now because I can easily use all these channels and I don't know, just be present in a meeting. I think the opportunities for introverts are becoming fewer.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	You tend to lose the introverts. They don't write, don't respond, or take longer than others.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	But I think the opportunity for visibility has actually become easier because I might be in an online meeting or call and can raise my hand, get involved. As an introverted person, I might have the opportunity to prepare some talking points again.	HR professionals
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	The discussion has shifted online, but contributions are still visible. Depending on the case, it goes both ways and you can see the work results if someone has delivered good results and worked without errors. You can see that today just as you could in the past.	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	We have people who dominate discussions. It's harder to get a word in than in a physical room	general management
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	With more digital work, things that used to happen in the background are now more visible, and that benefits the team.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	If I ask a question in chat, I know who will respond within five minutes.	employees
expectations towards and relationship with manager	visibility of employees	Hybrid work doesn't change my opportunities to contribute. We have plenty of ways to exchange ideas.	employees

Appendix 3.8 Theme "managing people" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
managing people	controlling/ steering	Or how far have you got now? Can you have it ready by the end of the week? Maybe by next week? The fact that we would have seen each other in the office anyway meant that this commitment was unnecessary from the start.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	You could always get a daily update, so to speak, over the phone, but that's falling by the wayside. That's why the packages need to be better tailored and communication formats established that allow a status update to be given to the team or to individuals.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	And this commitment and information transfer then works either by assigning a task in the task planner, that I just say; okay, I have the tasks with the deadline by then and then and that will then be every Monday, so to speak, we have three modes for this, either jour fixe, that I take the task in as an update, a new task; I have taken on a new task from the risk office, something that I will discuss with you.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	As a manager, it is also my job to prioritise together with my team. (..) to say what comes first and what comes after. This works to a certain extent, but is of course counteracted by tasks that come in very ad hoc, so that the workload is significantly higher there too.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	The responsible tasks are always handled by two colleagues in a tandem.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	So what is often said, which of course is also ensured by the managers, is that when a team is working, there is always a substitute when someone is on holiday or sick, that all this is somehow defined and that, of course, you don't work at other times because of it.	employees
managing people	controlling/ steering	It just so happens that so-called "tandems" have formed. That means colleagues who have to work closely together. That's also generally a strong tandem structure that we have here in the department. That these colleagues naturally make sure that they are in the office at the same time, so that they can simply have a personal exchange together.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	There should be a representative there.	general management
managing people	controlling/ steering	We have substitution arrangements in place, so everything is coordinated for holidays, and the substitute is usually your QA partner for that topic.	employees
managing people	controlling/ steering	(..) How do you find a way between providing a framework and freedom? And still make sure that it works? I think it has become a bit more difficult to manage hybrid working, even if it's not essential. But I think it's something you can reap if more opportunities arise. At the same time, a manager also has to consider at which points they should intervene.	HR professionals
managing people	controlling/ steering	And what's more for managers, but which is also sometimes a team effort, is to simply coordinate and manage in order to then realise presence and meetings on site.	HR professionals
managing people	controlling/ steering	But I realise that it's all very difficult to reconcile, whether it's team events, team appointments like retrospectives, workshops, which certainly need a lot more preparation. So in the spring, you have to plan or you have to coordinate a lot, then you have to make sure that a large part of the team can actually be there when it matters.	HR professionals
managing people	delegation	After that, there are status updates in our weekly, so to speak. (..) then the communication is more of a companion to create opportunities/space for questions that arise. Because I do notice that the inhibition threshold is also higher then. Especially when you're new or somehow don't dare yet and think to yourself; I have to somehow bite my way through.	general management
managing people	delegation	Intermediate feedback. You run the risk of being in your own little world […] so that there is a bit of reassurance along the way, I make sure that I check that it's on the right track.	general management
managing people	delegation	The way the tasks are defined is actually more crucial. In other words, how do I lead? What tasks does each of us have? And if these are clearly defined, then in my opinion it doesn't really matter whether we work in hybrid mode or are in the bank.	general management
managing people	delegation	Yes, depending on how complex it is, I have a kick-off meeting on some topics. There are things that can be briefly explained in writing and then are self-explanatory. But when we tackle something larger, then the task is briefly written down and then there is a clarification meeting where we go through it all and then we start.	general management
managing people	delegation	Depending on the workload, to stay close to the employee. A female employee, so is she busy? It is actually more difficult [pauses] because it requires more buffer time, in that you can actively take time because an on-site meeting is simply no longer there. That is, so to speak, actually extra time that would have to be taken into account.	general management

managing people	delegation	And in my view, it is important to have regular touchpoints with employees, both in teams and in one-on-one meetings, in order to be close to them and not to leave the team to its own devices, but to support the team in being successful.	HR professionals
managing people	delegation	What is important for hybrid leadership, but also for leadership in a culture of presence, are simply goals that I agree with the team. I agree on regular touchpoints where I can track the goals, not in the sense of controlling, but rather in the sense of saying, 'This is the path we want to take. What do you need to achieve this goal?'	HR professionals
managing people	delegation	Because you don't have that momentum, you run into someone in the office by chance, you pick something up and can take it up. That means you actually have to create more situations to provoke the fact that you then have exactly this relevant touchpoint.	HR professionals
managing people	delegation	This means that you have to come up with other ideas and make sure that you have an equal distribution, that you make sure that someone is not overburdened or overwhelmed, and that you still build up a close relationship with the individual, even if you don't see each other in the office every day."	HR professionals
managing people	delegation	(..) actually a methodical approach. Thinking about how to develop these topics. How do I activate this in the other person as well?	HR professionals
managing people	employee-centred approach	I try to appeal to their conscience regularly. The topic of mindfulness, because some of my colleagues are a bit older. One of them is about to retire soon, and I think that at some point other topics will become more important. And then I think: it's great what you're doing here, I can only appreciate your work, but also take an early evening off when it suits you and somehow try to create your own balance.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	I now think more; People first for Organisation, if you will. Because I think it comes from this current zeitgeist, which is so prevalent in the bank, with the Fit for Growth. I also think; okay the organisation does with you as an individual what it wants, then you can also do with the organisation within your scope - as far as is justifiable - what you want.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	So when I think back to how presence management used to be, or to when I started at the bank, I definitely see a difference now in that you really focus on the person much more – at least, that's my ideal.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	Also with regard to work-life balance, I'll say it now. For example, when we start our jour fixe during the week, I always take the temperature: How's the weather right now? How are you feeling? I can't remember doing that in person before.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	You could tell by looking at people, and when they sat there like that [folded her arms across her chest], you can see that now, too. But still, I don't think you can quite grasp the facial expressions and gestures like you can in the room. But I think in the past it just wasn't an issue that interested people in the context of leadership.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	'you focus much more [...] on people"	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	And I believe that this human factor will become more and more important the more globalised and digitalised the world is and the more Gen Z and no idea what they're called after that. Are we back to A again? [Laughs] I don't know. They place much more value on it. (..) And so you need people who are good at this, who can somehow convey warmth and empathy even through the screen, who can inspire trust.	general management
managing people	employee-centred approach	And in general, this world of meetings has also become completely topsy-turvy for us. When everyone was in the room, there was automatic chatting. In virtual meetings, everyone is silent at first. We introduced check-in questions to counteract this.	employees
managing people	employee-centred approach	Deliberately not technical [questions]. Far from the [case study organisation].	employees
managing people	self assessement of managing behaviour	Yes, I actually like it. Well, I only know it in this hybrid form as a manager. I wasn't a manager before.	general management
managing people	self assessement of managing behaviour	In my current role as a manager, I have only worked hybrid, so I can't make a direct comparison to before Corona - when I only did office work - because then I only worked in the office and in a different role.	general management
managing people	self assessement of managing behaviour	No, I don't think so. I'm someone who doesn't like to micromanage and doesn't like to prescribe solutions, but rather empowers people to develop solutions. I wouldn't say that the way I work has changed that. Rather, it plays into my hands because I don't even get tempted to manage people. I can't do it. It's just not possible.	general management
managing people	self assessement of managing behaviour	(..) personal leadership style had not changed as a result of hybrid working.	general management
managing people	self assessement of managing behaviour	My leadership behaviour is characterised by certain behaviours. This means, what is important to me? For example, I often talk to employees or I don't talk to employees so much. I engage in dialogue and have solutions presented to me or I do it less, but just monitor whether deadlines are being met, etc. So no matter how I behave in terms of my personal leadership style, I don't think it matters or there has been no change now that we are working hybrid.	general management

Appendix 3.9 Theme "communication" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
communication	added value of communication in presence	You can't fully compensate for in-person interaction in hybrid work—you can only learn how to manage without it. But it's still important to have both.	HR professionals
communication	added value of communication in presence	In the past, you saw [name] every day. Now, when someone suggests meeting in person, it suddenly carries more value.	HR professionals
communication	added value of communication in presence	So, in terms of content and interpersonal relationships, I have noticed that seeing someone also has a different quality. That is to say, in the past you might have been annoyed more often at having seen one person or another. Today, it's more the case that you're not happy to see people in the office, but on average you see more people.	HR professionals
communication	added value of communication in presence	This randomness, that is significantly less and therefore more demanding. And that is why the argument for hybrid activity is valid at the same time, that you still have this on-site encounter because you can't somehow heal or compensate for that. You can only learn or practice how to deal with it. And yet it is important to have both.	HR professionals
communication	added value of communication in presence	In person, it's much more pleasant because you present yourself quite differently. You can also see a lot more of the other person's body language. You can't tell from here whether I'm sitting with my legs crossed under the table or whether I'm sitting with my legs open. And that's all very limited, as is the sympathy that you can show for the other person	general management
communication	added value of communication in presence	That's one thing that's still a bit lacking, even though it's important to me that everyone is doing well. And so I think it's just that in the morning you see everyone arriving one after the other, everyone greeting each other. The boss does a round, 'Morning, morning,' goes, pokes his head in everywhere. That's missing because we don't do a daily check-in like that.	general management
communication	added value of communication in presence	The biggest risk that comes with it is these blind spots that you don't even see and don't even know about. Because you don't see – even with the quality of the camera alone – I don't see whether I have dark circles under my eyes or not. So for me, it's more about appreciating this, about having a duty of care towards employees, than really organising it.	general management
communication	added value of communication in presence	Also, to be able to address things in an uncomplicated way, to talk about things that may be on your mind but for which you wouldn't organise a video conference, [..] And then you talk in presence for three minutes, have clarified things or really exchanged ideas creatively	general management
communication	added value of communication in presence	I'm sitting in the open-plan area, two people are talking, I pick it up. I try to think about it myself, pick up more information, pass it on, whatever. So this, this kind of communication, it just doesn't really exist anymore	general management
communication	information	And if the manager doesn't integrate it well into the communication topics, then of course it won't have a positive effect.	HR professionals
communication	information	If my manager is in the office, I can quickly pick up information, but others who aren't there might miss out. This sometimes makes the whole communication loop difficult.	HR professionals
communication	information	Leadership needs to be rethought. There's a difference between talking in person and exchanging ideas digitally. How can I create a personal space that doesn't end at the screen?	HR professionals
communication	information	You have to find the right time, you have to find the right group, and so on. That's why I say it makes things more exhausting. But I think it makes it better. Now we're on to the next one. I don't even know [pauses] that wasn't your question at all, but I think it does get better because you are actually thinking about it; what is my goal? How do I want to achieve it? Writing it down is also a super lot	general management
communication	information	You have to think about what formats you do, with which group of participants you do it. Who do I tell what and when? This was relevant before, but it becomes even more important in a hybrid way of working.	general management
communication	information	How do I get information distributed efficiently in organisations? I would say it works. Okay, I haven't heard of anyone who basically always feels left out.	general management
communication	information	Because we have jour fixe twice a week, it's easy to pass things on. And I also use Teams sometimes. So I check; do we have jour fixe tomorrow? This information can wait until tomorrow, because there's something that's supposed to take effect in June or something.	general management
communication	information	I think the difference is that communication is a bit more organised. Because you don't just go into the office where all the employees are sitting together; so big announcement very important - but it has to be organised to some extent, either by using existing agreed appointments for a communication or, if it is really very relevant, trying to get everyone together on the spur of the moment, which is quite difficult though due to the high density of appointments that everyone has.	general management

communication	information	Well, it's much more difficult because it has to be made more explicit. […] You simply talk a lot more and communicate a lot more because you see each other. […] Which makes it much more difficult with hybrid working or remote working. So you have to make it much more explicit. You have to share formats, you have to write it down, you have to communicate it well. […] That's why I say it makes things more strenuous. But I think it makes it better.	general management
communication	information	It's 100% digital, and everyone has their preferred method—meetings, email, or chat. But it works well.	employees
communication	information	We never had regular department-wide exchanges before. Now, every four weeks, 140 people join a meeting where updates and new projects are shared.	employees
communication	information	Actually, pretty well. And either an email is forwarded or something is written via a chat.	employees
communication	information	With Teams, it's easy for two people to agree separately, and sometimes you don't get to hear about all the topics. And it's like a triangle, and you talk to this person and he says something to that person. But I think that's up to us. You can just set a common appointment. That's what it's for.	employees
communication	information	Well, we have team channels where you can upload certain files. We have team chats where you just quickly drop a line. Just talked to so-and-so about such-and-such. Just like you normally would.	employees
communication	information	If I had to summarise it in one word, I would say it is more exhausting. Well, it is much more difficult because it has to be made more explicit.	general management
communication	information	However, it is much more exhausting and, especially with controversial topics, I notice time and again that it would help to sit down together for this, because this non-verbal communication is lost.	general management
communication	information	Well, this explicitness of communication, I think that is the biggest change between the former normal and the new normal.	general management
communication	information	Hybrid working also has a lot to do with asynchronous communication. Yes, and then there's the asynchrony in the sense of me having to do it afterwards in a way that is comprehensible to others.	general management
communication	information	In that sense, I do think that it is being promoted to the extreme, with new formats coming up all the time. It's about thinking about what you can offer and what you want to report on. So I think it has taken on a different significance.	employees
communication	information	You have to consider what format works best and be more attuned to your colleagues' needs.	employees
communication	information	If there's an IT issue, I get notified through five different channels—email, chat, and Confluence. It can be too much	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	I think it was very, very difficult at the beginning because we had to go from zero to 100. Or actually the other way around, from 100 to zero. And accordingly, all formats had to be rethought, including all the communication formats that you have. And you had to think about what you actually need now that you no longer see each other.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	I think I would look, especially when I have a hybrid team, what are some of the guidelines that I include? How do we want to interact with each other? What are the formats in which we come together? How do we share the work? How do we ensure exchange? I would try to sort that out as a leader.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	The longer you do something, the more routine it becomes. But you need honesty to admit what doesn't work. (::) and that's the case with every sport and every hobby. And you have to build up that routine. And that requires a certain amount of discipline. It requires a certain amount of self-reflection, but also of honesty; to say what isn't working well.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	What applies to managers? What applies to employees? Making availability transparent—am I green, am I absent? These things need to be arranged.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	It starts with simple things: how often do we exchange ideas? What are our responsibilities? How do we document and coordinate?	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	Otherwise, you keep having the same discussions—'Where did this come from?' We need to clarify once and for all how we want to work together.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	We are simply really focused on not losing this person. So we just focus on it, especially the moderator. And then we have good meeting etiquette. Rules defined for us.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	This means creating exchange formats where the team compensates for what was taken for granted in the pre-corona period. And even then, in this context, I would say it makes it a little more sustainable because everyone can join in, everyone can take part in these exchange formats.	HR professionals
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	I think we have a relatively homogenous structure in the way we understand how to work, so we don't clap each other now. If we had different or very, very divergent personality profiles that couldn't now take a step back or adapt well to the other, then that would probably be the case. But I don't have that at the moment.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	And for that, you have to have a knack for how you want to interact with each other. But we've all developed that quite well. I haven't had any nasty surprises yet where someone has taken advantage of that. That's why there aren't really many rules of etiquette. The only one is perhaps more of a question of attitude. I've given in that I'll watch your back, my team, and that crap can happen from time to time. But then I want to be proactively pointed out so that I don't run into trouble and then we can work out how to deal with it internally. But I'm willing to take the blame for any mess you might have somehow created, so to speak, as a manager.	general management

communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	For me, it's just important to discuss expectations and rules in the team that are okay for everyone, where everyone says, okay, yes, I'll do that. And that you just say, for example, okay, and if we do a workshop like that, it would be cool if everyone came, because I won't do it in hybrid form.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	A few netiquette rules, but also something like that; how do I manage to be resilient in this flood of information and also in this constantly changing world.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	The rules state that if someone is on red, you don't call them, but write to them briefly; if it's convenient, do you have five minutes? As a manager, I pay attention to this and of course I expect the same. And it works very well, at least for us internal.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	So if someone has their camera off, I don't really like it. So in that sense, it's not at all appropriate in the team meeting	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	If I call someone, I always use the camera—face-to-face.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	We have central storage locations for, for example, decisions that we make. There are central, readable places where you can look up where things, where decisions are documented	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	so we set up this one format again. This is an hour during the week, this work appointment, where we all get together again and discuss current problems and hurdles, really at the working level. Either your topic can wait until then or if you have something, then of course we have our own team chat for us.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	We use Confluence for documentation.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	Yes, we are actually organised with Teams and […] we have written down our delivery objects, which have emerged from a materiality analysis and are grouped into fields of action, i.e. our internal products. […] have also transferred this to our team folder structure.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	I use Outlook for formal messages or documentation, but for a quick question, I go to MS Teams.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	No, the only thing [pauses] we have on the Confluence page is our jour fixe, where everything is simply entered. So first of all, what topics we have, what is being discussed by the team now, so that you can review the last few weeks. Otherwise, we have a folder structure that we developed at some point. But it's only important in certain subject areas that you really have folders 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in the same order.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	In principle, everyone has access to the folders. But not via OneDrive. In that case, we give permission for the folder. That's when we have votes or something like that, then we use OneDrive that anyone can sign, then it's already initiated that way.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	(..) smaller meetings, we speak freely, but in bigger ones, we raise our hands or use signals.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	We have a team jour fixe every week with an agenda on Confluence, plus various Teams channels for quick coordination.	employees
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	For me, it's just important to discuss expectations and rules in the team that are okay for everyone, where everyone says, okay, yes, I'll do that. And that you just say, for example, okay, and if we do a workshop like that, it would be great if everyone came, because I won't do it hybrid.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	Well, I'm not particularly satisfied. I would actually like to see a higher level of commitment to face-to-face work, but I don't want to prescribe it […].	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	Well, we have almost nothing.	general management
communication	rules/ agreed collaboration	But if I now really reflect on our conversation, I believe that I personally have to do more to ensure that I arrange fixed appointments with the individual people. So I think that's something I'll take away from the conversation for myself as well.	general management

Appendix 3.10 Theme "performance" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
performance	no long-term studies	I've heard that burnout and depression rates have increased. This model isn't for everyone—you have to be very structured when no one is there to check on you.	employees
performance	no long-term studies	We keep pushing our brains to exhaustion without giving them a break—like a footballer training without resting before match day.	HR professionals
performance	no long-term studies	Yes, I also read a very exciting article recently, exactly on this topic. And there was a very nice analogy compared to the topic of footballer versus knowledge work. (..) And the topic of knowledge work, that we keep putting more and more strain on the brain and allow ourselves little time to rest, so to speak.	HR professionals
performance	no long-term studies	That means break times, also breaks between appointments in general. The duration of the working days is certainly something that you have to keep a closer eye on and take more care of.	HR professionals
performance	no long-term studies	I can well imagine – from what I've heard – what I've also heard, that the rate of burnout and depression has increased. I also believe that this model, especially at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, brings with it completely different cause-and-effect models and that it doesn't apply to everyone. Because you have to be very structured when there's no one to control you, right?	employees
performance	organisational performance	It's generic enough to reflect different organisational goals, whether share values or charitable benefits.	general management
performance	organisational performance	No, I haven't really looked into the term in depth yet, but from my first impression, I think it's what I would have had in mind. It's a bit more formal, exactly. But I can work with that. All good.	general management
performance	organisational performance	I would agree.	general management
performance	organisational performance	No, it's fine for me. It fits.	general management
performance	organisational performance	Nah. I think that if you say organisation is the entire [case study organisation] as a group with its, and I thought that was a good keyword, multidimensional influencing factors, which can be many, from technology to blah, then I can relate to that.	general management
performance	organisational performance	No, I think the definition is very apt and also very comprehensive.	employees
performance	organisational performance	Yes, it fits.	employees
performance	organisational performance	No, it fits.	employees
performance	organisational performance	Yes, that's about right.	employees
performance	organisational performance	(..) the collective achievement of individual actors.	HR professionals
performance	organisational performance	No, that fits with the topic of organisational performance. I would describe that as performance. Yes, that fits.	HR professionals
performance	organisational performance	That's fitting. I can understand that well.	HR professionals
performance	underperformance/ low performance	You need a fine sensor for it—otherwise, an employee can take advantage of that.	general management
performance	underperformance/ low performance	You look at it much more closely now and then you notice – well, you get a feeling – you notice it more quickly when a person like that disappears. Because people who are performance cases usually disappear.	general management
performance	underperformance/ low performance	And I think you can identify them more easily in hybrid working. They usually disappear and are no longer visible. And you notice that relatively quickly.	general management
performance	underperformance/ low performance	It already existed before.	general management
performance	underperformance/ low performance	They stand out more now. They stand out more in hybrid working. In on-site work, people were just there, present, and you said; oh yes, she does that because she's there.	general management

rformance	underperformance/ low performance	The issues we would have in the office are basically the same.	HR professionals
rformance	underperformance/ low performance	I think it's more challenging to recognise this as a manager.	HR professionals
rformance	underperformance/ low performance	In the office, you could assume someone was working just because they were sitting there. Now, if work results are missing, it's more noticeable.	HR professionals
rformance	underperformance/ low performance	You notice it when you're in doubt – and it actually contradicts itself a bit now – on the one hand, you probably find it harder to grasp as a manager or you notice it more.	HR professionals
rformance	underperformance/ low performance	So yes, that may sound a bit abstruse now, but I think in the office you had the feeling that you could see even more of what the employee was doing, whether they were more productive there or not. I dare to doubt that. But if you no longer have any real visibility over them and then you get little, then you can't keep an eye on them as much. But you notice it more when in doubt, because otherwise you would have at least seen him in the office and what is he doing? Is he typing something, for example? I'll put it a bit casually, sorry, but if the work results are missing, you might notice it even more when working remotely, because you are simply a bit unsure as a manager.	HR professionals
rformance	underperformance/ low performance	I think it is more challenging to recognise this as a manager.	HR professionals
rformance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	If you define productivity as actions per minute, hybrid work has significantly increased mine.	general management
rformance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	Productivity means I have [stops]... so for me that is, I have achieved the agreed goals in the time and managed.	general management
rformance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	Back then, you could measure presence and assume workload based on how long someone sat in the office. But now, in hybrid work, you can't see how long someone has been busy.	HR professionals
rformance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	I think we need to distinguish here: what kind of mindset do I have? So am I a manager who feels productive when they see their employees? Then I would tend to say that they are not more productive because they are constantly asking themselves the question, 'What are my employees doing?' I can't see them.	HR professionals
rformance	impact of hybrid work	It ensures good work performance and motivation (..).	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	Some have small children, both partners work, and this flexibility ensures they can still perform well.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	We get more done in less time through video calls and structured online meetings.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	I perform differently in a different setting, but the number of tasks remains the same.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	I do think that they are more productive because, as I said, many of them don't live in Berlin and also have a family. And they also appreciate being able to organise their work freely. Some people are early risers and really want to start working at six, but would probably never be in the office at six because they would have to travel for an hour and a half. That kind of thing. That's why I do believe that it has a major impact on productivity, that you can plan it so closely with your life.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	would say I can get more done. Yes, we have a lot on our plates, but we're still meeting deadlines.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	Just mentioned – some have small children, both partners work, sometimes both at DKB, and in this respect it is really very profitable because the flexibility that is provided also ensures, at least that's how I see it in practice, that everyone can perform their work well according to their individual needs.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	I can organise my day more independently and thus bring it more into line with my private life. That simply makes me happier and more satisfied.	general management
rformance	impact of hybrid work	You have it all virtually, we see each other, we can share things—that's efficiency.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	I think it's very good. I like the flexibility of being able to go to the office if I want to. And if I don't want to, I just stay at home.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	Someone who used to have long coffee breaks at the office won't suddenly become a workaholic at home.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	My calendar is always full of appointments.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	If my boss is in meetings all day, I can't just barge in, but I can message her on Teams and she'll reply when she can.	employees
rformance	impact of hybrid work	Some things work better at home, others in the office. The mix makes it work.	employees

performance	impact of hybrid work	That's why I say it's a question of how I measure productivity. If I measure it in terms of output, I have become more productive.	general management
performance	impact of hybrid work	And in this respect, I rate it very, very positively, because in my view it provides good work performance and good motivation. And it also works very well in the management by me and my team.	general management
performance	impact of hybrid work	I would say it tends to improve because I no longer do anything that doesn't feel right, but at least have a bit of space to decide for myself and then also feel more commitment and more freedom to direct my energies to the bank in what I consider to be the right way.	general management
performance	impact of hybrid work	Some people feel that the days are much more structured because everything is organised through Outlook appointments. In the past, you clarified and discussed a lot over the desk. And when I look at my calendar today, it's just always, always full of appointments.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	Of course, things can be clarified more quickly. Well, it's [pauses] with teams, you can write messages faster, you can get someone you're working with – even from other departments – involved faster, share screens and look at things together.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	I think that overall it is becoming blurred that they have all become more productive.	general management
performance	impact of hybrid work	I perform differently in a different setting. It's a shift, not an issue at all, if we really only pay attention to the issues. Yes, I have a list of ten tasks here and they have to be done. Yes, of course. Then it is as you say. But you also mentioned how it feels.	general management
performance	impact of hybrid work	I would say the same.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	Well, it certainly doesn't make you less productive. [Pauses] It's personally more convenient, which also motivates you, because you save yourself the journey.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	I think it's consistent. [Pauses] Well, I've been more productive than during the coronavirus pandemic, because then no one had the choice of going to the office. But it depends: I can do some tasks better in the home office, some better in the office. It depends entirely on the task, but that's why I would say more or less the same, because if I know I have something to do that is better done in the office, then I go to the office.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	I would say it is the same on average.	employees
performance	impact of hybrid work	The hybrid set-up makes you more focused, especially when working from home, because you don't have a colleague standing in the doorway distracting you. And that means you get more done and basically you pack the table a bit fuller again, because before, you felt like you were just chatting for 2 or 3 hours a week and that was working time.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	You can quickly bring people together for coordination, which increases productivity.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	The managers I supervise are all very, very productive and always available, and I think they are even more so because they feel they have to be available all the time. So they are at least as productive, if not more so, because now they always have their work with them at home as well.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	work is getting done, but it's simply happening in a different way. Does it affect management? I don't think so. I think it's just more flexible.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	A significant share of productivity is the result of time that was previously spent commuting or taking breaks.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	I think it has developed and above all because we all have a Teams account and everyone works with it or writes a quick chat message. So I think it has become much easier.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	But I find the pure work packages and the tasks have not changed because we have decided that someone can work from home.	HR professionals
performance	impact of hybrid work	There will certainly be some that have become more efficient as a result. But there are also bound to be some that then had performance issues.	HR professionals
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	If you define productivity as actions per minute, hybrid work has significantly increased mine.	general management
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	I can see in OneNote how long something has been sitting there or if it's progressing.	general management
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	What topics have you actually worked on over the year? You invest time and effort—does that get recognised?	employees
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	Our work results have always been digital and always disclosed, because they only had an effect when we disclosed them. The code was there, the code became the programme, the programmes were installed, were and could be used by their users. That means that our work results have always been disclosed. The way there also always had to be disclosed, simply because the supervisor was also watching. Did you test it? Did you document it, etc.? Show me all of that. In that respect, nothing has changed.	general management

performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	In the hybrid, this topic of tracking, i.e. tasks, progress monitoring and such things has become more important in the sense of; I don't want to monitor it at all, but we have to document it somewhere. And we now work together more collaboratively in the shared OneNote via hybrid. So, we suddenly have a notebook that you used to have on your desk, privately for you. In that sense, we have now shared it and I can see at any time whether something is happening there or not.	general management
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	But I can see in OneNote or in the tickets where things are being added and moving forward, I can see more quickly that something is happening there or how long something has been lying there that is not happening. And you can also work in tickets beforehand – that's all true, but I have the feeling that hybrid working has also done that. That the work is becoming more transparent.	general management
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	What topics have actually been worked through each year? What is of course more difficult is to process this in these development dialogues and say: look, I did this, you can remember, we invested a lot of time in this, or I invested time and effort in this, to show productivity. Is that on your screen then?	employees
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	It is also my responsibility, including my professional responsibility, to ensure that we keep an eye on the issues. And as I said, I am in regular contact with the relevant people to make sure I know who has what on the table and how things are progressing.	general management
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	But would I want to ask the counter-question: do I recognise it when I see more in the employee? No, I am more likely to recognise it by setting goals, pursuing goals and regularly checking in with the team to see where they actually stand. And that's where performance actually comes to my attention.	HR professionals
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	You don't have to hold their hands on the way to the coffee machine, but it helps to have a sense of what is currently on your employees' minds. What might be on their plates right now? What is their workload like?	HR professionals
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	If we were to have a dedicated performance measurement, we would need the works council. But at the end of the day, you're judged on the task packages you complete.	HR professionals
performance	understanding of performance/ productivity estimate	I don't recognise performance just by seeing employees work—I see it by setting goals and checking in regularly.	HR professionals

Appendix 3.11 Theme "structural implications" with sub-themes & quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quote	Target group
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	No, not that I can think of, and I don't have anything on my mind.	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	I wouldn't necessarily say that hybrid working caused a structural change, but rather that other challenges led to structural reorganisation.	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	The organisational structures form a framework, they set guardrails. But how these are filled depends on the rules agreed upon within the team.	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	That's a very good question again. I would actually say no. I don't think it has anything to do with where you work, but rather how you want to work?	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	It's not about organisational structure but about operational structure. Hybrid work requires the right processes and regulations to function effectively.	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	No, I think that if you have a good working relationship, a manager who is close to the employees, then hybrid working can succeed regardless of the formal structure. But you have to work at it. Yes.	HR professionals
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	I don't think it has or had any impact in either direction. It should actually work the same whether you're completely on-site or completely remote.	general management
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	No, no influence from hybrid working.	general management
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	The main phase of hybrid working didn't bring any restructuring or team changes for us. They didn't do that at the time. No.	employees
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	This is completely independent of the rest of the work.	employees
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	I can't even tell you that, I'd have to think about it now. So I don't feel it.	employees
structural implications	no connection to hybrid work	Well, the matrix was just introduced. Last year in May in IT and I've been in the lead since September. But I can't say what the driving factor was, was it the hybrid collaboration? Probably not.	general management