



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Remote work and organizational culture for innovation:
*How organizational culture for innovation has been managed
when working remotely*

School of Business, Economics and Law - University of Gothenburg

Master Thesis

GM0461, Degree Project in Innovation and Industrial Management

Spring term 2022

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is the final work of our master's program Innovation and Industrial Management at the School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg.

First, we would like to thank everyone who participated in the study. It has been very interesting for us to discuss organizational culture and innovation with you. To gain insights in how you and your organization's work have also been interesting for us. We are sure that this experience will help us in our future careers.

Secondly, we would like to thank our classmates who have provided feedback during group discussion sessions over the past semester. Your feedback has been very valuable and has contributed to making this thesis better in every way. We wish all of you good luck in your future careers.

Lastly, thank you to our supervisor, Karin Berg, for providing us with her knowledge and encouraging us to constantly move forward.

Thank you!

Carl Bergström & Carl Börjesson

Abstract

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, organizations had to change the way they worked as employees had to work remotely. This abrupt transition to working remotely has brought many complications, one of which relates to organizations ability to sustain an innovative culture. This research aims to understand how organizations have managed their culture for innovation when employees have been working remotely. The companies in scope of the study are innovative organizations operating in Sweden where employees have experience from working remotely over some period of time. To enable assessment of how organizations have managed the organizational culture for innovation, a theoretical framework was defined in which Schein's (1990) model for organizational culture served as a foundation.

The proposed theoretical framework accounts for three dimensions of organizational culture for innovation. These are *Values supporting an innovative culture*, *Norms for an innovative culture*, and *Artifacts of an innovative culture*. The theoretical framework proposed that remote work has impacted all these dimensions.

The empirical results show that although organizations have experienced issues in sustaining a culture for innovation, no impact on the values supporting an innovative culture could be found. However, findings show how organizations have introduced new, and adapted old, norms and artifacts to sustain an organizational culture for innovation when working remotely.

Concepts

Remote work

Remote work means that the employee conducts the work from another geographical location than the traditional office in terms of both space (location) and time (Olson, 1983). The remote work concept is applied in this research to study organizational culture for innovation.

Organizational culture

Formally, organizational culture is defined as beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are characteristic of a group of people (Warrick, 2015). In practice, it is described as the environment in which people work within and what influence this environment has on how they act, think and experience work (Warrick, Milliman & Ferguson, 2016).

Organizational innovation

Organizational innovation is considered as a continuous process of problem solving rather than a specific result of an individual's actions and may arise from learning-by-using, learning-by-doing, or learning-by-sharing through internal or external knowledge and the absorption capacity of firms (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Dogson, 1991). Innovation can also be considered as either radical or incremental (e.g., Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005), technical or administrative (e.g., Han et al., 1998), or product or process (e.g., Chen, 2009).

Schein's organizational culture model

Edgar Schein's model for organizational culture distinguished three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself. These are *artifacts*, *values* and *basic underlying assumptions* (Schein, 1990). In this thesis, the model is used as a foundation to develop a framework for studying organizational culture for innovation.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Problem discussion	2
1.3. Purpose and Research question	4
1.4. Research gap	4
1.5. Research contribution	5
1.6. Delimitations of Scope	5
2. Literature review	7
2.1. Remote work	7
2.2. Organizational culture	8
2.2.1. Schein’s model of organizational culture	9
2.2.2. Managing organizational culture	11
2.3. Organizational innovation	12
2.4. Theoretical framework	14
2.4.1. Values supporting an innovative culture	15
2.4.2. Norms for an innovative culture	16
2.4.3. Artifacts of an innovative culture	17
3. Methodology	19
3.1. Subject choice justification	19
3.2. Research Philosophy	19
3.3. Research Strategy	21
3.4. Research Design	22
3.5. Literature review	24
3.6. Research method	25
3.6.1. Sampling	26
3.6.2. Interviews	27
3.6.3. Interview guide	28
3.6.4. Interview process	28
3.6.5. Secondary data	29

3.7.	<i>Data analysis</i>	30
3.8.	<i>Research quality</i>	30
3.8.1.	Reliability.....	30
3.8.2.	Validity.....	31
4.	Empirical Results	33
4.1.	<i>Results from interviews</i>	33
4.1.1.	Overview of interview results.....	33
4.1.2.	Values supporting an innovative culture.....	35
4.1.3.	Norms for an innovative culture.....	41
4.1.4.	Artifacts of an innovative culture.....	44
4.2.	<i>Results from secondary data</i>	49
4.2.1.	GitLab.....	49
4.2.2.	Google.....	50
5.	Analysis	52
5.1.	<i>Values supporting an innovative culture</i>	52
5.2.	<i>Norms for an innovative culture</i>	54
5.3.	<i>Artifacts of innovation an innovative culture</i>	57
5.4.	<i>Revised Framework</i>	60
6.	Conclusions	62
6.1.	<i>Answering the research question</i>	62
6.2.	<i>Implications from conclusions</i>	63
6.2.1.	Practical Implications.....	63
6.2.2.	Theoretical Implications.....	63
6.2.3.	Limitations.....	64
6.3.	<i>Future Research</i>	64
	References	66
	Appendix 1 - Interview invitation and Guide	73

1. Introduction

In the initial chapter of this thesis, the context will be established followed by a problem discussion that serves as a foundation for the purpose and research questions of this thesis. Furthermore, the boundaries of this thesis are explained to ensure that the reader fully understands the scope of this thesis.

1.1. Background

History of remote work dates to as early as 1972 when the American scientist Jack Nilles tried to ignite a work from home trend. He expressed the idea that modern means of communication allow employees to work from home and that this would be good for businesses as well as the environment (Berthiaume, 2020). A few years later, Frank Schiff, the head of the Committee for Economic Development of the US, became interested in the works of Nilles. He later invented the term “flexible workplace” and published an article in The Washington Post in 1979 which coined the term “Why not try it?” (Schiff, 1979).

Fast forward to the development of the internet, new possibilities of communication have grown, and the exchange of information and work results has become simpler. An office in its traditional sense might not look the same in the future and some people will prefer remote work over working at a traditional office as it, among other things, gives the opportunity to a better work-life balance, reduced transportation cost, reduced emotional stress, appearance of additional free time and ability to consider work in another region without having to move (Blumberga & Pylinskaya, 2019). However, it is not just in the sense of the employee that remote work could be beneficial. Utilizing remote work models also comes with advantages for the organization, such as reduced cost of office maintenance and wider pools for finding new employees (ibid).

Yet, despite advances in technology, adoption has been limited and slow until recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic and reactive government restrictions which have abruptly forced organizations to pursue their work from home or at other locations away from

the traditional workplace. How employees have worked during the pandemic has brought side effects in both positive and negative ways for organizations. Some positives are that managers have seen productivity and efficiency increase, and some negatives are that managers have seen challenges in ensuring team engagement, connection, innovating, and maintaining work culture (BCG, 2020).

1.2. Problem discussion

In *Decoding Global Ways of Working*, it is identified that 89% of the workforce, to some extent, wants to work from home in a post pandemic world (BCG, 2021). Prior to the pandemic, the corresponding number was just 31% which implies that the pandemic has shed light on the individuals benefit of working remotely. Furthermore, McKinsey and Company (2021) state that up to 25% of the workforce in developed economies could work from home a majority of the week without losing productivity. The preponderance of this group sources from what McKinsey and Company defines as the “computer-based office-work” arena, which accounts for about a third of the entire workforce in developed countries (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

The new employee-demand of a long-term adoption of working remotely has been recognized by some organizations. For instance, Spotify announced their “Working from anywhere” concept in February of 2021, with the goal of becoming a “distributed-first company”, a design that prioritizes working remotely but also allows employees to work from the office (Spotify, 2021). The adoption of remote work solutions has revolted the working climate in organizations and has brought both positives and negatives. In a study conducted by BCG (2020), it is identified that managers experience issues maintaining the work culture, especially onboarding. On the same topic, Merrill (2021) worries about the erosion of the office culture with the increase of remote work.

Explaining why some firms are more successful than others is hard to describe, likewise, an organization’s culture is hard to describe ultimately resulting in that a firm’s culture holds promise for contributing to superior results. Research of organizational culture is in general widespread, and previous studies have found that a firm’s culture is one of several attributes that can differentiate one firm from another (Alchian, 1950; Alchian &

Demsetz, 1972) and that valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable cultures can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). Organizational culture can also, at least partly, explain why firms such as McDonald's, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, and Procter and Gamble have sustained superior performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982), and because of this, organizational culture should be considered as a high priority for firms since this distinguishing attribute may be the deciding factor for superior results on the market.

However, the concept of organizational culture is quite complex and consists of many different subgroups that can affect the organization in a positive or negative way. One of those subgroups is culture for innovation, and it has been studied that to effectively meet changing demands in today's environment, organizations need to be more flexible, adaptive, entrepreneurial, and innovative (Parker & Bradley, 2000). Sustaining an organizational culture supporting innovation while working remotely is therefore of interest, particularly for organizational divisions where innovation is at the core of their business, such as research and development.

Considering the realized benefits for employees while working remotely, it is plausible to assume that remote work-models will remain. Hence, organizations must identify new solutions that mitigates barriers in building and maintaining organization's culture for innovation caused by the new working climate. The recent increase in remote work practices provides an opportunity to study how organizations have managed their culture for innovation when working remotely. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to investigate how an organization's culture for innovation has been managed during the abrupt transition from on-site work to remote work.

1.3. Purpose and Research question

The importance of corporate culture is widely agreed on in existing literature, and by removing an important artifact such as the physical office space, it is likely that the culture for innovation is impacted. The purpose of this thesis is to study how the organizational culture for innovation has been managed when the members of the organization work remotely.

Research Question: *How has the organizational culture for innovation been managed when working remotely?*

1.4. Research gap

Existing research on innovation, company culture and their relationship are extensive, and the two concepts have been known and studied for a long time. Yet, research on the two in combination with remote work is limited and considering the unique circumstances, with a massive increase in organizations adopting remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is of high interest to study the phenomenon of culture in remote work contexts. Even though the remote work trend is in an early stage and not yet fully mature as there still exists uncertainty and experimentation concerning how things should be conducted remotely, it is of interest to, at an early stage, explore how organizations work with their corporate culture for innovation to follow how it develops over time.

Even though remote work is far from a new concept, it was not a widely used practice prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which supports the conclusion that practitioners have had little experience of remote work and have not been prepared when the pandemic hit (Wang et al., 2021). While previous research has been conducted on companies that have done extensive planning before implementing remote work (i.e., Bloom et al., 2015; Choudhury, 2021), this thesis aims to capture how organizations' culture for innovation has been managed during the abrupt unplanned transition from onsite to remote work.

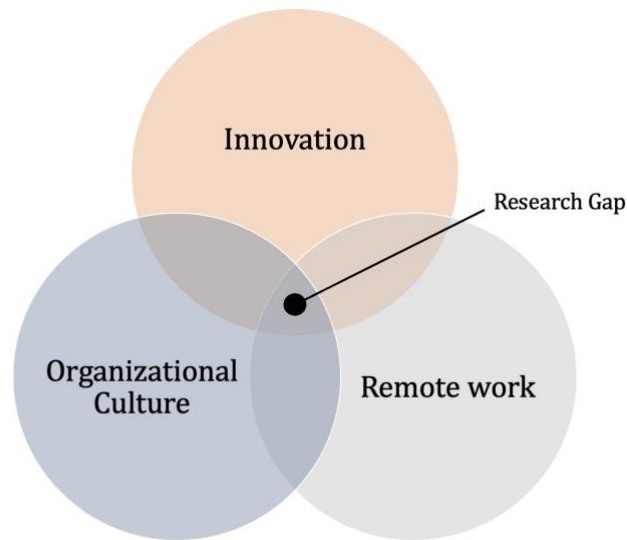


FIGURE 1
Research Gap

1.5. Research contribution

This thesis aims to contribute to organizational research on corporate culture by revealing how organization's culture for innovation has been managed during the abrupt transition from onsite to remote work. The generated insights are believed to contribute both in terms of new theory to organizational research, and in terms of practical insights concerning how organization's culture for innovation is affected and how managers can sustain an innovative culture when working remotely.

1.6. Delimitations of Scope

The conducted research will be limited in the sense that it only investigates organizations operating in Sweden where employees have experience of working fully remotely over some period. The choice of organizations had to be of an innovative nature so that an innovative culture to study existed within the organization.

The research is further limited to only investigate the innovative dimension of an organization's culture. Other dimensions of organizational culture are not considered in

this research. Additionally, only findings that relate to organizations culture for innovation as a response to the transition to remote work will be addressed.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, a summary of reviewed literature related to the key concepts that this thesis is based on is presented. In addition, the theoretical framework that serves as this study's basis for empirical analysis is presented.

2.1. Remote work

Considering the large amount of media publishing about remote work recently, people will undoubtedly have an idea of what remote work is. However, a general definition of the term suitable for academic research is not as much published and may be overlooked as it sounds self-explanatory. The term also needs differentiation between different types of remote work as they put confusion on the general definition. In addition, previous and potential gaps of studies on how remote work affects organizations will lastly be presented.

Remote work is the practice of working from another geographical location than the traditional office, and Olson (1983) states that remote work generally refers to organizational work performed independent of space and time. It means that, as most employees work predetermined hours at a specified organizational location, remote work is performed during self-decided hours as well as outside of the organizational confines of space and time. Moreover, Sullivan (2003) says that remote work is generally defined as telework and that it involves the fundamental usage of information and communications technologies (ICTs). Thus, a concern of simply using the term working from home (WFH) has a difference from telework and remote work as both require the use of ICTs (Ellison, 1999).

Spicer (2020) highlights the gap and interest of studying remote work and organizational culture. However, the existing recent studies of organizational effects of remote work mostly relate to productivity. In a study conducted by Bloom et. al. (2015), it was found that the productivity of a NASDAQ listed Chinese organization with 16000 employees rose with 13% when the employees got to work remotely. The productivity

increases sourced both from employees putting in more minutes and from a higher work efficiency, meaning that employees produced more per minute (ibid). Although a productivity increase could be seen in the short term, Bloom (2020) expresses concerns of the impact remote work could have on organizations in the long-term perspective. The biggest concern relates to the organization's ability to innovate and grow as in-person collaboration and socialization are considered to be crucial in doing so (ibid).

Thus, as previous studies on remote work have mostly been from an employee standpoint, touching upon aspects such as productivity and work-life balance, studies on the organizational effects are fewer, nevertheless remote works effect on organizational culture and innovation.

2.2. Organizational culture

To define organizational culture the concept of organization itself needs to be clarified. To allow culture to form, enough common history and stability to a given group of people need to exist (Schein, 1990). This means that some organizations do not have an overarching culture since there is too frequent turnover of members or no common history. Organizations can be presumed to have a strong culture because of long shared history or shared intense experiences (ibid). Although, whether the organization allows for culture to form, an organization must be empirically determined and not presumed from observation (ibid). For this study however, it is believed that culture can form in any definable group with shared history and stability.

Formally, culture is defined as beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are characteristic of a group of people (Warrick, 2015), also commonly known as “*the way we do things around here*”. On the other hand, in practice, culture describes the environment in which people work within and what influence this environment has on how they act, think and experience work (Warrick, Milliman & Ferguson, 2016). Schein (1990), one of the fathers of organizational culture research according to Martin (2002), also defines culture through six dimensions:

1) patterns of basic assumptions, 2) that has been developed, discovered, or invented by a group, 3) which help the group to manage internal and external problems or

integrations, 4) that has been considered valid, 5) and is to be taught to new group members, 6) since it is the correct way to act to those problems and situations.

Even though these definitions could be seen as entitled, definitions of organizational culture and how it should be studied are widespread among scholars. The variety of definitions of culture relates to the different approaches scholars make when studying culture. One aspect of organizational culture is that it includes many different manifestations such as dress code, stories, physical layout, structures, symbols, norms and policies which enables researchers to make general or specific studies on culture (Martin, 2002). When many manifestations are studied, giving a holistic view of the organization's culture, it is generally referred to as a generalist study of culture, which this study aims to provide. While a narrower focus on culture, focusing on one or two is referred to as specialist studies (ibid).

Organizational culture can be considered as a substantial part of the work climate as it permeates the organizations visible and invisible surrounding. While culture can foster innovation, culture could also inhibit innovation according to some theories (Dougherty & Heller, 1994; Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Leonard-Barton, 1992). Depending on what the organization prefers, for instance stability, product innovation may fail in the organization's thought and action process (Dougherty & Heller, 1994). Also, hierarchical culture traits have shown to have a negative correlation with innovation, but hierarchical cultures do not, on the other hand, imply bad culture since it could be positive for other organizational goals (Büschgens et al., 2013).

2.2.1. Schein's model of organizational culture

To analyze organizational culture, Schein (1990) distinguished three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself. These are *artifacts*, *values* and *basic underlying assumptions* which are visualized in figure 2 and presented more in detail below. Putting the three fundamental levels in reverse, Schein (1990) proposes that the basic assumptions shape organizational members values, and in turn, these values shape how the members act and behave which ultimately can be observed.

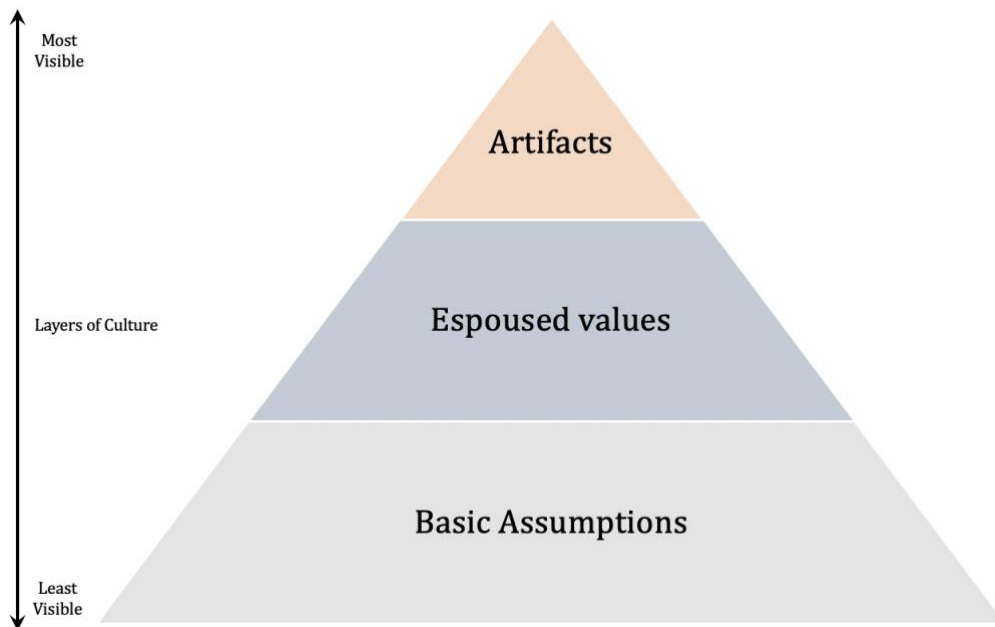


FIGURE 2
Schein's Organizational Culture Model (1990)

Artifacts are the top layer of organizational culture and can be observed and felt when entering an organization (Schein, 1990). It includes everything from dress code, physical layout, how people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena such as not leaving out company records, products, annual reports, and statements of philosophy (ibid). But even though artifacts can be observed and felt, they are still hard to decipher accurately as individuals' perception of the artifacts varies (ibid). For instance, an organization that is perceived as more formal and bureaucratic than another to one individual, may be recognized differently to the members of the organization. Another concrete example is that incorrect inferences from studying organizational artifacts such as stories, symbols and myths are made because the “lesson” learned from them cannot be understood if it is unclear how they connect to the basic underlying assumptions (ibid).

Espoused values are the second layer of the organizational culture and refers to the organizations espoused and documented values, norms, ideologies, charters, and philosophies (Schein, 1990). The artifacts themselves do not necessarily tell the whole

picture of an organization's culture. Employees' attitudes and thought processes have an impact on the organizational culture, which in turn is affected by what and how the organization communicates (ibid). Thus, the values of the employees play a large role in manifesting culture (ibid).

Basic underlying assumptions is the third and least visible level of an organization's culture (Schein, 1990). Unlike the artifacts and values of the employees, the basic underlying assumptions are harder to observe and measure, although it comes with a significant impact on an organization's culture (ibid). Organizations follow certain principles contributing to the overall culture that are not fully understood or discussed which can be explained by basic underlying assumptions, such as how time should be defined and measured or if humans are fundamentally good, neutral, or bad (ibid).

2.2.2. Managing organizational culture

Culture can either be built by design in a purposeful way or built by default left to chance. Paying little attention to culture or building it by default may come with high risks as it neglects or creates undesired culture which further can constitute costs for the firm. Bad cultures are likely to have a negative impact on performance, morale, motivation, teamwork, customer relationship, service, and loyalty and roughly 60% of all mergers fail because of cultural differences that were not dealt with (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2011). Sometimes bad culture even becomes the ultimate contributor to failure for organizations (Warrick, 2017).

Building and sustaining culture requires intelligent and careful work where leaders play a key role. Leaders who believe that simply talking about culture, posting cultural values within the firm, and educating culture will form the desired culture are mistaken (Warrick, 2017). Instead, Warrick (2017) proposes ten guidelines for building and sustaining cultures.

1. Make strategy and culture important leadership priorities.
2. Develop a clear understanding of the present culture.
3. Identify, communicate, educate, and engage employees in the cultural ideals.

4. Role model desired behaviors.
5. Recruit and develop for culture.
6. Align for consistency between strategy and culture.
7. Recognize and reward desired behaviors and practices.
8. Use symbols, ceremonies, socialization, and stories to reinforce culture.
9. Appoint a culture team.
10. Monitor and manage the culture.

It is reasonable to claim that remote work environments will put leaders and culture to a test as it calls for new and innovative ways of building and sustaining cultures. For instance, a recent study surveying 267 professional developers at Microsoft, noted several difficulties for newly hired employees during a remote onboarding process such as finding documentation, communication, asking for help and bonding with teammates (Rodeghero et al., 2021).

2.3. Organizational innovation

The concept innovation was initially described as a new combination of productive resources within five specific areas: new products, new production methods, exploration of new markets, new ways of business organizations and conquering new sources of supply which are all associated with economic development (Schumpeter, 1934). More recent studies have explained innovation by a diversified learning process where learning may arise from learning-by-using, learning-by-doing, or learning-by-sharing through internal or external knowledge and the absorption capacity of firms (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Dogson, 1991). Innovation could therefore be considered as a continuous process of problem solving rather than a specific result of an individual's actions. In the literature, innovation is also often considered as either radical or incremental (e.g., Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005), technical or administrative (e.g., Han et al., 1998), or product or process (e.g., Chen, 2009).

Factors that affect innovation have been widely studied and previous innovation research clearly shows that high-quality ideas increase with supported and facilitated possibilities for interaction with other people (Björk & Magnusson, 2009). Same

research implies that factors such as connecting people with each other, areas and meeting points for informational and knowledge exchange should all be considered to enhance innovation within the firm. This includes idea generation techniques in projects, creating and supporting communities, collaboration between different departments and improved information and knowledge sharing means. Connecting with people outside of the organization also increases innovation capabilities (ibid). However, on the other hand, the number of high-quality ideas is not shown to increase with highly connected people and tools for knowledge and information sharing (ibid), which puts doubt on how innovation capabilities unfold in a remote work environment. But given that collaboration and communication are two drivers of innovation, it is plausible to imply that remote work comes with challenges to both collaboration and communication as organizations work in a different environment than before, ultimately affecting innovation. Likewise, Bloom et al. (2020) has expressed concern on remote work effects on innovation as their research argues that collaboration in person is essential for innovation. Connecting people with each other to the same extent remotely as on-site and facilitating areas and meeting points for informational and knowledge exchange in a remote context is not something you optimize over night, but rather a process of trial and error, just like the process of innovating implies.

Sarros et al. (2008) believe climate for innovation is a useful proxy for organizational innovation because it is difficult to get direct behavioral measures of innovation across diverse organizations and industry sectors. In a further sense, organizational culture can be considered to constitute a large portion of climate as it permeates most of what an organization does. According to Martins and Terblanche (2003), a culture that supports innovation through support and encouragement provides its employees to explore innovative approaches and take initiative. Another study emphasizes a culture with values and ideas that reward innovation, encourage risk-taking, engage flexibility, and change as something that inspires innovation and promotes knowledge sharing within the organization, (Xie et al., 2021). While an organizational culture can foster innovation, culture could also inhibit innovation according to some theories (Dougherty & Heller, 1994).

2.4. Theoretical framework

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how organizations' culture for innovation is managed when employees work remotely and don't physically meet. Figure 3 below visualizes the theoretical framework and gives an overview of how remote work may impact an organization's culture and thus, the organization's innovative behaviors. The theoretical framework is based on Schein's organizational culture model which was presented above. From Schein's model of organizational culture, we find that an organization's espoused values shape the norms and procedures within an organization, which in turn brings an effect on the organization's artifacts (Schein, 1990). Unlike values, norms and artifacts, basic underlying assumptions are the least visible layer of culture and burdensome to investigate as they are deeply embedded within employees' minds. Thus, it is not included in the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework will serve as the basis for analysis of empirical findings. Since it is likely that working remotely has impacted the values, norms, and artifacts of an organization's culture, which according to this model, should impact innovative behaviors, the theoretical framework highlights dimensions that can be studied in order to understand how organizations have managed an innovative culture when working remotely. In the following sections, the theoretical framework is explained further.

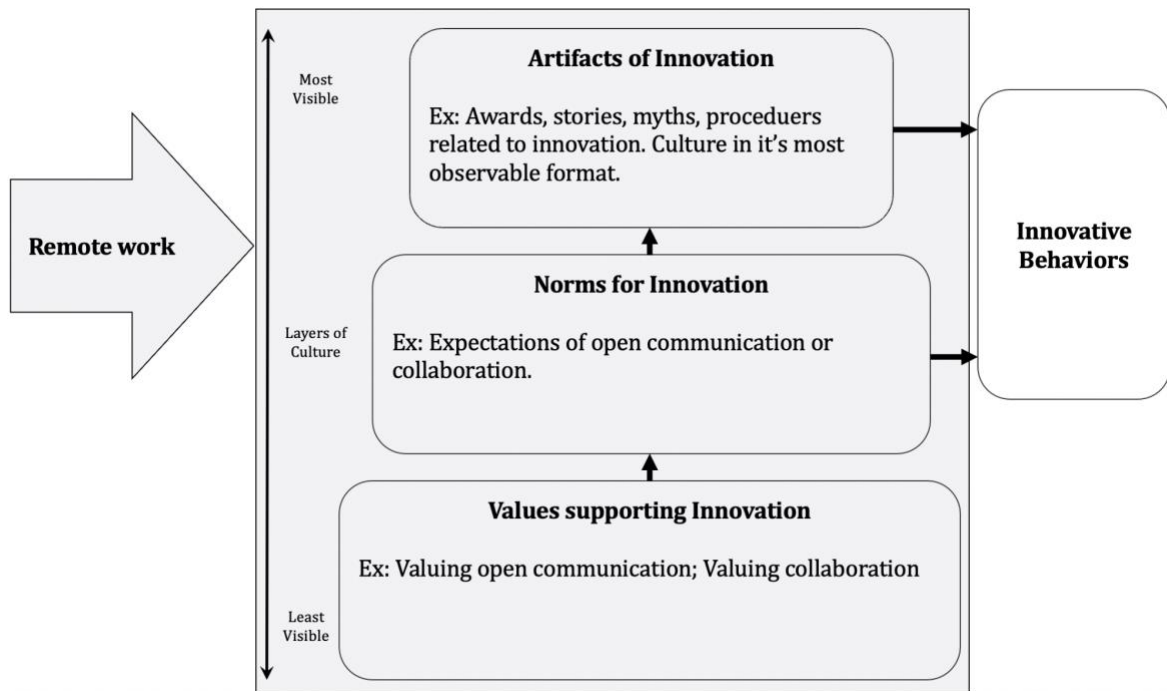


FIGURE 3
Theoretical Framework

2.4.1. Values supporting an innovative culture

According to social learning theory, Bandura (1986) suggests that individuals learn values, attitudes, behaviors, and skills through social contexts by observing others. Similarly, prior research suggests that values develop through the influence of cultural and social context (Dose, 1997; Rokeach, 1973).

Xie et al. (2021) argues that the core concept of a culture for innovation can be summarized as values and ideas that reward innovation, encourage risk-taking, engage flexibility and change, inspire innovative climate, and promote knowledge sharing (Xie et al., 2021). However, when it comes to organizational values for innovation, some researchers divide the values into value profiles, defined as cohesive sets of organizational values that guide its members' expectations, decisions and actions (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). The value profiles are divided into a flexibility value profile, which emphasizes creativity, change and empowerment, and a control value profile stressing values such as productivity, efficiency, and stability (Kimberly & Quinn, 1984). Although

the value profiles to some extents are paradoxical, organizations should adopt values that combine and support both control and flexibility (ibid).

Flexible values enable higher performance by encouraging employee commitment and problem solving, and a flexible value profile supports a culture for innovation by fostering experimentation (Zammuto & O'Connor, 1992). By embracing employee empowerment, flexible values foster trust among employees (Boyer & Lewis, 2002). On the other hand, studies suggest that control values also foster innovation by encouraging stable routines which guide members in the innovative problem-solving process (Tyre & Orlikowski, 1993).

2.4.2. Norms for an innovative culture

The values of an organization permeate in the work environment or the standards relating to work which the employees consider as right or wrong (Dose, 1997). This supports that values guide norms and artifacts within organizations that influence the behavior of employees, for instance, how to stay informed of market trends and reacting to customers preferences (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000). Whereas values are the foundation of an organization's culture, norms provide more explicit guidance to how employees behave and act as norms are social expectations based on organizational values (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Bandura, 1986). When employees come to ambiguous situations, norms provide order and guidance on how to behave appropriately and according to Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985), social norms are one of the most powerful forms of social control over human action.

It has been shown that norms associated with enhancing creativity and norms associated with promoting implementation of projects are significantly related to innovation (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 2003). More specifically, such norms could be encouragement or expectations of risk-taking, teamwork, coordination, and exchange of information. If these norms are present, creative solutions, collaborative problem-solving and putting ideas into action are more likely to occur (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 2003; Dewett, 2004; Taggar & Ellis, 2007).

2.4.3. Artifacts of an innovative culture

As stated by Schien (1990), artifacts are the most visible layers of organizational culture, as they reveal what is important and expected within the organization (Mahler, 1997; Meyer, 1995). Artifacts such as symbols, ceremonies, stories, myths, or socialization both reinforce organizational culture (Warrick, 2017), and reveal what is important in an organization (Higgins & McAllaster, 2002). Artifacts have also been found as important in how they symbolically convey organizational norms (ibid). The norms in turn, have an important role in creating and forming an organization's social environment. As emphasized by Warrick (2017), engaging employees in the cultural norms or ideals is important when building and sustaining an organizational culture.

Monitoring and managing the culture is according to Warrick (2017) one of the ten guidelines for sustaining and building cultures and there are several examples of how artifacts influence appropriate organizational behaviors. One of those artifacts is language and several researchers highlight why it is important for managers to send out well-thought-out messages to their employees (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994; Smith & Ellis, 2001). For instance, the way in which stories are told have been suggested to have a significant effect on the attitudes and behaviors of employees (Martin et al., 1983). Bartel and Garud (2009) also propose that stories of innovation can provide means of information sharing, help inspire employees to new ideas, and coordinate teams during innovative processes without mentioning guide employees in expected behaviors. Another research states that clear and consistent ritual signals to employees on desired organizational behavior is required for successful innovation (Barnes et al., 2006).

Except for language, the physical layout of organizations has also been shown to affect organizational innovative behavior. How the office space is constructed facilitates or constrain social interaction between employees and groups. The degree of face-to-face consultation which ultimately affects innovation outcomes was increased when offices featured open and shared spaces as well as easily accessible and quiet individual offices (Toker & Gray, 2008).

This indicates that artifacts in the physical and social environment, where innovative new systems, strategies, ideas, and products can be developed and formed, can steer the

organization in a particular desirable direction by carefully crafting as they help signal and communicate organizational values and norms.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the rationale of the subject choice is explained followed by a presentation of the selected research strategy, design and methodology used in this study. The authors aim to provide the reader a thorough understanding of how the research has been conducted and why the used research strategy, design, and method was deemed the most appropriate. Thereafter, a description of the data collection, the sampling, and interview process is presented. This section also includes a description of how the gathered data was analyzed and presents the measures taken to ensure a high research quality.

3.1. Subject choice justification

The primary reason for choosing this subject for the thesis is related to the topicality of the subject and the opportunity to, at an early stage, provide new insights into a research field that is believed to grow over the coming years given that many points towards that working remotely will remain and become a new normal for some employees. Also, the authors ranked an opportunity to assist organizations in understanding how working remotely affects their corporate culture highly, which made the selection of the subject for the thesis easier. Furthermore, the authors believed that studying such a timely subject would simplify the data collection process considering the number of employees that have experienced working remotely during the pandemic.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Before diving into the research strategy and design, the research philosophy is to be elaborated as it provides an understanding of the choice of research strategy and design. The ontological and epistemological considerations in relation to research refers to different perspectives on the world and how knowledge is generated (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In the “four paradigm model”, suggested by Burrell and Morgan (1979), standpoints either take the objectivist- or the subjectivist perspective. Whereas objectivists take an external viewpoint to study an organization and consider an

organization to consist of real processes and structures, subjectivists consider an organization to be a socially constructed label in continuous revision (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In relation to our research question this would mean that an objectivist would argue that culture is something that an organization possesses, whereas subjectivists would argue that culture is what the organization actually is. Furthermore, the “four paradigm model” divides the function and purpose of business research as either *regulatory*, where the purpose is to describe what’s going on in organizations without making a judgment, or *radical*, where the purpose is to make judgments about how the organization should be (ibid).

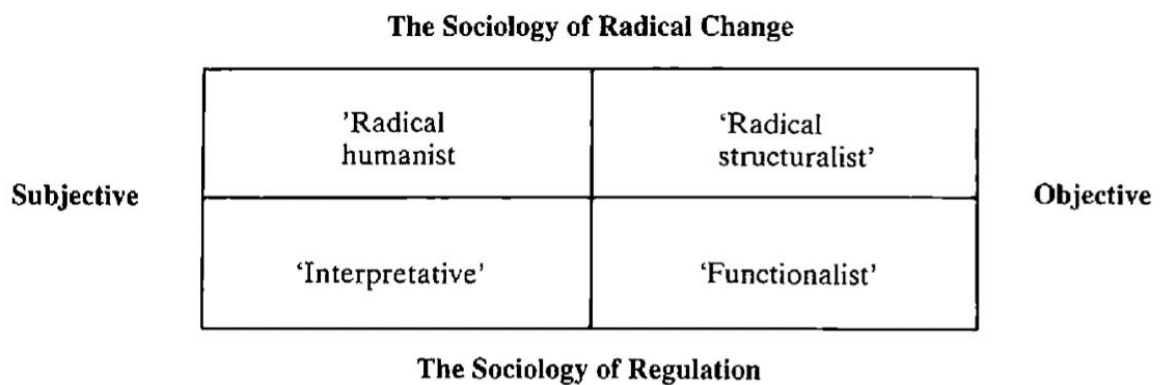


FIGURE 4
Four paradigm model of social theory (Burrell & Morgan, 1979)

As this study aims to understand how organizational culture may have been impacted by remote work, we seek a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. Going back to Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) “four paradigm model”, this goes hand in hand with the *interpretative* paradigm, described by Bryman and Bell (2019, p. 34) as a paradigmatic position where focus is put on actors in the organization and that “*understandings must be based on the experience of those who work in the organization*”. This means that the paradigmatic standpoint of this thesis is of a subjective, regulative nature which has influenced the chosen research strategy and design.

3.3. Research Strategy

The research strategy determines the general approach taken to conduct the research (Bryman & Bell, 2019). The researchers examined whether a quantitative, qualitative or a combined approach should be utilized. Whereas quantitative research is dependent on numerical data and results are often provided in terms of relationships between variables, a qualitative approach relates to interpreting verbal communication or documentation of real-life situations (Bryman & Bell, 2019; Silverman, 2016). Considering the research question of this thesis, the authors aim to establish an understanding of a phenomenon in a field where little research previously had been conducted. When researching questions from the “why” or “how” perspective, a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon is required. With this in mind, a qualitative research strategy is the most appropriate approach as qualitative research in general provides more detailed observations compared to a quantitative research strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Additionally, qualitative research strategies are heavily linked with identifying explanations and causes for different phenomenon (ibid.).

A benefit of conducting qualitative research is that it does not suffer as much as quantitative strategies when there is a limited amount of data available (ibid). Considering that remote work just recently has started to be adapted on a mass scale, the phenomenon is quite unexplored, and therefore the benefits of a qualitative research strategy in terms of responsiveness and flexibility towards the research comes in handy given the circumstances.

According to Bryman and Bell (2019), qualitative research is usually associated with an inductive approach, meaning that findings and observations are used to generate new theories. The alternative to an inductive approach is referred to as a deductive approach, which refers to the process of studying previous research on a subject through which hypotheses are developed and tested (ibid). This study primarily followed an inductive approach as it aimed to contribute to the field of organizational culture research, by observing the effect that working remotely has had on the corporate culture. However, as the impact of remote work on corporate culture is studied through the lens of existing organizational culture research, one might argue that the research entails some

deduction. As stated by Bryman and Bell (2019), even primarily inductive processes generally entail some deduction, and with features of both an inductive and a deductive process, the research strategy could be considered as abductive, a research strategy that seeks to identify conditions that would make a phenomenon more understandable (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013).

3.4. Research Design

The design of the research refers to the framework used for collecting and analyzing data, and it is used to evaluate the quality of the research. The framework should generate evidence that it is appropriate to the addressed research question. Bryman and Bell (2019) highlights five archetypical research designs.

- **Experimental:** Tries to rule out alternative explanations of the findings. This is made by comparing a treatment group and a control group which allows for a cause-and-effect analysis. This design is commonly conducted in labs such as drug trials.
- **Cross-sectional:** Collection of data on multiple subjects (individuals or firms etc.) at a single point in time. Data is commonly collected by questionnaires or by structured interviews.
- **Longitudinal:** Collection of data on the same multiple subjects but at two or more points in time which provides panel data. Typically used to identify change over time and could be conducted by repeated questionnaires given to the same subjects.
- **Case Study:** An in-depth study of a single or multiple case (individual, organization etc.) in its natural context. Due to its characteristics, it is mostly used for exploratory studies and qualitative research.
- **Comparative:** Comparison between two or more subjects/cases using the same method. The purpose of this design is to uncover uniqueness and similarities.

Considering the purpose of this study and that this study takes an interpretative stance, where findings were based on the experience of those who work in the organization (Bryman & Bell, 2019), a study where interviews with employees served as the primary

data collection was deemed most suitable. Hence, the case study research design was selected as the most appropriate design for this research. Eisenhardt (1989) argues the case study for:

1. It focuses the research on understanding the dynamics present within single settings.
2. Generation a roadmap for building theories from case study research.
3. Positioning theory building from case studies into the larger context of social science research.

Also, case studies are commonly used for exploratory research, and given the topicality of the subject, an exploratory research approach is suitable as it is recommended when little or no previous research exists, and the focus is put on generating new theory rather than testing existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

When studying cases, researchers can either decide to study a single case in depth, or study multiple cases. Eisenhardt and Grabner (2007) argue that the single case study has the potential of allowing for a more detailed and complex theory building process in comparison to multiple case studies. This is because single case studies can fit the theory in line with the many details of a specific case, whereas multiple case studies only can retain the relationships that are replicated across most of the investigated cases (ibid). However, single case studies often provide theories that are more complicated than multiple case studies, which allows for a comparative design where similarities and differences across cases can improve theory building (Eisenhardt, 2021). Eisenhardt argues for multiple case studies over single case studies as multiple cases makes it easier for the researcher to “*identify and sharpen theoretically relevant construct definitions at an appropriate abstraction level and often mitigate alternative explanations and over-determined theory*” (Eisenhardt, 2021, p.151).

There are several case designs related to multiple case studies. Eisenhardt (2021) suggests five case designs referred to as (1) *common antecedents*, (2) *matched pairs*, (3) *racing*, (4) *polar types*, and (5) *common processes*. According to Eisenhardt (2021), the four first designs all involve similar cases that may overlook alternative explanations of a phenomenon. However, the fifth one, referred to by Eisenhardt (2021) as *common*

processes design, is about choosing cases where the same phenomenon can be studied in varying contexts, thus improving generalizability of the findings. The design of this research contained features related to the *common process* design described by Eisenhardt (2021), as innovative organization in different sizes acting in different industries where studied.

Given the topicality of this paper's focus and the fact that most of the organizations were forced to work remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic, the researchers believed that a multiple case study would allow for the identification of and thus, contribute most to the generation of new theory. However, multiple case studies are often related to in-depth studies where cases are carefully studied through several interviews. This research is limited in the sense that it does not investigate cases through several interviews per case. Instead, this research entails features of a cross-sectional design, as it investigates multiple subjects at a single point in time (Bryman & Bell, 2018). The applied research design also holds features of a comparative study, as subjects are being compared to discover similarities and uniqueness (*ibid*).

3.5. Literature review

A literature review was conducted with two purposes. Firstly, it served as a solid starting point where the authors could understand the topic better, and secondly, it served as a foundation to formulate a theoretical framework used to define relevant interview questions to ultimately draw conclusions based on generated data. Bryman and Bell (2019) argue that performing a literature review is both time efficient as well as provides a thread for the reader to follow when the authors make decisions for the thesis to answer the research question and ultimately an understanding of drawn conclusions.

The literature review was conducted with a systematic approach. Properties of the literature review can be found below in table 1. They are used to ensure that all literature meets sufficient quality and demands expected in research. In addition to the suggested keywords, a snowball approach was used.

TABLE 1***Data sources, Key words, Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria's.***

Data sources	Keywords	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Databases Google Scholar Science Direct Business Source Premier Emerald Insight	Remote work Corporate culture Organizational culture Company culture Innovation Innovation culture	Studies focusing on: <i>*Organizational culture for innovation</i> <i>*Remote works impact on organizational culture</i> <i>*Remote works impact on innovation</i>	Studies focusing on: <i>*Remote work impact on dimensions of organizational culture unrelated to innovation</i>
Other sources Consultancy reports			

To further ensure a high quality of the reviewed literature, many researchers suggest that only peer-reviewed articles should be included. However, considering the contemporaneity of this research focus and the fact that the peer-review process takes a long time, a peer-review criterion was not used in this research. Although, to ensure a high quality, the non-peer-reviewed articles were selected carefully and reliability checked by the researchers in terms of 1) number of citations, and 2) the authors reputation.

3.6. Research method

The research method refers to the technique used for data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2019). For this study, both primary and secondary data has been collected. Primary data refers to data collected by the researchers with the purpose to answer the research questions, whereas secondary data refers to the data collected from external sources (ibid). The primary data for this research was collected through interviews, and the secondary data was collected from documents elaborating best practice approaches for managing the organizational culture for innovation when working remotely.

3.6.1. Sampling

When it comes to inductive studies, a random sampling method is neither necessary nor preferable (Eisenhardt, 1989). Instead Eisenhardt (1989) suggests theoretical sampling, also referred to as purposive sampling, as it makes sense to choose subjects such as extreme situations in which the phenomenon of interest is "transparently observable" when there is a limited number of subjects that can be studied. Purposive sampling is, according to Bryman and Bell (2019) a fundamental way of choosing subjects and participants to interview in qualitative research.

Inductive research stands in contrast to hypothesis testing research, where statistical sampling with the purpose of achieving statistically significant variables within the population is conducted (Eisenhardt, 2019). Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling as participants are not selected randomly and places the author's research questions at the forefront instead of the other way around (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Unlike statistical sampling, this approach opens the possibility to ensure that the sample has the characteristics relevant for the research question (ibid).

Given the scope of this research, which was to study organizations through a cross-sectional design entailing comparative features, both organizations and employees within each organization had to be sampled. The selection of the organizations to study was limited by several factors. Firstly, the researchers decided to limit the potential organizations to firms operating in Sweden. Secondly, the organizations had to be of an innovative nature so that an innovative culture to study existed within the organization.

In table 2 below, an overview of the respondents interviewed in this study is presented.

TABLE 2
Overview - respondents

Interview number	Organization	Length of Interview	Role	Industry
1	A	40 min	Project Leader	IT Services
2	A	37 min	Analyst	IT Services
3	B	35 min	Business Sales	IT Services
4	C	48 min	Consultant	Management Consulting
5	D	39 min	Business Sales	IT Services
6	E	46 min	Consultant	Management Consulting
7	F	52 min	Founder	IT Services
8	G	36 min	CEO	Manufacturing
9	H	43 min	Engineer	Vehicle Automation
10	H	48 min	Software Team Lead	Vehicle Automation

3.6.2. Interviews

The chosen data collection method for this research was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were performed due to their flexibility and ability to generate deeply held insights (Bryman & Bell, 2019), which were deemed important features considering the exploratory nature of this research. Semi-structured interviews implies that the researcher has a general idea of topics that should be investigated during the interviews, but flexibility is left for the respondents to elaborate further and talk about what is important rather than being limited by closed-ended questions (ibid).

The purpose during the interviews was both to make sure that the studied phenomenon was actively addressed, and to make sure to ask questions without bias while directing

the interview in line with the purpose of this research (Yin, 2014). Hence, the objective was to address the chosen theoretical framework while enabling the respondents by asking open questions (ibid). Furthermore, as the phenomenon in which this study was meant to investigate was relatively new within the organizational research field, an interview structure where respondents were allowed to further elaborate their ideas and experiences was preferred.

The risks with the semi-structured interview as a data collection method is of varying nature. For instance, the respondent's personal bias could be captured in the results (Yin, 2014). Although this was acknowledged, it required close attention as personal bias would harm the credibility of the result of this research.

3.6.3. Interview guide

An interview guide covering the topics and questions that were to be discussed during the interview was conducted. The formulated questions and topics were based on the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. Although the interview was of a semi-structured character, allowing the respondents to freely elaborate answers, the researchers believed that it was of great importance to create an interview guide which served as a spine for the interview, ensuring that discussions addressed the purpose of the research. Another purpose of the interview guide was to prepare the respondents in advance of the interview and to strengthen the dependability of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

3.6.4. Interview process

A few days in advance of the interview, the interview guide was sent out to the interviewee together with the purpose of the research. This was done so that the respondent would arrive at the interview prepared and ready to discuss the subject. The interviews were conducted online, which made the interview process less time consuming both for the respondent and the researchers. Another benefit of conducting the interviews online was that the respondent could choose whatever environment he or she preferred. According to Bryman and Bell (2019), the environment is an important feature in interviews as respondents tend to talk more freely in the right environment.

The interviews were recorded to allow the researchers to fully concentrate on the objective of the interview (ibid). When starting the interview, the researchers ensured that the respondent understood the purpose of the research and the research question. The researchers also ensured that the respondent understood the following:

- 1) That the interview would be recorded if the respondent allowed it.
- 2) That the recording would be treated as confidential and only available to the researchers for this study. Neither the company nor the respondents name would be mentioned in the research.
- 3) That any recordings would be deleted on completion of the research.

Bryman and Bell (2019) advice researchers to perform pilot interviews in advance to the actual interviews. Doing so allows the researchers to realize if some questions may be difficult to understand or complicated to answer in a way so that usable information is generated. The test interview was conducted with an individual who was familiar with the concepts of culture and innovation. Based on the feedback generated from the pilot interview, the interview guide was adjusted accordingly.

3.6.5. Secondary data

Beside interviews, secondary data was collected by documenting tips from organizations with experience of working remotely. This was done to gain insights of remote work in practice and advice of how things should be done while working remotely from the perspective of organizations experienced in the field. The selected organizations were chosen due to their reputation and status within their fields and because they have experience of managing fully remote teams. The selected sources were deemed reputable and reliable, and we recognize that as they are secondary sources, they are perhaps less reliable than peer- reviewed studies and journals. However, we found that these sources could provide information that peer-reviewed sources could not.

3.7. Data analysis

To analyze the empirical data and answer the research question, a thematic analysis approach was conducted. The themes were derived from the dimensions of organizational culture for innovation presented in the theoretical framework to uphold the thesis's lucidity. The process of deriving the themes was conducted by a coding scheme based on 1) the dimensions of organizational culture for innovation, 2) the interview questions, 3) illustrative quotes from the interviews, which were merged into themes (see Appendix 2 - Coding scheme).

The thematic analysis method can be criticized, especially through the lens of the research quality measure reliability, as the analysis method is based on the researcher's ability to search for themes. This means that results from a thematic analysis may vary depending on the researcher conducting the analysis. However, the two researchers separately conducted a thematic analysis and later compared if the findings aligned. By doing so, the reliability issue was mitigated to some extent.

3.8. Research quality

When it comes to cross-sectional studies, the relevance of research quality evaluation criteria depends on the type of studies that is conducted. As this thesis aims to capture the remote work environment effects on culture for innovation, some evaluation criterions are more fulfilled than others. In qualitative research, reliability and validity are two commonly used research quality criteria (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

3.8.1. Reliability

Reliability can be explained by whether the results of the study are repeatable, i.e., if another resembling research would be conducted, the study would want to consistently yield the same result. Particularly quantitative research is concerned with whether results are stable. If results fluctuate, the study would be considered unreliable (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In qualitative research, the reliability criterion is separated into external and internal reliability (ibid).

External reliability concerns the degree of which the research can be replicated. In qualitative research, it is difficult to reach a high degree of replicability. This is because the environment is constantly changing and studying the same phenomenon at two different points in time might call for different approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2019). However, a thorough description of the used research methodology grants future researchers to understand how the study has been conducted and allow for the research to be replicated and thus, increasing the external reliability.

Internal reliability concerns the researcher's interpretation of the research and how well the two researchers' interpretation aligns with each other (Bryman & Bell, 2019). To ensure a high internal reliability, both the authors attended all interviews as this gave the researchers the same information and thus the same opportunity to interpret the information generated in the interview.

3.8.2. Validity

Validity might be the most important criterion of research as it validates the integrity of conclusions drawn in the research. The validity criterion is separated into internal validity and external validity.

Internal validity relates to the fit between the researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas, that is whether conclusions drawn from causal relationships hold in the thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2019). For qualitative research, internal validity tends to be a strength since qualitative research allows the researcher to have a prolonged or deep analysis in the social life of a group over a long period of time which can facilitate a high congruence between concepts and observations (ibid).

To ensure internal validity some actions have been made. A foundation of the subject and thesis was created with the help of a literature review and later a literature framework for how the thesis will approach the research question. Also, methodological choices, which are described above, contribute to a higher internal validity.

External validity relates to what degree findings can be generalized from the sample to describe the population. While internal validity is strengthened by qualitative research, external validity represents a problem because of qualitative studies characteristics of

small sample size. However, the purpose of this study is not to generalize the findings, but rather to provide insights on how organizations have managed their innovative culture during remote work (Bryman & Bell, 2019)

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2019) highlights subjectiveness as one main criticism in qualitative research which ultimately results in low external validity. That could be if the interview does not reflect what is happening in the organization in practice or if the researchers interpret the answers differently when finalizing the result.

To mitigate the risk of low external validity, the researchers have, among other things, interviewed relevant people to find data contributing to answering the research question, made precautions in the thematic analysis, and compared results to previous research for alternative explanations.

However, as mentioned before, sample size is one limitation of qualitative studies and is hard to ensure in a master thesis as it does not allow for too many interviews due to time limits. Consequently, this is left for future studies that can be more extensive.

4. Empirical Results

The following chapter presents both empirical findings from the primary data collection and the secondary data collection. The primary data was collected through interviews and the results from those are based on themes derived through a thematic analysis. The secondary data was collected from documents where organizations with experience of working remotely provide tips and advice on how a culture for innovation is built when working remotely.

4.1. Results from interviews

4.1.1. Overview of interview results

From the interviews, it was identified that organizational values supporting innovation relate to *Open Communication, Creativity, Trust, and Collaboration*. In addition, it was found that organizations have struggled to engage employees and create loyalty when working remotely, especially when it comes to new employees.

The result also points towards that working remotely has brought new norms and artifacts that supports an innovative culture. When it comes to norms, the result indicates that employees expect *active participation*, meaning that employees expect each other to engage and participate.

New artifacts related to an innovative culture have emerged, and most of the identified artifacts relate to the usage of digital tools. New artifacts such as informal chat rooms used for sharing jokes, digital fikas, lunch vouchers, have to some extent replaced artifacts related to working from the office.

In table 3 below, an overview of the coding scheme is presented for values, norms, and artifacts for an innovative culture.

TABLE 3
Coding Scheme

Values supporting an innovative culture	Illustrative quotes
Open Communication	<p><i>“Open communication is critical to generate new ideas, both internally and externally with customers.”</i></p> <p><i>“We say that we want to have ‘högt i tak’.”</i></p>
Creativity	<p><i>“... it is of highest importance that it is okay to make mistakes and that things go wrong sometimes. There are no bad questions and everyone must recognize that. There must be room for initiatives and experimentation that could end up in either success or failure.”</i></p> <p><i>“... being creative and taking initiatives is important for innovation, even if it ends up in failure. We must at least try to do new things to find new solutions.”</i></p>
Trust	<p><i>“If the organization puts trust in your abilities to solve issues, you will likely feel more confident and come up with better solutions compared to if someone constantly checks what you are doing.”</i></p>
Collaboration	<p><i>“It is important that we can collaborate and that everyone is cooperative. It is about helping each other and to understand what other people are doing. I get inspired from others' ideas and I think that many ideas and initiatives are born when working together.”</i></p> <p><i>“We want to have a strong culture of working together and it has been very important to get involved when working remotely.”</i></p>
Norms for an innovative culture	Illustrative quotes
Engagement in communication	<p><i>“... I would say that small things, such as having the camera turned on and asking each other questions makes a difference when communicating.”</i></p>
Availability	<p><i>“We used a channel which became like a virtual coffee-machine chat, so we logged on to</i></p>

	<i>the channel in the morning and just talked about things, both business related and other more personal things.”</i>
Artifacts of an innovative culture	Illustrative quotes
Open Digital Channels for Communication	<i>“We realized that, since we missed the talk at the computer, we could just open a channel [...] we had two to three channels where you could jump in for discussions about anything.”</i>
Daily “Check-ins”	<i>“We have had digital ‘fika’ where you have been able to meet without any agenda.”</i>
Text Messaging	<i>“Suddenly you have this new situation where you have to have everyone onboard in channels as it is absolutely crucial for building culture and affinity.”</i>
Adapted organizational activities	<i>“Our department has sent out packages. It could be everything from cups, chips, balloons or boxes with candy. Despite the circumstances, we have done a lot to celebrate from home.”</i>

4.1.2. Values supporting an innovative culture

The results show that it was more difficult to get employees to emotionally attach to the values of an organization and to feel loyalty towards the organization when working remotely. This has particularly been the case when onboarding new employees.

“It is not the same loyalty as before. You might be sitting at home and suddenly another employer calls and offers something else.” - Respondent 9

“Employees have started and quitted without being in the office. It has been a very strange period. People have to a large extent searched for new jobs and that has of course affected a lot. Much got wrong there. It was hard to get new employees onboard emotionally.” - Respondent 7

“We have employed three persons who have been working remotely during the pandemic. Two of them have resigned and I think it relates to the fact that the rest of us

knew each other from before and bringing the new ones into our culture has been harder when working remotely.” - Respondent 3

“Onboarding has been more difficult, it is harder to bond online compared to in person. We have recruited a lot of employees during the pandemic, but also lost a lot of the new recruits.” - Respondent 9

On the other hand, respondent 7 still expects that it is possible to build and create loyalty between employees to the same extent as when working from the office.

“I believe you can create just as good loyalty anyway. But it depends on if you get the opportunity to meet physically at least once a year. I feel the same in personal relationships, you do not have to meet every month or quarter, but if you meet once a year it can still feel like you are just as good friends or feel just as much for that person.” - Respondent 7

Although the result indicates that organizations have experienced difficulties in building loyalty through their values, four values have been identified in relation to an innovative culture. These values are *Open communication, Creativity, Trust, and Collaboration*.

Open communication

Most of the respondents believed that open communication is critical for organizations to be innovative. Respondent 2, who is employed by an IT service organization, argued that both internal and external open communication are important for innovation.

“Being innovative is important to us as it relates to being able to build and create what our customers ask for. To do so, we must have open communication, both internally and externally with our customers as it allows us to understand how we can improve our services and products.” - Respondent 2

Similarly, respondent 4 also considered “openness” as a key factor for an innovative culture and expressed that.

“First and foremost, I think that it is easier to get heard when working in a culture where openness is valued as it makes you feel like you have the ability to make an impact. Also, I feel that updating and altering how we do things is contributing to an innovative culture as employees are forced to change the way we approach things, which I think encourages innovation.” - Respondent 4

Respondent 3, working for a start-up with ten employees, stated that the organization had no spoken values but considered open communication and a high level of acceptance as key aspects in building an innovative culture.

“We don’t have any spoken values from the organization, but at the office we emphasize that we want to have ‘högt i tak’ when we work together. I think it is important as we must discuss a lot and look at things from different perspectives in order to find new revenue streams.” - Respondent 3

The results point towards that working remotely has to some extent affected the organization's ability to sustain the value of open communication and meet employees' expectation of an open communication. Several employees in different organizations expressed that their expectation of open communication has not been fulfilled and especially that the spontaneous and informal communication to a large extent diminish in a remote context.

“You do not get to communicate to the same extent as before. I mean small talk by the coffemaker, or spontaneous lunches with one or a few employees. It’s not the same when working from home, and I feel that it causes some restrictions [...] I am looking forward to getting it back.” - Respondent 2

“[...] the communication hasn't worked ideally, and I mean, especially the communication with colleagues in other teams. I think that's the part where we have lost the most [when working remotely], the spontaneous interaction where things are ventilated and discussed, it does not happen in the same way when working from home.” - Respondent 1

Respondent 7 points out that he does not feel as informed about issues that employees face, which limits his understanding of what other employees work on.

“I think that as a leader, it is very important to hear about the problems and issues of employees as it helps me understand and I feel that it has been harder to get that information when working remotely, probably because it takes more effort to get in touch with someone [compared to when working at the office].” - Respondent 7

However, some respondents felt that despite the circumstances, communicating remotely has worked out quite well. But these respondents worked at an organization with prior experience of working with colleagues remotely.

“I would say that it has worked pretty well. Even before the pandemic, we had a lot of our meetings online, so we were quite used to it.” - Respondent 1

“We have offices in China, Italy, and the US. We have always had to work remotely. It has therefore not been strange at all, it has worked as usual. But it has been boring to not see each other.” - Respondent 9

Creativity

Another organizational value that was found to be heavily linked to an innovative culture relates to having a creative climate where initiatives and experimentation is encouraged. Respondents 9 and 2 state the following.

“To have an innovative culture, I think that it is of highest importance that it is okay to make mistakes and that things go wrong sometimes. There are no bad questions, and everyone must recognize that. There must be room for initiatives and experimentation that could end up in either success or failure.” - Respondent 9

“[...] being creative and taking initiatives is important for innovation, even if it ends up in failure. We must at least try to do new things to find new solutions. Mistakes will be made but mistakes are also valuable and provide ideas on how we can succeed in the following attempt.” - Respondent 2

On the same topic, respondent 7 says that innovation is related to creativity and a curiosity to understand consumer needs.

"[...] it is about having curious colleagues with the ability to understand consumer needs and the creativity to find solutions to those needs. And the solution could be found based on past experiences and having a dialogue with consumers [...]" - Respondent 7

The studied organizations have experienced different impacts on creativity when working remotely. Respondent 8 felt that experimentation for new solutions had been put on hold. For their particular organization, their customers are heavily involved in bringing new solutions alive, and respondent 8 had experienced that these customers were not as interested in experimenting during remote work, because of difficulties with collaboration.

"Focus has been put on the 'must haves' rather than the 'nice to haves'." - Respondent 8

Similarly, respondent 7 highlights that expectations of innovating have been taken off the agenda, as other challenges have been more important than being innovative. Consequently, firms have not cared to launch new projects at the same pace as before. To illustrate this, respondents 7 said.

"If you are out sailing and you get a leak in the hull, then you are not considering opening up the genoa to maximize speed, instead you are prioritizing the leak." - Respondent 7

Trust

In relation to innovation, the results point towards that a high level of trust, both among the employees and from the organization is an important value for fostering innovation. Like the value of creativity, trust was found as an important value for promoting initiatives and experimentation. Respondent 10 talks about trust as a belief from the entire organization that provides the freedom to resolve issues.

"[...] the trust you get from the organization and your coworkers can be a bit pressuring, but it is the mission of the team to create new solutions. The organization's innovative capability lies in the various teams and is not controlled from above [...] It's the team that is trusted to develop new tools and it is a natural part of the job [...] I think that trust is a

foundation in innovation. Feeling trusted is extremely important, at least to me. Everyone in the team believes 100% that we can solve problems, and even if it seems hard, we always feel the full trust and freedom to resolve the issues from other parts of the organization.” -

Respondent 10

Respondent 5 shares the view that trust from both the organization and colleagues are important to take on initiatives. In addition, respondent 5 believed that from the organization's perspective, putting trust in employees creates a more efficient, dynamic organization.

“[...] and I mean, from the organization's perspective, I think that it is important that everyone feels that they can cope with problems on their own. If the organization puts trust in your abilities to solve issues, you will likely feel more confident and come up with better solutions compared to if someone constantly checks what you are doing.” -

Respondent 5

Respondent 7, who works at an organization with just four employees argues that trust is the key for them as they know each other on both a personal and professional level.

“You feel trust among each other and you kind of feel that you want to build a company and create new things together since you have similar values and goals. As we know each other on a personal level, misunderstandings do not occur as they would in other organizations.” - Respondent 7

Collaboration

Collaboration was also found to be an important value for innovation. Respondents argue that inclusion and collaboration are important for innovation as initiatives and new ideas can emerge when working together with others.

“It is important that we can collaborate and that everyone is cooperative. It is about helping each other and to understand what other people are doing. I get inspired from others' ideas and I think that many ideas and initiatives are born when working together.”

- Respondent 1

“We want to have a strong culture of working together and it has been very important to get involved when working remotely.” - Respondent 2

“Apart from feeling trust, I think that innovation is very much about collaboration and inclusion. That is also very important.” - Respondent 10

Many respondents have experienced difficulties in collaborating when working remotely. The difficulties in collaborating mostly relate to issues with getting in contact with others and to get help from others.

“I believe that the exchange becomes so much better when you get to work together with others and get to listen to others, and when working from home, you naturally work more on your own. I think that it is easier to reach new solutions when working closer to others.” - Respondent 9

“There are a lot of people who are not good at collaborating and innovating through video communication services. Even though there are digital tools for whiteboards and such, it is not similar enough to some generations.” - Respondent 7

“[...] it was super easy to get the help you needed from people on-site rather than sitting at home. It gets a bit easier to have someone showing you how to do it instead of getting it explained [...] The discussion was much clearer with us in the room than for people sitting online and listening. I believe I got more out of being on site.” - Respondent 4

4.1.3. Norms for an innovative culture

Remote work has had an impact on the organization's capability to stick to their values and to some extent “practice what they preach”, as employees' expectations of an *Open Communication, Creativity, Collaboration, and Trust* has not been in line with the actual outcome. Respondent 7 puts it clearly and states that:

“It is easy for organizations to have values in times where it's business as usual, but when things get rough, the true identity of an organization comes forward, and it becomes clear to the employees.” - Respondent 7

However, results from the interviews show that the shift to working remotely has brought new employee expectations based on the organizational values. The expectations, or norms, identified in this research all relate to organizational values for innovation. More specifically, in this research, the identified norms for innovation have been divided into *Engagement in Communication* and *Availability for Communication*.

Engagement in communication

In the interviews, all respondents stated that they expected their colleague to show interest and engagement when communicating and the respondent explicitly stated that his team tried to create a digital environment as similar as possible to the office environment by sitting in a digital meeting just for social interaction. When asked about actions to improve communication when working remotely, respondents stated that informal chats in the beginning of meetings had become a new standard procedure that improved communication. In addition to speaking about more topics unrelated to work, having the camera turned on during meetings was another standard procedure that according to the respondent ensured engagement and presence in the conversation.

“Communication has improved over time as everyone gets more comfortable with communicating in this way. We have more meetings now and we usually talk more informally before meetings begin to get to know each other better. I also think that we are better at using the camera in meetings now than in the beginning.” - Respondent 2

“I think that communicating digitally is a lot about your social skills, but I would say that small things, such as having the camera turned on and asking each other questions makes a difference when communicating.” - Respondent 9

“To show more engagement and make it more personal we have a policy that the camera should always be turned on during meetings [...] The casual talk is easier to get done when you are in a Teams-meeting and just work and talk. During meetings there are usually time constraints and focus is put on the meeting's agenda. So I would say that it is easier to talk casually when you are working on something alone or with others over Teams

[...] I really enjoy going to the office so in my team we have tried to create something that is as close to the office as possible.” - Respondent 10

Availability

Respondents argued that their availability towards each other was lost when they could not work from the physical office, and many respondents felt that it was hard to get help from others. When the employees of an organization could not see each other, the feeling of others' presence was to some extent lost, and respondents felt that others were not available to help with issues and answer questions to the same extent as before. According to results from the interviews, these issues related to both a higher barrier of connecting to others over a video call and to struggles of finding time for meetings.

“It has been hard to ask for help as a new employee. It is a higher barrier to make a video call than asking your colleague sitting next to you [...] And it takes more time to get help and to find the right information and knowledge.” - Respondent 6

“It has been more difficult to communicate as it is harder to get in contact [...] It feels like more things emerge and it's sometimes hard to find time for meetings.” - Respondent 2

This lack of availability is clearly opposite to the identified organizational values for innovation as it makes *Collaboration, Open communication, Creativity* and *Trust* harder to build. However, from our interviews, results show that organizations have created new forums for communication, and new employee expectations of using these various forums have emerged. This has resulted in a norm of Availability, as employees are expected to be available and participate in the various forums for communication. Examples of new digital communication are for instance new chat channels with more specific purposes, digital check-ins, and open channels for communication.

“We used a channel which became like a virtual coffee-machine chat, so we logged on to the channel in the morning and just talked about things, both business related and other more personal things.” - Respondent 9

“We have had special purpose Slack channels, for instance where we share fun things such as jokes or other fun with each other. We have also had a ‘HELP’ channel, where all employees in the organization can ask for help and find it. I think it has worked alright.” - Respondent 1

The new forums for communication are further elaborated in the artifacts section below.

4.1.4. Artifacts of an innovative culture

The new norms of *Engagement in communication* and *Availability* have called for new artifacts required to sustain the organizational values for innovation when working remotely. As discussed above, the common denominator for the artifacts is communication which has been a challenge in a remote work environment, illustrated in following quotes from several respondents:

“You do not get in contact as you would have because you must make a Team-meeting or a zoom-meeting. Also, you might not get in contact with the person you want because they are in the middle of something else. All of this makes it harder to connect people with each other spontaneously compared with working on-site.” - Respondent 2

“One thing I suspect is a higher barrier of asking for help when you are not at the office and have colleagues around you. It is a bigger step to make contact when sitting away from each other and this can lead to longer time working with problems you are not sure of how to solve.” - Respondent 1

Structuring and clarifying have also been important to favor an innovative culture as remote work has put organizations at a state of uncertainty. Respondent 4 explains it has been hard to be part of a team of the organizations when sitting at home, therefore, organizations have structured and clarified new organizational activities that make up for the communication loss.

“It is much easier to be part of a team if you are on-site rather than remote. I prefer to sit at the office and eat lunch with colleagues rather than at home. You get more

motivated and do a better job by hanging out with colleagues than sitting at home.” - Respondent 4

“I think we have become better at clarifying. For instance, what our goals and values are. The firm has been much better at communicating this, so I believe it makes it easier for both new and old employees.” - Respondent 1

As a result of interviews, five artifacts have been identified. These are *Open digital channels for communication*, *Daily “check-ins”*, *Text messaging*, and *Adapted organizational activities* which will be presented more below.

Open digital channels for communication

Several organizations have tried to imitate an open work environment through different digital channels during remote work. This is to facilitate informal discussion but also to help employees keep track of how the organization performs when you are not at the office. Respondent 9 in organization H mentions they have actively implemented a continuous running Teams-room open for everyone to join for informal discussions, in hope of substituting coffee machine chats. The CEO of the firm was a diligent user of the room every morning:

“We use it every day and you can always in the morning or at lunch jump into the Teams-room for a chat [...] it does not have to be about business, we could talk about the weekend and stuff like that. And then we always have cameras on when there is a meeting with numerous people.” - Respondent 9

Furthermore, respondents 1 and 10 mention good examples of open communication within their organization, for example Slack-channels to keep their employees updated and included in the organizational journey or Team-rooms to have spontaneous discussions:

“We use different channels in Slack often. We have channels where we celebrate sold projects and successful deliveries to customers. Everyone is part of these channels and can

take part in how the organization performs. It gives a sense of inclusion to see how we as a team are performing.” - Respondent 1

*“We realized that, since we missed the talk at the computer, we could just open a channel [...] we had two to three channels where you could jump in for discussions about anything.”
- Respondent 10*

Respondent 7 acknowledges the new communication patterns in the digital communication service Slack as an open and unconditional communication within the organization, which has become very important for the organization.

*“Slack is a platform where you can share nonsense, thumbs up and say hi just like that. That did not exist in businesses before. Regardless of time and position one can post a smiley, ask a question or something else. It has flattened out the organization.” -
Respondent 7*

Daily “check-ins”

For many organizations, daily “check-ins” have been an important part of daily activities when working remotely. Respondent 4’s organization daily “check-ins” were implemented in pursuit of better employee well-being.

“Something that instead got prioritized was well-being because you get lonely by sitting at home. You do not get the same social exchange as before. Because of this we had a focus on daily catchups, meetings where you could just chat about everything. We also had ‘virtual walks’ where you could go for a walk and join a video or voice chat to talk about things that did not involve work.” - Respondent 4

*“We have had digital ‘fika’ where you have been able to meet without any agenda.”
- Respondent 7*

*“Many in the team have scheduled morning coffee and afternoon coffee.” -
Respondent 10*

Text messaging

As employees have been forced to work in a different work environment, text messages have started to play a bigger role in everyday work for some organizations. Respondent 7 argues that it has made the playing field more equal between employees and more democratic. Respondent 8 argues it has contributed to forming organizational culture and structure.

“They have gotten a more equal platform [...] linked to innovation, we have demolished barriers and made it more democratic in a sense.” - Respondent 7

“Suddenly you have this new situation where you must have everyone onboard in channels as it is absolutely crucial for building culture and affinity. If there is something good out of this pandemic it would be that people have become less scared of contacting each other within the organization. Regardless of what position you have.” - Respondent 8

Adapted organizational activities

A few organizations have adapted and started working with other types of artifacts to make the organizational activities like being on-site. The organization where respondent 1 and 9 works at uses coupons or vouchers for team lunches and “fikas” or packages with gifts:

“We use coupons so that employees can pick up fika at Pressbyrån before some meetings. Of course, this only works for employees living in the city center, but I guess it creates some kind of coherence.” - Respondent 1

“Our department has sent out packages. It could be everything from cups, chips, balloons, or boxes with candy. Despite the circumstances, we have done a lot to celebrate from home.” - Respondent 9

Respondents 1 and 9 also talked about their policy of “cameras on” at all times in meetings which mimics the feeling of being in a meeting on-site:

"We have 'cameras on' as a policy to make a more personal feeling." - Respondent 1

"It might be because everyone has cameras so that we can communicate easier. But it matters when we have an external meeting, it is much easier when we have customers on-site or not." - Respondent 9

However, some organizational activities for innovation have been canceled due to the transition of working remotely.

"We have innovation days 3-4 times a year where we discuss in the teams how we can innovate and learn from mistakes that we have made. During the pandemic, these days have been conducted remotely, but it worked alright." - Respondent 9

"When it suddenly became remote work, we did not have our Tuesday meetings. We also had lunch with everyone at our department where someone presented something valuable for the whole team. This disappeared completely when the pandemic hit. I definitely believe some stuff got deprioritized as a result of the pandemic." - Respondent 4

"Before we had more spontaneous and planned activities together. For example, after work or bowling. This has not been possible during the pandemic, and you have not gotten the chance to meet your colleagues to the same extent." - Respondent 1

"The lunch crew, conferences or kick-offs disappeared to a great extent." - Respondent 8

4.2. Results from secondary data

Below, the documented advice from organizations with experience of remote work is presented. The gathered tips sources from two organizations; GitLab and Google.

4.2.1. GitLab

GitLab provides an open-source DevOps platform that uses their community, with over 30 million members, to create new, innovative solutions (GitLab, 2022). GitLab has operated fully remotely since it was founded and has over 1350 employees in over 65 countries (ibid). Important to note is that GitLab has an interest in increasing the number of remote workers globally as they provide solutions for remote teams (ibid).

GitLab provides extensive advice on how to build a culture adapted for working remotely and states that when artifacts such as the office vibe, music or coffee is removed, the culture must be values written down and reinforced by how leaders behave (GitLab, 2022). When it comes to maintaining an innovative culture, GitLab argues that managers must ensure inclusion as combining different perspectives creates a more innovative environment. To do so, GitLab (2022) lists 7 practices that leaders should do to promote inclusion in a remote workforce. These are:

1. **Be empathetic.** As body language and expressions are harder to capture when working remotely, managers must be proactive and ask employees how they're doing and how life's going.
2. **Ask about needs, listen, and act.** To simplify communication and understanding employee's needs, managers should regularly schedule appointments for team members to boost conversation and aid employees in removing blockades.
3. **Dedicate time to networking and team building.** Working remotely means that conversation will likely center around work-related issues. Thus, online gatherings with the purpose of networking and team building should be scheduled.
4. **Normalize asking for help and helping others.** To boost collaboration, asking for help and helping others must be considered as top priority in an organization.

Asking for help could be difficult for some employees and normalizing such behavior is important.

5. **Encourage participation within a diverse space.** When working remotely, little informal communication occurs, and it needs to be promoted.
6. **Proactively develop and mentor all team members based on their individual requirements.**
7. **Create inclusion commitment among remote staff.**

Further, GitLab (2022) emphasizes that remote organizations should build and sustain culture by:

1. **Reinforce and make values clear.** When employees cannot experience the culture in an office, communicating and stating the organization's values becomes more important. This is especially important in onboarding new employees.
2. **Embrace transparency in all interactions.** Transparency helps reduce confusion and contributes to align employees to a common goal, which makes collaboration easier. External transparency also attracts talent that share the organizational values.
3. **Put structure around the culture.** When it is harder to see how others act and behave, some structure is needed to guide employees in the right direction. By giving a team something without any structure, it becomes hard to understand how to navigate it. Leaders should set the tone and the culture needs to be documented to a greater extent, compared to on-site organizations.

4.2.2. Google

Google is a technology organization that provides products and services in the information technology sector. With employees in more than 150 cities spread over 50 countries (Gilrane, 2019), Google is a truly multinational organization. According to themselves, 40% of all work groups include Google employees from more than one location. This has provided Google with plenty of data to understand and analyze how distributed teams function, which has resulted in what Google calls "*Distributed Work*

Playbooks” (Google, n.d.). In this playbook, Google (n.d) provides advice on what leaders should do to improve distributed work to create stronger connections between employees:

- 1. Articulate team visions and norms.** A shared vision and shared norms align expectations among employees, which makes it easier for the team to work together. Often, visions and norms are assumed rather than explicitly articulated, which can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. To ensure a shared vision and norms, Google suggests that directors must be encouraged to discuss and document team norms about communication, decision making, and how work is done, no matter the location. Also, leaders must make sure that the team has a shared vision so that members can work together towards a common goal.
- 2. Reach out and get talking.** When working remotely, the feeling of belongingness may get lost. To avoid this, leaders must reach out to team members to ensure that members feel included and respected. Furthermore, informal communication that in the office occurs over coffee or lunch is lost by working remotely, and to bond on a personal level, reaching out on an informal level is advocated. Employees also play a role in this, and by asking each other questions unrelated to work during meetings, employees can bond on a more personal level. Using group chats where fun things are shared in the team also contributes to employees' sense of belongingness.
- 3. Be present.** When working virtually together with colleagues, it is of high importance to be present and show engagement. To do so, validating contributions by head nods, or confirmations are important and shows that a person is engaged in the meeting. Reactions need to be expressed more clearly than in physical meetings.

5. Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the empirical findings, previous literature, and secondary data. This is to build a better understanding of our result and to build a foundation for answering the research question. Based on our analysis, the last section of this chapter presents a revised theoretical framework.

5.1. Values supporting an innovative culture

As identified from the researched cases, *Open communication, Creativity, Trust, and Collaboration* are organizational values that are critical for an innovative culture. The values identified in this research is in line with values in literature, as the literature states that a climate for innovation support and encourage its employees to explore innovative approaches and take initiative (Martins & Terblanche, 2003), and that organizational values for innovation relates to ideas that encourage risk-taking, engage flexibility and change, inspire innovative climate, and promote knowledge sharing (Xie et al., 2021). On the same topic, secondary data from GitLab (2022) highlights that manager must ensure inclusion as combining different perspectives creates a more innovative environment.

Considering the flexibility and control value profiles suggested by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), the values for innovation identified in this research arguably relates to the flexible profile. As argued by Quinn and Kimberly (1984), a flexible value profile emphasizes creativity, change, and empowerment, which the identified values in this research relate to. On the other hand, it could to some extent be argued that we have seen signs of a control value profile as well in our findings. According to Quinn and Kimberly (1984) a control values profile stresses values such as productivity, efficiency, and stability, and although we have not seen any value for innovation that matches the control value profile, respondents argued in the interview that they had to continuously work with innovation and control it rather than letting it be a completely flexible and fluid process. This indicates that some organizations use values to control the innovation process, even though no specific values for controlling innovation were identified in this

research. However, one could argue that values related to the flexible value profile when working from the office have moved towards being more controlled when working from home. The results indicate that organizations have been forced to incorporate processes to ensure that employees do communicate with each other, such as digital fikas and after work. Although planned knowledge exchanges occurred in an office environment as well, the results implies that the spontaneous meeting by the coffee maker, although uncontrollable, was an important artifact for sustaining the organizational values. By removing this artifact, we have seen that organizations have had to replace it with controlled practices. Thus, one could argue that the shift to working remotely has forced organizations to take control over their previously flexible values to ensure that they are sustained.

Although findings suggest that the organizational values for innovation have been more difficult to sustain when working remotely, we find no evidence that neither the values have been affected in the sense that some values have become irrelevant, nor any new values have emerged in a setting where employees work from home. One could argue that this is in line with Schein's (1990) organizational culture model, which suggests that espoused values are deeply rooted in the organizational culture. The case could also be that the studied organization did not know for how long remote work would last and thus did not bother to make actions to change the deeply embedded organizational values. The studied organization also did not plan to continue to operate fully remotely in a post pandemic world.

Moreover, the results from the interviews do not show any indication that the values for innovation have been outspoken more frequently, or in different ways when working remotely. This opposes the secondary data results, where both Google (n.d.) and Gitlab (2022) argue that values must be reinforced and articulate more clearly and articulate more often in remote contexts. Similarly, the literature (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983, Schein, 1990, Dose, 1997), emphasizes the values are important to align organizational members' vision and the norm. However, even though the values have not been emphasized more often in a remote context in the studied cases, we see that the values play a role in shaping the norms and artifacts for an innovative organizational culture. Both Schein (1990), Dose (1997), and Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) argue that the values

guide employees' expectations, decisions, and actions as the values permeate in the work environment, and the interview results both agree and contribute to this theory. Our results indicated that the norms and artifacts have been changed to sustain the organizational values for innovation in a remote context. This finding extends the existing theory of organizational culture in the sense that norms and artifacts adapt to sustain the organizational values when external factors make it harder for organizations to sustain those values. How the norms and artifacts have been impacted is discussed below in section 5.2 respectively 5.3.

5.2. Norms for an innovative culture

Our findings indicate that new norms have emerged to sustain the organizational values for innovation when working remotely. We find that the removal of the physical office place made it hard for organizations to follow existing norms that were in place to sustain the organizational values for innovation and have seen new norms emerge to fill the void left by the old ones. As identified, all respondents stated that they expected their colleagues to show more interest and engagement when communicating. They also stated that their availability towards each other was lost when they could not work from the physical office. *Engagement in Communication* and *Availability for Communication* was therefore identified as two underlying norms. According to Caldwell and O'Reilly (2003), norms associated with enhancing creativity and promoting implementation of projects are significantly related to innovation. They further state that examples of such norms could be encouragement or expectations of risk-taking, teamwork, coordination, and exchange of information. *Engagement in Communication* and *Availability for Communication* can be considered as enablers for communication, teamwork, coordination, and exchange of information which ultimately, according to theory, create creative solutions, collaborative problem-solving and putting ideas into action more often (Caldwell & O'reilly, 2003; Dewett, 2004; Taggar & Ellis, 2007).

Engagement in Communication

From the results, we have seen that organizations have built a new norm of ensuring that employees stay engaged when communicating. The results show that employees found it easier to stay anonymous in conversations when working remotely by just not turning on the camera and “hiding”. To avoid such behavior, some organizations have introduced new standards on how to engage when communicating in virtual environments, resulting in new norms. Secondary data from Google (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of showing presence and engagement, and GitLab (2022) highlights difficulties in perceiving body language and expressions during remote work. To ensure engagement, organizations have introduced policies to mitigate non-engagement in conversations and meetings. For instance, policies such as always having the camera turned on during meetings have been introduced. Although a simple measure, a norm or standard of always having the camera can be argued to support communication by allowing meeting participants to perceive each other's reaction and body language, which ultimately promotes collaboration and problem solving (Caldwell & O'reilly, 2003; Dewett, 2004; Taggar & Ellis, 2007).

Another norm that was found to be removed by the transition to working remotely relates to informal communication. By removing the physical office space, the informal small talk by the coffee maker was lost. Google (n.d.) advocates to reach out and talk with employees for an increased feeling of belongingness and suggest informal communication since it is lost when working remotely which is also emphasized by GitLab (2022). We have seen that some organizations have been more successful in engaging employees to discuss informal matters than others. The results indicate that organizations have tried to introduce various informal communication channels. For instance, some organizations introduced digital fikas and after-works to boost such conversations. In addition to this, some respondents state that more time during meetings have been spent focusing on informal conversation. Furthermore, some respondents emphasized that just reaching out and talking to each other have been important when working remotely. These practices are examples of how norms comply with organizational values, such as trust, since asking questions unrelated to work during meetings helps employees to bond on a more personal level (Google, (n.d.)).

According to a couple of studies, facilitating informal communication when working remotely, is a practice that promotes inclusion which stimulates different employee perspectives and ultimately innovative environments (GitLab, 2022). Another study states that connecting people with each other increases high-quality ideas and initiatives, and thus contributes to an innovative culture (Björk & Magnusson, 2009). Lastly, Dewet (2004) argues that informal communication contributes to increasing the exchange of information, which contributes to a more innovative environment.

Availability for Communication

Respondents argued that their availability towards each other was lost when they could not work from the physical office, and they felt that it was hard to get help from others as well as feel others' presence. This was mainly because of two reasons, a higher barrier of connecting over a video call and struggling to find time for meetings where time for questions could be asked. Previous innovation research indicates that the issue of connecting people with each other for information and knowledge exchange is considered to impair innovation within the firm as high-quality ideas increase with supported and facilitated possibilities for interaction with other people (Björk & Magnusson, 2009).

We have observed a normalization of asking for help in some organizations. For instance, our results state how more specific purpose chat rooms have been opened, creating a forum where employees easily can reach out to others in the organization for assistance. Respondents stated that it was normalized to ask for help, and that it was expected by those possessing the correct information to assist the employee in need of help. GitLab (2022) argues that normalizing asking for help and helping others is considered as a top priority in an organization since it is something that maintains and creates a more innovative environment as it boosts collaboration.

5.3. Artifacts of innovation an innovative culture

As argued by Schein (1990), artifacts can reveal what is important in an organization and are the most visible layer of the organizational culture. With the removal of the physical office, which is an artifact, new artifacts have emerged to take its place in order to make it easier for employees to follow norms and standards, and ultimately sustain the organizational values for innovation. The new artifacts found in this research relates to socialization and ceremonies as these artifacts were found to be most heavily impacted by the transition to working remotely. Socialization and ceremonies are also suggested to contribute to the organizational culture (Warrick, 2017). However, nothing indicates that the shift to working remotely has impacted artifacts such as stories, symbols, or myths. The identified artifacts in this research that have assisted in filling the void of the physical office and other remote work implications are *Open digital channels for communication, Daily check-ins, Text Messaging* and *Adapted organizational activities*.

Open digital channels for communication

Toker and Gray (2008) argue that innovation outcomes increase with more face-to-face consultation, which are encouraged by open and shared spaces in the office. As the results show, several organizations have tried to imitate an office work environment through different digital channels during remote work to facilitate informal discussion but also to help employees keep track of how the organization performs when you are not at the office. For instance, we have seen continuous running Teams-rooms dedicated for certain purposes as attempts to substitute open and shared spaces at the office.

But although it is hard to determine whether these communication channels can be considered as an equivalent substitute to the physical office. It can be determined that communication channels like this have had a purpose in sustaining organizational values for innovation, which the respondents themselves have brought attention to.

Daily “check-ins”

Similar to open digital channels for communication, many organizations implemented daily “check-ins” as an important part of daily activities when working remotely. Based on our interpretation of the interviews, the difference between the two artifacts is that daily “check-ins” is a more formal way of communication as it is scheduled beforehand and often involves agendas. This type of artifact is another example of increasing social interactions between employees and groups which affects the degree of face-to-face consultation and ultimately innovation outcomes (Toker & Gray, 2008). GitLab (2022) also suggests that managers should regularly schedule appointments for team members to boost conversation and aid employees in removing blockades. Except for this, daily “check-ins” are very much in line with communication which is one of the identified organizational values that is important for an innovative culture.

Text messaging

Prior researchers have highlighted language as an important artifact for innovative culture since well-thought-out messages provide a means to affect their employees (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994; Smith & Ellis, 2001). For instance, the way in which stories are told have been suggested to have a significant effect on the attitudes and behaviors of employees (Martin et al., 1983). Bartel and Garud (2009) also propose that stories of innovation can provide means of information sharing, help inspire employees to new ideas, and coordinate teams during innovative processes without mentioning guide employees in expected behaviors. Similarly, clear, and consistent ritual signals to employees on desired organizational behavior is required for successful innovation (Barnes et al., 2006).

As communication through text messaging has been identified to increase during remote work and started to play a bigger role in everyday work, it is hard to decompose how text messaging has affected culture for innovation. This is because text messaging is only a part of language communication. On the other hand, we do know that one respondent said text messaging has contributed to forming organizational culture and flatten out the organization. Another respondent said it has broken down hierarchical barriers and

contributed to a more democratic organization. Considering respondents' experience and the fact that hierarchical culture traits have shown to have negative correlation with innovation (Büschgens et al., 2013), it is plausible to imply that text messaging can be an artifact that steer organization in a desirable direction concerning innovation capabilities. We also know that language contributes to symbols and socialization which reinforce culture (Warrick, 2017).

Adapted organizational activities

A few organizations have adapted their organizational activities to fit a remote context and sustains organizational values. It has reached everything from virtual after-works to home-delivery gift packages. Warrick's (2017) admits ceremonies and socialization as something that influence appropriate organizational behaviors. Recognizing and rewarding desired behaviors and practices are also influences that Warrick (ibid) acknowledges. Even though this has helped sustain and build culture, it cannot be directly linked to culture for innovation. Yet, one can argue that such activities support important organizational values for innovation such as trust and collaboration.

Whereas the results have shown that some organizational activities have been adapted to fit a remote context, some organizational activities for innovation have been left out completely as a consequence of remote work. Among other activities, we say that innovation days that occurred only 3-4 times a year for an organization and weekly meetings where innovation information was shared for the whole team were canceled. But not only activities directly related to innovation were put on hold, it was also activities related to team-bonding and team-spirit which fight against many of the respondents' important values for innovation, such as creativity, collaboration and trust.

5.4. Revised Framework

The findings from the empirical study supports previous research as results show that organizational values permeate in the work environment and shape norms and artifacts which is in line with Schein's (1990) model for organizational culture. Like previous research on organizational culture for innovation (i.e., Zammuto & O'Connor, 1992; Xie et al., 2021), we find that values relating to communication and a creative environment are considered as values fostering innovation.

Findings also suggest that neither organizations value nor how these values have been used, have been affected when working remotely. In contrast to Google (n.d.) and Gitlab (2022), who argue that values must be made clearer in remote contexts to ensure employee alignment, no findings suggest that the values have been articulated more clearly or purposefully used in any different ways when employees worked from home.

Whereas the original theoretical frameworks suggested that values supporting innovation would be impacted by remote work, the result from the research implies the opposite. Organizational values for innovation have stayed strong and instead influenced the norms and artifacts so that the values remain sustained. Since we have not found any effects other than that the values have been more difficult to sustain, our theoretical framework needs to be revised. Figure 5 provides a visualization of the changes made to the theoretical framework. In addition, findings from this thesis allows us to develop our theoretical framework by adding our identified norms and artifacts as illustrative examples.

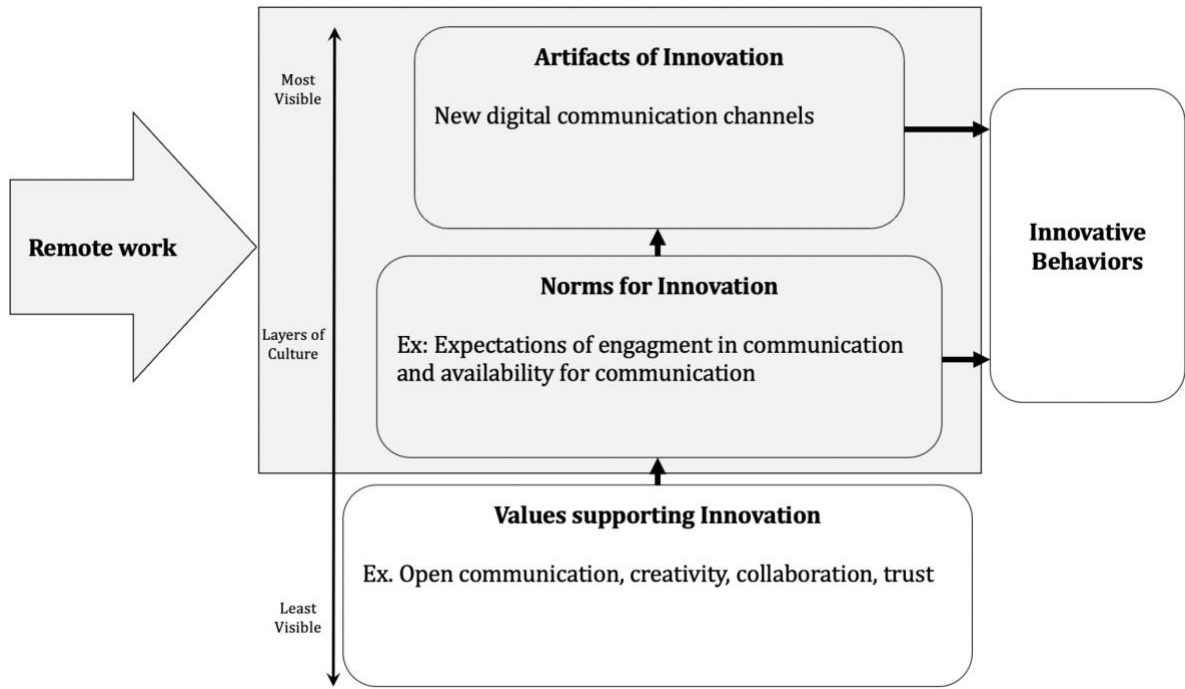


FIGURE 5
Revised framework

6. Conclusions

This last chapter answers the research question of how the organizational culture for innovation has been managed when working remotely. The chapter also presents practical and theoretical implications of findings as well as limitations and future research.

6.1. Answering the research question

The purpose of the conducted research was to answer the following research question:

RQ: *How has the organizational culture for innovation been managed when working remotely?*

Based on the theoretical framework, the findings suggest working fully remotely has affected the organization's culture for innovation. Although the organizational values supporting innovation have remained the same, the ability to sustain these values have been more difficult. The ways of doing things have changed with the removal of the physical office space and the main challenge has revolved around connecting people with each other to the same extent remotely as on-site. This has been evident in organizations norms for innovation, in other words organizations approaches and the “how”, have been affected. Pretty much all organizations have had to create new ways of doing things to sustain the values for innovation that results in an innovative culture. Similarly, organizational artifacts for innovation, which can be observed and felt when entering an organization, have also been affected for the same reason and organizations have tried to facilitate areas and meeting points for communication and knowledge exchange.

Even though all the researched organizations have experienced effects of remote work, some of the studied organizations have been able to sustain a culture for innovation better than others. In line with the advice from secondary data, the most robust organizations in the transition from working in the office to remote were the ones with the most structure around how things are done and conducted. In many organizations, innovation seems to be a bit blurry and something that “just occurs” in communication

with customers and internally. The organizations who actively work with innovating on the other hand, have found it easier to adjust to working remotely and sustain an innovative culture.

6.2. Implications from conclusions

6.2.1. Practical Implications

One of the purposes of this research was to provide organizations with advice on how their culture for innovation can be managed when working remotely. The results from this research imply that a shift to working remote work has made it more difficult for organizations to sustain their values for innovation. The identified difficulties mostly relate to an inability to sustain and ensure communication among employees in remote contexts, and for innovation, communication was found to be crucial for innovation.

However, findings indicate that by putting more structure around communication, and by ensuring that employees are communicating, the culture for innovation has been more robust when working remotely. In addition, findings of this research encourage organizations that consider innovation to be something that “just occurs” to be more active and develop a strategy for innovation, especially when employees are working remotely.

6.2.2. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the theory by confirming the importance of organizational values. In line with existing research, our findings show how values permeate in the work environment and shape norms and artifacts so that values can be sustained. Our research extends this theory by confirming the importance of organizational values as findings show how new norms and artifacts have emerged to sustain the values in a setting where old norms and artifacts have been diminished. The shift to working remotely provided such a setting as the way work was conducted changed.

6.2.3. Limitations

This research is limited in the sense that it only investigates how organizations' culture of innovation have been managed when working remotely. This allows for insights to be drawn on differences of the culture for innovation when working from the office compared to remotely. Although we can see that some organizations have experienced difficulties in sustaining values such as open communication and collaboration, this research cannot discern whether organizations' innovation capabilities have been harmed from working remotely. The research can also not distinguish to what extent certain management activities have had on overall innovation, only acknowledge that it has been managed.

Another identified limitation of this research is that the studied organizations all planned to go back to the office in a post pandemic world. This means that the studied organization might not have even tried to manage their organizational culture for innovation so that it was suited for a fully remote organization. It is possible that the results would be different if the studied organizations planned to continue to operate with a fully remote work model.

6.3. Future Research

Working remotely is only possible due to the development of digital tools and communication practices but creates new demands and challenges for the organization. Based on the findings of this research, it becomes clear that working remotely creates new challenges for organizations and their culture for innovation. One, and possibly the biggest challenges for organizations working remotely, relates to onboarding new personnel. Recruiting new employees and tapping into their knowledge is, according to the literature (e.g., Warrick et. al., 2016) a crucial factor in building an organizational culture. Similarly, bringing in new knowledge and perspectives is key in developing an organization's innovation capabilities. In line with Boston Consulting Group's findings in "*Decoding Global Ways of Working*" (BCG, 2021), we see that organizations seem to have issues with onboarding new personnel when working remotely. Also, in a recent study surveying 267 professional developers at Microsoft confirms this statement (Rodeghero

et al., 2021). They noted several difficulties for newly hired employees during a remote onboarding process such as finding documentation, communication, asking for help and bonding with teammates (ibid). Thus, research on how organizations can be more efficient in their onboarding practices when working remotely is clearly something that is needed, at least from the organization's perspective.

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Appendix 1 - Interview invitation and Guide

Hej,

Jag och en klasskamrat skriver just nu vår masteruppsats med fokus på att undersöka hur organisationer har arbetat med sin innovativa kultur där medarbetarna jobbat hemifrån under en längre period, såsom under pandemin.

För att undersöka detta tänkte vi hålla ett par intervjuer med anställda på olika positioner i bolaget som kommer ta ca 45 min. Det finns inga rätt eller fel svar under intervjun, utan det vi söker är att förstå hur anställda har upplevt att organisationens kultur och kultur för innovation har påverkats av att arbeta hemifrån.

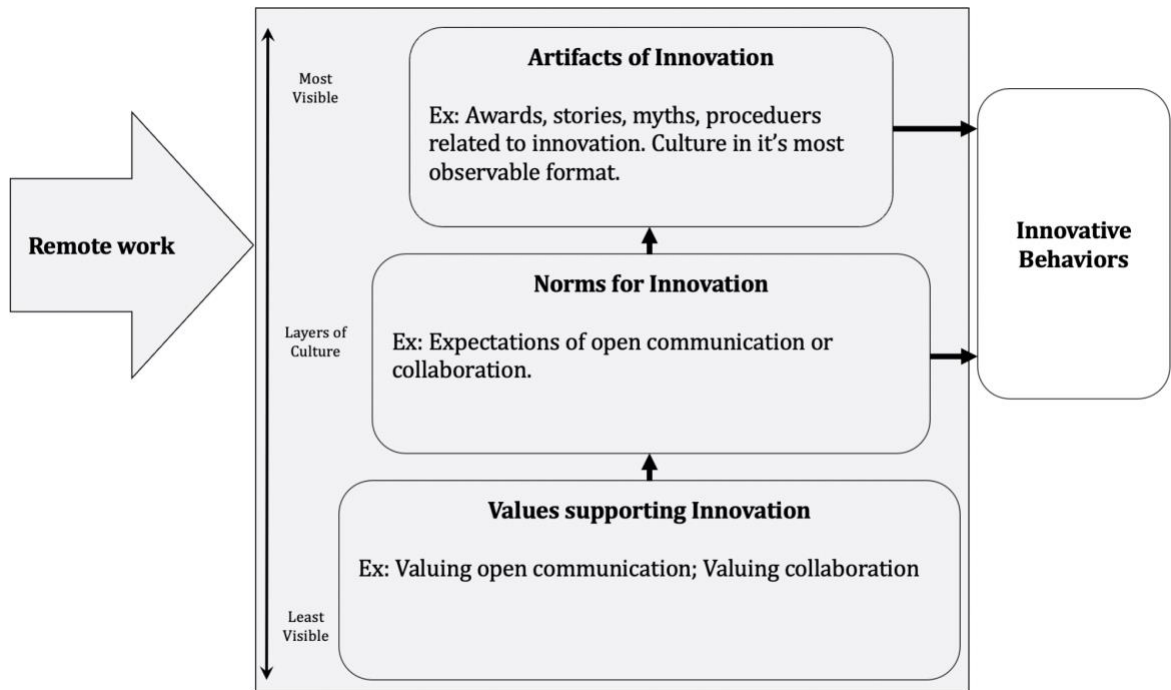
Både företag och anställda kommer att vara anonyma i vår studie, och allt insamlat material kommer behandlas konfidentiellt samt raderas när studien är färdig.

Nedan ser du vårt teoretiska ramverk samt en intervjuguide med frågor som kommer diskuteras under intervjun.

Intervjuguide

Main Question	Follow up question
Background	
Please tell us about yourself and your role in the company.	
How long have you worked for the company?	
Organizational Values	
What aspects do you think are the most important in building a culture for innovation?	- Have these aspects been affected by working remotely?

Why is innovation important for your organization?	
How would you describe the culture at your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In your opinion, was the culture affected in some way when you didn't get to meet your colleagues face to face on a daily basis?
What are the values of your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In what ways are these values used? - Why are these values important to the organization? - What values do you think are the most important for you? - How has the company worked with building and maintaining these values in a remote context?
Norms	
Are there any standardized ways in which "how things are done here" at your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has this been affected by working remotely? How?
What are the main differences you perceive considering expectations of your colleagues in your remote working situation compared to before you started working remotely?	
Artifacts	
Has any visible or formulated things related to corporate activities been affected by the transition from on site to remotely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dresscode - Celebrations - Awards and employee recognition - Corporate stories and myths - Onboarding new colleagues - How to mediate and social interactions
Has any particular corporate activities, that occurred on site, been left out when working remotely?	
How has the formal activities, such as meetings, been affected as a consequence of remote work? Structure of meetings, time, informal chats etc. Give examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure of meetings - Time - Informal chats



Teoretiskt ramverk