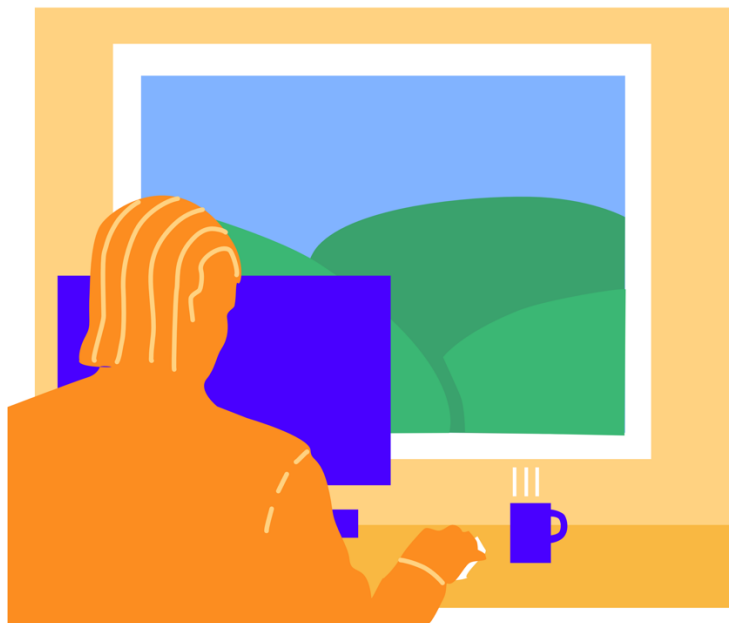


# Teleworking and the Countryside

An explorative thesis regarding *telework* as an enabler for residential relocations and life in the countryside



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## ABSTRACT

The research on teleworking, and its spatial implications, is well explored. However, anticipations of a rising diffusion of teleworking never really got actualised, until a global pandemic emerged, and redrew the map of teleworking considerably. In current times of an exciting situation, in the research field around teleworking, this thesis draws on the relationship between teleworking and residential relocations, with an extra focus on relocations targeted the countryside.

Two methods are utilised to carry out the research, one is quantitative, and one is qualitative. A more comprehensive statistical analysis is based on a survey, and a more in-depth thematic analysis is based on semi-structured interviews. Theoretically, this thesis draws on residential mobility, with a primary focus on the access-space tradeoff theory. The empirical findings show that current teleworking trends are by many both perceived and experienced as an enabling factor when it comes to residential relocations. Research have long pointed to that specific correlation, but given the earlier low diffusion levels of teleworking, the flexibility of working remotely from the regular workplace has not been raised as a valid factor in residential relocations. Findings also draws on that teleworking are perceived as a facilitating factor regarding work and everyday life, not least it applies to countryside dwellers. Further, it is emphasized that there is a strong potential regarding teleworking, and the circumstances that comes with it, to be a contributing factor for a *living countryside*.

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## 1. Introduction

Due to improved capabilities in information and communication technology (ICT), the spatial organisation of the working life can be transformed with the practice of teleworking i.e., working remotely from the regular workplace. Teleworking has therefore been of great interest to both researchers and practitioners over the years, and it is a world-renowned phenomenon (Mokhtarian, 1991; Sturesson, 2003; Andreev et al., 2010). Early on, and continuously throughout the debate on teleworking, there have been high hopes of a great diffusion of the practice, which eventually would make a significant shift in spatial principles. A great diffusion of teleworking was considered to have a substantial impact when it comes to decreasing daily commuting and opening up for increased flexibility around one's residential location. However, the high hopes and predictions of a great diffusion never really got actualised, and the possible impact on decreasing commuting and influence where people live did not reach its full potential (Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2016).

Thus, the geography of conducting work has not transformed in the way many researchers expected, who had high expectations of the consequences of a continuously developing ICT (Nilles, 1975; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). Performed work, with the potential of being teleworked, would continue to be urban and on-site, dictating people to live within commuting distance. Also, when it comes to those individuals who perform teleworking, it turns out that they rather live within cities, than outside of them. With the point of departure of conducted work as a mainly urban phenomenon, teleworkers still live relatively close to their regular workplaces, even though teleworking as a form of work spatially decouples you from it. The following situation of having a restrained teleworking diffusion, and that people who perform teleworking are urban dwellers, do not end up as a positive consequence for the countryside, as in many ways struggles with fewer inhabitants, decreased job opportunities, and downgraded social service.

Coming into the beginning of the 2020s, a newly discovered coronavirus will have a long-lasting and worldwide influence. The pandemic has played a major role in becoming a trigger for change when it comes to teleworking. During the years of active restrictions and confinement, a big load of the working population worked from home due to avoid contact with other people to prevent the virus from spreading. Recent research now shows that more and more professional groups both want, and demonstrably can, work remotely from the regular

workplace using ICT technology (Hennekam et al., 2021; Baert et al., 2020). With approximately two years of working from home, people did spend a lot of time in their household and nearest surroundings, which for many aroused curiosities for residential relocation and among other things advancing in a bigger living area, having a garden, and being closer to nature (Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz, 2022). The increased possibilities of being decoupled from the regular workplace, with less need for physical attendance, can possibly open up for a new kind of spark in residential mobility, which could lead people to settle outside of the cities and in the countryside.

With experience gained by both employers and employees, the situation around teleworking is now standing in front of a new and exciting future. Therefore, it is relevant to ask questions again, and investigate the trends around the spatial implications of teleworking, since the pandemic has changed preferences among both employers and employees.

## 1.2 Aim and research questions

In line with statements from Mokhtarian (1991) and Grimes (2000), who emphasizes that the impact of teleworking on residential locations deserves further and long-term evaluation, I will in this thesis continue and contribute with studies to the relationship between teleworking and residential locations. Further, with additional inspiration from the political goal of a *living countryside*, the study in this thesis will also investigate if circumstances around the spatial implications of teleworking are favourable in order to achieve such goals.

Thus, this thesis aims to look deeper into what the current, and potentially future, practice of teleworking could entail in residential relocation, especially targeted toward the countryside. Further, to study whether teleworking can be considered beneficial for countryside development i.e., a *living countryside*. The following research questions (RQ) are established to aid with the research.

**RQ1:** After pandemic-induced constraints, how does the performance of teleworking shape teleworkers' everyday life, and what is the state of their preferences on residential relocation in general, targeted to the countryside in particular?

**RQ2:** How do people living in the countryside experience that an increased practice of teleworking has changed the conditions for work and everyday life? Do they experience that

teleworking (now) creates new conditions for life in the countryside, and by that fosters a *living countryside*?

To aid in answering the established research questions, two empirical examinations are implemented. A survey is used to predominantly answer RQ1, and semi-structured interviews, together with teleworking countryside dwellers as interviewees, are utilised to predominantly answer RQ2. Thus, this cross-methodological thesis draws on both quantitative and qualitative methods. My theoretical approach is drawing on residential mobility and primarily on the access-space tradeoff theory. The access-space tradeoff theory draws on the fact that proximity to the workplace is the dominant factor when it comes to one's residential location. I will contribute with research showing a post-pandemic impact on this correlation, where teleworking can act as an influential factor, where the importance of proximity to the workplace might be less present and thus rebalance the theoretical point of departure.



## 2. Background

In the background chapter that follows, I will first go through previous literature regarding countryside development, which among other things accounts for non-governmental bills targeted a *living countryside*. The following will be based on the Swedish case of the countryside, and the strive to find ways to improve its conditions and develop it. Further, since the thesis draws on the spatial implications of teleworking, I will go through previous literature on teleworking. In the part regarding teleworking, both a pre-and post-pandemic context will be accounted for and subsequently discussed. Lastly, in the background chapter, I will go through previous literature that accounts for co-working spaces, which offer teleworkers an office-like context. Additionally, a current Western Swedish project, with examples of co-working spaces in the countryside is also presented.

### 2.1 Living countryside - The Swedish case

The term a *living countryside* (Swedish: levande landsbygd) is commonly used within the political context to represent the aspiration of rural living with positively charged content (Nilsson and Lundgren, 2018). First and foremost, in order to determine what makes a place a countryside, a demarcation will be presented: From the balance sheet from *Hela Sverige ska leva* (2018) it is stated that a precise and universal definition of countryside does not exist. The way the countryside is defined refers to the circumstances and the content regarding the purpose of the definition. For instance, demarcations are to varying degrees coupled to aspects such as the size and density of the population but also commuting patterns and proximity to population agglomerations (Tillväxtverket, 2021; Tillväxtanalys, 2014). What makes an area coupled to the countryside, or more towards an urban context, differs greatly between regional, national, and international contexts (Hela Sverige ska leva, 2018). The countryside definition mainly applies to different authorities and organisations since their engagement towards it for example includes grants for development, or to research around urbanisation/ruralisation trends. So, in order to make more accurate demarcations, and to among other things make sure the contribution ends up at the right place and in the right activities, different definitions are being developed.

However, in the following thesis, I will lean towards the definition of the countryside established by the government office for the rural development programme between 2014-2020 (Regeringskansliet, 2019). The definition draws on that:

*“the areas outside of urban areas, with a population of more than 3000, are defined as the countryside”* (Regeringskansliet, 2019).

The following means that approximately 25 % of the Swedish population is considered countryside dwellers, residing outside and between urban areas (Hela Sverige ska leva, 2018). Furthermore, the following definition thus includes “countryside” even in municipalities which not per se are classified as countryside municipalities.

Most often, the debate around the countryside focuses on the many problems faced, with examples such as depopulation and losses of local services i.e., schools, healthcare, grocery store, etc. (Melander, 2016). Hence, the image of a *living countryside* does instead present the very opposite, where the growth of population leads to maintained local service, possibilities for a greater sense of community, and possibly a more socially mixed attendance (Nilsson & Lundgren, 2018).

However, when in the political context of discussing and targeting a *living countryside*, there are multiple strategies and measures presented. Nilsson and Lundgren (2018) highlight several non-governmental bills (Swedish: motioner) in the Swedish Riksdag reputed for a *living countryside*, and the signers representing all parliamentary parties. The non-governmental bills included in their study were written and handed in between 2010-2014. For example, on the topic of creating jobs in the countryside, which will attract more people to live there, suggestions were primarily on investing in traditionally and symbolically connected working sectors i.e., animal husbandry and agriculture. Additionally, green industries, tourism, and renewable energy were also mentioned as possible sectors which could improve the possibilities around jobs in the countryside (Nilsson and Lundgren, 2014). Further, most suggestions included investments in several services, since they act like foundations for a life in the countryside.

Nilsson and Lundgren (2014) summarize the main points of the bills to that on the one hand cover citizens’ rights, meaning investing in infrastructure, improving the possibilities for rural job opportunities, and most significantly enabling health and social service in the local context. On the other hand, the focus lies on maintaining the rural landscape with the picture of it as something traditional to hold on to since it is a “growth machine” for the whole of Sweden.

Drawing on more recent non-governmental bills, the trend is following the same theme, where suggestions for investment are targeted toward traditional activities coupled with the countryside. For example, a lower tax on fuel and artificial fertilizer is presented to help farmers run their businesses (2017/18:2328). Furthermore, several politicians are suggesting more favourable conditions for small business owners, since they constitute a significant part of the rural working population (2022/23:1672; 2016/17:2474). To further improve the attraction of living in the countryside, there are suggestions to adjust the beach protection (Swedish: Strandskydd), but also reduce the student loan debt to target more highly educated people (2016/17:2659; 2021/22:2451).

What emerges from Nilsson and Lundgrens' (2014) study, and furthermore from recent non-governmental bills in the Swedish Riksdag, is that there is low attention targeted towards teleworking as a possibly beneficial concept. The main goal in trying to reach a *living countryside* would be to attract people to live there, since that brings tax income and a population basis sufficient for (re)establishment of several services. Furthermore, a countryside with a stable population basis will also underlie initiatives for a range of activities by individuals.

From what is displayed above, with suggestions from several bills, is that the biggest focus lies in supporting already existent activities. Within residential aspects, the countryside can offer what many teleworkers want – affordable housing, a bigger living area, a garden, and closeness to nature (Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz, 2022). Some politicians who handed in bills for a *living countryside* scratched the surface of teleworking when they mentioned the need for better infrastructure around the internet, and mentioned that more people tend to work from home and that the regulations around it should be overlooked (2022/23:1672; 2016/17:2659). However, according to the non-governmental bills in the Swedish Riksdag, the potential of teleworking as a concept to attract more people to the countryside is as said not widely noticed and explored.

## 2.2 Teleworking

The terminology around *Teleworking* is of varying content, whereas Telecommuting, E-work, Distance work, Remote work, and Home-working are some examples of common usage. As Andreev et al. (2010) indicate, the term *Telecommuting* is used by the majority of American researchers, and *Teleworking* is commonly used by European and Asian researchers. Thus, these two terms are the most common. In the following paper, I will consistently use *Teleworking*, and below, a short explanation will follow, of how I choose to see the practice of teleworking and manage it throughout the paper.

Teleworking will in this paper be regarded as paid work under an employment contract, which is done remotely from the regular workplace. Likewise, what Mokhtarian et al (2005) and Boell et al (2016) describe, the important part here is that what is usually performed at the office, is instead performed at a location geographically decoupled from the office.

The following background section on teleworking will follow its development in a chronological way, displaying benefits and drawbacks, its spatial practice and implication on residential locations, and predictions around the diffusion of teleworking. First, I will display the early phases of teleworking and follow it up until the breakout of the past Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022). Second, I will display how teleworking developed both during and after the pandemic.

### 2.2.1 Early phases of teleworking - pre-pandemic

The practice of teleworking very much co-exists with information and communication technology (ICT), since it enables a worker to perform remotely from the workplace, using digital tools such as computers, the internet, and various communication platforms (Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001; Nilles, 1975; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). With ICT there are prerequisites to still be up to date with colleagues and managers at the office for significant notifications and input.

Both the practice of teleworking, and the research around it, began to be established during the 1980s (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). However, Stureson (2003) emphasizes that telework was practised already in the 1970s in America. Coupled with the consequences of the oil crisis,

telework became, among other things, presented as a possible solution to decrease commuting within and to cities (Nilles et al., 1976; Pyöriä, 2011).

One early approach in trying to increase the possibilities for teleworking was an engagement in implementing telecottages (Qvortrup, 1989; Harrison and Qvortrup, 1989). Telecottages were among other things established to offer a closer-to-home-office, meaning more significantly; offering potential teleworkers good prerequisites regarding access to suitable information and computers with a stable and fast internet connection, since very few people had such prerequisites in their own household (Sturesson, 2003; Qvortrup, 1989). Additionally, the telecottages acted as centres when it came to being connected and offering the use of digital tools. For instance, telecottages were used as digital libraries and education centres, where one could carry out preparatory studies for university (Qvortrup, 1989; Harrison and Qvortrup, 1989). In general, when implementing telecottages, a long-term goal was to reach out to people who had more marginalized digital opportunities. Accordingly, telecottages were mainly implemented in rural areas, since the rural population was kind of left out of the digital boom that was ongoing during the 80s and the 90s (Qvortrup, 1989; Sturesson, 2003).

The teleworking debate displays many benefits, but there are always two sides to the coin, so it also displays several drawbacks (e.g., Mokhtarian, 1991; Pyöriä, 2011). On the benefits front, the initial focus on teleworking was mainly related to transport policies. Nilles (1975) makes notice that the widespread phenomenon of urban sprawl, which on a spatial scale separates residential areas and business areas, entails an increased demand for transportation since the commuting distance to work becomes longer. Teleworking was thus seen as a well-fitting and rather inexpensive tool to adjust problems around the transport situation, which largely could be coupled with commuting to and from workplaces (Nilles, 1975; Sturesson, 2003; Mokhtarian, 1991). An increased use of teleworking, with people working from home or close to home, would therefore result in less pressure on the transport infrastructure and reduce the risk of extensive congestion (Mokhtarian, 1991, Sturesson, 2003; Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001). Simply, due to the gradual decoupling from the workplace, the need for recurrent work trips becomes absent. In line with the effects on transportation from teleworking, environmental aspects are also highlighted when there is a decreased need for commuting (Pyöriä, 2011; Sturesson, 2003; Mokhtarian, 1991). For example, the air quality, which in many cities reaches unhealthy levels, would improve with a stronger teleworking norm, since traffic levels will most likely be reduced (Mokhtarian, 1991). However, even if the practice of teleworking

doesn't become a full-time commitment, but rather something workers dedicate some days per month to or apply for a part of their working day (Boell et al., 2016; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), it will still imply for effects on transportation. Part-day teleworkers often skip peak hours in traffic, and when working flexibility is given, the person who is concerned is more likely to change transport modes and patterns (Mokhtarian, 1991).

Further, flexibility is regarded as a positive consequence, since practising teleworking enables the worker to perform at any location chosen. Maruyama and Tietze (2012) mention that the aspects of flexibility are seen as the biggest motivator in becoming a teleworker, having more control and mandate over how your daily routines are executed. Additionally, a more flexible working lifestyle can have positive impacts on work-life balance, since there are increased prerequisites for carrying out the workday more effectively when saving commuting time and avoiding probable distractions at the office (Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001, 2016). Implications from the more flexible teleworking lifestyle are by many experienced as advantageous for private and family life, since it became easier to balance the care for people in the nearest surrounding (Crosbie and Moore, 2004). Overall, several researchers found evidence that people's well-being increased with a teleworking context (Felstead and Henseke, 2017; Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2016; Maruyama and Tietze, 2012; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Sturesson, 2003). Simultaneously, it is not only the teleworking employee that is coupled with benefits, also the employers can benefit from increased opportunities for teleworking. Sturesson (2003) and Pyöriä (2011) argue that offering more flexible working conditions (i.e., teleworking) will reduce energy consumption, lower office costs, and simplify recruitment to more focus on professional than logistical aspects.

Despite the positive consequences connected to teleworking, critical voices are also being raised. Especially targeted are the circumstances around the work-life balance, which could be seen as quite paradoxical since the prerequisites around that are said to be better with greater flexibility. However, leisure and family time are by some described to be affected in a negative way, when the execution of informal overtime is unconsciously prioritized and thus a source of conflicts at home (Ojala et al., 2013). Vilhelmson and Thulin (2016) mention that professional and social isolation are potential drawbacks when practising teleworking. Also, Pyöriä (2011) exemplifies that teleworking can sometimes be used as an excuse for employers to put more load on employees. Therefore, several authors encourage more investment in the employee HR departments to establish a framework to on the one hand better manage, and on the other hand

offer good prerequisites for their employed teleworkers (Maruyama and Tietze, 2012; Boell et al., 2016; Pyöriä, 2011). Boell et al. (2016) mean that the appropriateness and effectiveness coupled with telework are very contextual and embedded in work practice, which emphasizes the need for a mutual dialogue with the employer.

Throughout the reasoning when it comes to teleworking, there have continuously been high hopes that the practice will flourish. For instance, the strong belief in ICT development made experts believe that teleworking would become more widespread already during the 90s and at the beginning of the millennium (Mokhtarian, 1991). However, teleworking not even closely reached its potential of spatially decoupling employees from their employers. Vilhelmson and Thulin (2016) state that teleworking rather is an infrequent practised activity, and where the trend among teleworkers is to work from home a maximum of once a week. The diffusion of the concept simply goes at a slow pace, and the people who telework are in a certain sense considered to be privileged (Hynes, 2014; Pyöriä, 2011; Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001).

When it comes to where teleworkers mainly reside, research shows that it is mainly an urban activity since the big majority of teleworkers live in urban areas (Grimes, 2000; Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2016). Despite the attempts with implementing telecottages, to favour a teleworking community within rural areas, the teleworkers, who often are highly skilled, continue to be urban dwellers. However, several authors emphasize the potential of teleworking to be a trigger for residential mobility, and thus affect the pattern of teleworkers being urban citizens (Grimes, 2000; Mokhtarian, 1991; Sturesson, 2003). As mentioned above, Mokhtarian (1991) states that the impact of teleworking on residential mobility deserves further and long-term evaluation.

Drawing on more recent literature, published around the outbreak of the pandemic, the story of teleworking development is still following similar patterns. Thulin et al. (2019) are seeing a trend that teleworking is spreading to more and more groups, and it's not solely coupled to a small fraction of the working force. Further, In line with Mokhtarian (1991), Elldér (2020) finds evidence that teleworking clearly affects travel behaviour. The diffusion of teleworking is stated to be visible, but it is not at the level of the anticipations. However, something was about to happen with the concept of teleworking, which will be revealed in the next part.

### 2.2.2 Teleworking during and post the pandemic

In order to draw on the telework situation both during and after the pandemic, recently conducted research is relevant here, since the pandemic with its restrictions is very close in time. In terms of teleworking, the past two years of a global pandemic became a trigger for change. Restrictions and confinement as measures, to prevent the virus from spreading, resulted in some kind of an experiment of testing teleworking on completely new levels, never even closely reached before (Baert et al., 2020; Hennekam et al., 2021; Hensher et al., 2021; Balbontin et al., 2020). Even though countries over the world took on different strategies during the pandemic, and implemented restrictions at different stages, teleworking became a norm for (white-collar) workers in the service sector throughout the years of pandemic (Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz, 2022; Conway et al., 2020). As earlier reported by Thulin and Vilhelmson (2016) and Grimes (2000), the practice of teleworking was mainly coupled with a quite privileged minority of the highly skilled workforce, but with the circumstances that unfolded with the pandemic, a majority of workers with ICT-oriented working tasks started teleworking (Hennekam et al, 2021; Hiselius and Arnfalk, 2021; Kolarova et al, 2021).

Several studies on the impacts of Covid-19 on working life did substantially focus on work-related travel patterns (Balbontin et al, 2021; Hiselius and Arnfalk, 2021; Hensher et al, 2021; Kolarova et al, 2021). Simply logically, the commuting levels decreased since many working professionals stayed at home throughout their working week, just as the presumptions presented above (e.g., Mokhtarian, 1991). Hensher et al. (2021) report that people spent less money on public transport and on fueling their private transport vehicles. Conway et al. (2020) and Vatavali et al. (2020) show that walking and cycling increased as chosen transport modes during the pandemic. However, both Balbontin et al. (2021) and Kolarova et al. (2021) could display that among some private car users, commuting and the number of days working from home did not decrease at the same pace as for non-car owners. Still, on a general level, high diffusion of teleworking did affect the traffic situation, thus Hensher et al. (2021) point out improved conditions for teleworking as a future transport strategical approach.

Further beneficial experiences from the teleworking context during the pandemic are, among other things, improved work-life balance with more available time for leisure activities and for family (Kolarova et al., 2021; Hensher et al, 2021). Baert et al. (2020) also found evidence that teleworkers experienced a lower risk for burnout. Although, in a shocking event, such as a pandemic outbreak and confinement, the perceptions of teleworking as a concept had to take



time before given a proper opinion. However, with experiences from the past two years, many practitioners were on the whole satisfied with teleworking (Hennekam et al., 2021). Customizing into a working arrangement from home was however difficult for many to deal with in the beginning, as well as missing out on social contexts (Hennekam et al., 2021; Hensher et al., 2021).

From a residential point of view, the increased days of working from home do notice one on the closest surroundings in general, but the household in particular. Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz (2022) mention that the shift to increased teleworking has prompted workers to reconsider their life situation. More telework can enable a residential location further away from the office. In Stockholm's inner city, a higher degree of out-migration where measured, and the picture is alike in cities all over Europe. However, the suburbs rather than the countryside are most targeted when it comes to out-migration from the city centre (Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz, 2022).

Future prospects for teleworking are that the trend, very much created by the pandemic, will have long-term implications. Employers have seen that efficiency is maintained, sometimes even improved, and that the majority of the employees appreciate the flexible working conditions (Hennekam et al., 2021; Baert et al., 2020). If possible, many workers see themselves continuing to perform teleworking (Conway et al., 2021).

### 2.3 Co-working spaces

A linking aspect to teleworking, when not done from home, is the possibility to perform at a co-working space. The previous research on co-working spaces is quite sparse since the phenomenon defined as a co-working space appears to be young (Tillväxtanalys, 2022). However, likewise what telecottages could offer, with being a closer-to-home office with favourable conditions to perform remotely from the regular workplace (Qvortrup, 1989; Qvortrup and Harrison, 1989), a co-working space aims to offer largely the same. Also, linking concepts more known as office hotels could be described as very alike, but as Spinuzzi (2012) displays, the most obvious difference builds upon that co-working spaces encourages and creates conditions for a sense of community. Fuzi (2015) describes co-working spaces as flexible, community-oriented, shared workplaces, allowing professionals from different sectors to rent.

Mainly, co-working spaces appear to be an urban phenomenon, being a welcoming replacement for people working from home or at more informal workplaces such as cafés, libraries, and hotel lounges (Kojo and Nenonen, 2017; Fuzi, 2015). Kojo and Nenonen (2017) mention that the growth of co-working spaces is a response to today's knowledge-based economy, which also implies that a big part of the working population is incorporated in sectors where ICT usage among other things is the norm. A big part of these white-collar workers resides in urban areas, meaning they influence the choices of locations for co-working spaces as in a typical supply and demand situation.

Just like the benefits of teleworking in general, the benefits coupled with co-working spaces are reported to be similar i.e., improved work-life balance. Having a more time-efficient working day by saving commuting time by being closer to home entail prerequisites for more time with family, and friends, and leisure activities (Spinuzzi, 2012; Kojo and Nenonen; 2017; Houghton et al. 2018). However, some research does show that the usage of a co-working space did not change people's commuting patterns in a way of decreasing them, meaning they travelled an equal distance to work at the co-working space (Tillväxtanalys, 2022). Houghton et al. (2018) are also displaying that the use of flexible working agreements, as in a co-working space, could lead to challenging circumstances for the employer to communicate as desired since working hours are not always matching.

Additionally, with a co-working space, the biggest impact it does on the practice of teleworking is that it offers a social context with the potential for further exchanges (Tillväxtanalys, 2022; Fuzi, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012). Participating in a co-working space is said to be a place where co-workers learn a lot from each other, coming from different contexts, which could be advantageous from a career point of view (Spinuzzi, 2012; Fuzi, 2015). There are also indications that co-working spaces can bring a positive impact within their local context, by being an incubator for local entrepreneurship and helping the local to develop (Houghton et al., 2018; Fuzi, 2015; Tillväxtanalys, 2022). In the report from Tillväxtanalys (2022), co-working spaces are also something that could be interesting for companies to invest in, meaning that they could offer their employees well-functioned workplaces remotely from the regular workplace. This could help companies to strengthen their reputation and increase their recruitment area.

### 2.3.1 Swedish example of co-working spaces in the countryside

Both Qvortrup (1989) and Fuzi (2015) account for co-working spaces as a beneficial concept for the countryside, where several good reasons and conditions to perform teleworking could be offered. As mentioned above, the appearance of co-working spaces is still most common in urban areas (Kojo and Nenonen, 2017). However, the potential of creating beneficial teleworking conditions in the countryside is still being investigated.

As a Western Swedish example of that, the ongoing project of *RoRiLand*, initiated by the municipal association of Fyrbodal (Swedish: Fyrbodals kommunalförbund), examines the utilisation of five rural, rather than urban, co-working spaces (Fyrbodals kommunalförbund, 2022). Within the project, they choose to entitle the co-working spaces as *neighbourhood offices* (Swedish: grannskapskontor). The following project and engagement in neighbourhood offices do in their case originate from one of their earlier projects called *Tur&Retur*. In *Tur&Retur*, they researched how mobility between the rural and the urban could be made possible in a more sustainable manner, predominantly focusing on commuting white-collar workers (Fyrbodals kommunalförbund, 2020). Influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, teleworking became the new normal for many professionals. In terms of mobility patterns, teleworking implicated less commuting. Further, the teleworking practice was mainly appreciated, but participants in the project felt a desire to perform it in a more social context, but still close-to-home. Thus, the concept of neighbourhood offices took off and got implemented in further studies.

The project of *RoRiLand* is currently ongoing, and within their focus on neighbourhood offices, they are starting to see the first trends after approximately one year of implementation. According to project leader Louise Olsson, four out of five neighbourhood offices demonstrate positive signs, with an increasing number of participants. Further, on a positive note, some neighbourhood offices cause ripples in the water when it comes to engaging the local community, and it is becoming a natural meeting point for more activities. For example, one participating office named *Bro Coworking* in the municipality of Lysekil does, in addition to offering a place to telework from, include a bicycle repairation, a climbing gym, and opportunities for ecological farming on the property.

### 3. Theoretical framework

An overall aim of this thesis is to look deeper into what the current, and potentially future, practice of teleworking could entail in residential relocation, especially targeted toward the countryside. Therefore, as a theoretical point of departure, I will look into residential mobility and primarily make use of the *access-space tradeoff theory* (Phe and Wakely, 2000). Simultaneously, since teleworking here is the studied factor in residential relocation, attention will also be paid to *ICT* and *mobility*, which are central aspects in the practice of teleworking.

#### 3.1 Residential mobility

Residential mobility is defined as the movement of households, which predominantly occurs in urban areas, and therefore it is often an investigation of why intraurban migration occurs (Short, 1978). With residential mobility as a theoretical approach, the reasons behind people's residential relocations are investigated. However, the research on the topic from a geographer's view extends far back in time, and over a long period the emphasis on the field was more on form and patterns, but from the 1970s the emphasis became targeted to the processes that shape the spatial structures (Short, 1978). Thus, the field of residential mobility went to focus more on, as mentioned above, the reasons behind people's residential relocations, than on aggregated mobility within regional perspectives (Short, 1978). The research field of residential mobility would regardless be characterized by both perspectives. It was of study interest to both investigate individual processes such as household decisions and aggregated societal factors such as power relations in the housing market. Rossi (1955) is one key researcher when it comes to turning the perspective from a structural process to the desires of the individual.

Below I will initially go through the most recurring trajectories of focus areas and topics within residential mobility, and then primarily put focus on the access-space tradeoff theory.

##### 3.1.1 Residential mobility – Influential focus areas

Migration, at the beginning of the twentieth century, is mentioned as one big influential aspect which transformed the residential pattern in a city. Burgess (1925) and Hoyth (1939) accounts for the residential mobility development as a process of high-status residences being built in suburbs and outlying areas, inhabited by privileged people, and houses in the central areas of the city left vacant and inhabited by lower-status households, which often were immigrant workers.

Sánchez and Andrews (2011) further indicate that residential mobility has close connections to the forces on the housing market and to the financial institutions. Since the housing market can be both private and public, the regulations around it differ greatly (Dieleman, 2001). The residential mobility is said to be higher in cities where regulations on land use and rent control are less restrictive, combined with high competition in banking as it can provide favourable loan- and credit opportunities (Sánchez and Andrews, 2011).

Further focus areas within residential mobility have been the *life-cycle model/the approach of the life course*. The following model/approach draws on the different needs within a household over life course stages, which affect whether the household decides to move or not (Short, 1978; Dieleman, 2001). It is mentioned that moving from one residence to another is not an isolated event, rather it is events occurring in line with developments within one's personal life. For example, it can be coupled with expanding the family, accepting a new job position, and entering retirement (Dieleman, 2001; Coulter and Scott, 2015). According to this thesis, a development in one's personal life which triggers residential mobility could couple to increased performance of teleworking. However, criticism has been targeted toward its capability to fully explain residential mobility since it lacks to show the contemporary picture of household moves. It is a model that is mainly applicable to middle-, and high-income households since they have financial capabilities in the housing market. For households with financial struggles, and within public housing, it becomes trivial (Short, 1978). Likewise, there is also a lack of attention directed toward the widespread residential immobility, which is influenced by structural power relations such as a hard-to-enter housing market (Coulter et al., 2015).

However, Coulter et al. (2015) argue that there is a need to re-think residential mobility, since when it comes to household moves both mobility and immobility are shaped by a combination of factors. Coulter et al. (2015) emphasize that one should take resources/restrictions and opportunities/constraints into account when studying residential mobility. Desires over the life course are definitely strong in carrying through household movements, but it is also determined by the supply of the housing market and personal financial constraints. Further, spatial processes in a private housing market such as gentrification can also polarize neighbourhoods and entail forced household movements (Coulter et al., 2015; Short, 1978).

The immigration flow that feeds urbanization and transforms the residential pattern, the geographical filtering effect from high- to low-status households, the perspective of the life

course, and the opportunities and constraints on the housing market are, as said, all part of thoughts and explanations regarding residential mobility. Summed up, residential mobility is influenced by several aspects concerning housing market policies and life course considerations.

In the next section, I will go through an additional theoretical perspective which is the *access-space tradeoff theory*. The following tradeoff theory accounts for the location of the workplace as strongly influenceable on the residential location. It is also interesting to account for the possible effects of the performance of teleworking, which could change the spatial conditions for relocation decisions and patterns. Thus, teleworking is a variable that could transform the equation in the access-space tradeoff theory.

### 3.1.2 Acces-Space tradeoff theory

The access-space tradeoff theory is developed to account for the circumstances that primarily affect the choice of residential location (Phe and Wakely, 2000). Accordingly, the process of choosing a residential location is a negotiation of whether the circumstances regarding *accessibility* should take precedence, or if it is the actual *space* where the residence is located which shall take precedence. In this context, accessibility draws on considerations around travel costs and efforts to get to the workplace. Considerations around the space draw on aspects such as housing and living costs (Alonso, 1964; Phe and Wakely, 2000). Looking at it as a weighing scale, where on the one end there is accessibility to the workplace, and on the other end considerations regarding the space. The most dominant factor, and thus the end that weighs the most, is accessibility to the workplace (Kim et al., 2012). Since attending at the workplace is an everyday activity, it implies recurring trips to and from work, which means that employees spend both money and time transporting themselves to the office. To reside in a near surrounding will therefore make an impact on the commuting costs and time.

According to the access-space tradeoff theory, lower-income households tend to live closer to their workplace to minimize the cost of commuting, while households with stronger financial conditions focus more on housing quality, since expenditures on commuting do not affect such households as harshly (Phe and Wakely, 2000; Kim et al., 2012). High-quality houses are said to most likely be placed in the outlying areas of the city (Phe and Wakely, 2000; Kim et al., 2012). However, the picture of more wealthy people residing in outlying areas was accepted up

until the 1970s, since processes known as gentrification became world-renowned and transformed inner cities with displacements and socioeconomic division, which led to an increase of wealthy people in upgraded urban neighbourhoods that previously was inhabited by the working class (Phe and Wakely, 2000). Still, the phenomenon of gentrification which entails more wealthy people in upgraded central neighbourhoods does not correlate with an aim of coming closer to the workplace, it is more embedded in social and cultural aspects such as the will of living in a trendy block and surrounding yourself with cool people (Hubbard, 2017). So, also worth mentioning, even if households with stronger financial conditions can neglect expenditures on commuting, living farther away from the workplace will anyhow affect the quality of life, since a lot of time will still be needed for the recurring commute. The accessibility to the workplace will thus continue to be of a great deal.

Needless to say, it is not solely a tradeoff between the accessibility to the workplace vs housing and living costs, more characteristics are of course considered when deciding the residential location. Especially, things that could make an impact on the quality of life, such as the characteristics of the neighbourhood, safety in the surroundings, the supply of educational services, and local pollution levels (Kim et al., 2012). However, the principles of utility maximization and budget constraints when it comes to residential decisions are most influenced by where the workplace is located and household expenses.

### 3.1.3 Impact of teleworking on access-space tradeoff theory

Since the following paper draws on the impacts of teleworking, it is therefore relevant to add teleworking to the equation of access-space tradeoff theory, since that could possibly make a difference in the choice of residential location. As stated above, ICT is regarded as the enabler of teleworking since it creates the digital solutions needed in order to manage working tasks from a remote site (Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001). Further, the performance of teleworking may have the opportunity to rebalance the above-mentioned access-space correlation, where the location of the workplace dictates the residential location. With less need for recurring commuting and attendance at the office, the decisions around residential relocations may take less account of that factor.

Previously, Kim et al. (2012) investigated these perspectives on teleworking and residential location, and theorizes that teleworking may diversify the options of housing quality and residential location. They mention that from a long-term perspective when practising

teleworking, the money saved from recurrent commuting can be converted into investment in their residences and enable focus on the quality and size of the living area (Kim et al., 2012). Affordable houses with the following characteristics are most likely to be found in areas outside the agglomerations, which may be of interest to teleworkers (Kim et al., 2012). On a theoretical and hypothetical level, teleworking is in the long term seen as the factor that could determine the residential location, and outcompete the factor of where the workplace is located (Tayyaran et al., 2003; Lund and Mokhtarian, 1994).

Summed up, it is argued by Kim et al. (2012) that increased practice of teleworking may change the traditional view of the access-space tradeoff theory, where accessibility to the workplace is the dominant factor in residential decisions. Thus, the circumstances become the opposite with the picture of it as a weighing scale, where the space and quality of housing and life weigh more and by that take precedence (Kim et al., 2012). Since most of the research on teleworking impacts on residential locations is very western based, Kim et al. (2012) contribute with research from a different geographical perspective, with the case of Seoul Metropolitan Area (SMA).

The studies from Kim et al. (2012) show that the correlation between teleworking and peripheral living is quite modest, it cannot show that teleworking accelerates residential relocation to areas outside the cities. In contrast to previous research, teleworkers in SMA tend to have shorter commuting to the workplaces than regular commuters. Also, outlying residents who telework tend to be employed by companies at outlying job locations. Further, emphasizing that teleworking does not cause peripheral living, Kim et al. (2012) show that peripheral living on the other hand influences the adoption of teleworking. In addition to the findings from Kim et al. (2012), similar results are presented from a Western context, where no broad evidence can be shown that telework is a key influence in residing farther away from work (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1995; Ellen and Hampstead, 2002; Muhammad et al., 2007). Its limitations are coupled with the teleworking trends of that time (long before the Covid-19 pandemic), where very few practised it on a level over part-time, and the ones involved in teleworking are highly skilled workers that still needed the practicalities with closeness to face-to-face meetings. Thus, the theoretical causality that increased teleworking would make an impact on residential locations did not end up as a broad practical causality.



#### 3.1.4 Application to the following thesis

Adding telework to the equation of access-space tradeoff theory, and using that as a point of departure, I will investigate whether the new post-pandemic circumstances around the increased use of teleworking can take the theoretical causality of the lowered impact of accessibility to the workplace, into a practical causality where people reside farther away from their workplaces, and perhaps in a countryside context.

## 4. Methods

The following chapter will account for the different methods, tools, and research strategies that have been applied to carry out the study. This thesis is a cross-methodological study, meaning it includes an extensive and intensive approach, working with quantitative and qualitative data (Cloke et al., 2004). As the quantitative part, I have conducted a survey, and as the qualitative part, I will conduct a few semi-structured interviews. The application of two different methods will enable the following study to get a good overview of the trends in the relationship between teleworking and the propensity to move in general, and toward the countryside in particular. Further, the cross-methodical approach also enables more in-depth knowledge, through the semi-structured interviews, of how the practice of teleworking functions with rural life and the perception of it as a useful tool to contribute to a *living countryside*. The utilisation of two different methods will ensure that RQ1 and RQ2 will be answered in beneficial ways.

### 4.1 Survey

#### 4.1.1 Data collection

The first approach of this thesis is quantitative and draws on surveys. It is selected for its capability to describe and measure data that can be quantified in categories and numbers. A general focus is to have generalisation claims when it comes to using the following approach, where one wants to demonstrate patterns and trends around what one is studying (De Vaus, 2002). However, I am not able to draw generalisation claims regarding the question asked, since I was not able to obtain a representative selection of responders. Therefore, the claims in the thesis may be seen as indications of possible trends and patterns. In the following study, the focus on the possible patterns and trends are targeted toward teleworkers' preferences around residential relocation and everyday life, along with the new circumstances around the practice of teleworking. The following does predominantly couple to RQ1.

The quantitative research design is categorised as a cross-sectional study, where comparisons are made based on variables (De Vaus, 2002). A variable is a characteristic that includes more than one value or category, which for instance could be the amount of performing teleworking, where *1-2 days per week*, *3-4 days per week* and *every day* are three different categories/values (De Vaus, 2002). Further, when turning to quantitative research and studying survey data, one will also have to decide if it is descriptive or explanatory research which is carried out. The descriptive approach accounts for analyses to describe the difference between variables, while

the explanatory approach seeks causal relationships, between an independent and a dependent variable (Esaiasson et al., 2017). I will in the quantitative part of my study implement descriptive research, and make an appropriate interpretation of how it is, connected to the questions I ask.

To be able to investigate and describe the state of teleworkers' preferences, the survey structure needs to be operationalised in a way to make it measurable. The following includes clarification around the survey content, to make sure that the questions asked, and variables used, will actually measure what is being sought in the following study (De Vaus, 2002). Important is that the themes and questions are constructed to capture responses that goes in line with the aim of the study (De Vaus, 2002). Accordingly, the survey structure is divided into three different parts, where the *first part* investigates experience and motives around teleworking. The *second part* proceeds from the experiences and motives, and explores in what way teleworking has influenced preferences regarding both the residential location and everyday life. Further, it studies the interest and possibilities for moving and of a life in the countryside. The *third part* account for background questions such as gender, age, family situation etc. The background questions also deliver important variables for the study, and as Esaiasson et al. (2017) also argue, it is beneficial for the survey if such banal questions, which are quite poor in content, are kept at the end of the study, so the respondent does not lose its interest during the participation in the survey.

The design and the arrangement of the survey do almost to 100 % include questions where the respondents already have pre-constructed answer options to choose from (see Appendix 3). The answer options consist of at least two options, and coupled with many of the questions there is also an alternative phrased as *other*, where the respondent could add an option if that better suits one's perception. Further, the structure of the survey enables various forms of branchings, linked to how the respondent are answering. For example, if the respondent chooses the option *yes* on a question about whether the respondent telework from a co-working space, this will lead to further follow-up questions. If the respondent chooses option *no*, the follow-up questions are not displayed, and the respondent will be forwarded to the next part of the survey.

#### 4.1.2 Sampling group and strategies

On a general note, a researcher strives towards getting a broader picture of the characteristics of a group. In this case, the characteristics include new conditions and new experiences for teleworkers, and how that affects residential preferences and plans for moving, especially targeted towards a countryside context. Further, the researcher also strives towards the possibility of being able to draw random samples and account for the entire population i.e., people performing teleworking. The following will be able to draw on generalisation claims (Esaiasson et al., 2017, De Vaus, 2002). However, as mentioned above, I am reluctant to draw generalisation claims.

As a student at the University of Gothenburg, you get access to the Microsoft package, which includes one software for surveys/forms. The following software was beneficial in constructing a well-fitted survey. The general aim was to reach out as broadly as possible, meaning that the survey was posted on several channels. These channels included two of my own social media platforms, two companies sent it out through emails to their employees, and Louise Olsson (project leader of *RoRiLand*) enabled further diffusion through her and Fyrbodals contact web, which among other things included several individuals that perform teleworking. So, through these different channels and forums, I was able to reach a total of 94 voluntary respondents. In Table 1 below, the characteristics of the survey respondents are presented.

**Table 1.** Characteristics regarding the sample group.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	5	5.3	5.3
25-34	55	58.5	63.8
35-44	14	14.9	78.7
45-54	11	11.7	90.4
55-64	8	8.5	98.9
65+	1	1.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	

<b>Gender</b>			
Female	44	46.8	47.9
Male	49	52.1	98.9
Other	1	1.1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Family Situation</b>			
Living alone	18	19.1	19.1
Single, with children at home	3	3.2	22.2
Partner/married, no children at home	41	43.6	65.8
Partner/married, with children at home	28	29.8	95.6
Other	4	4.4	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Highest education</b>			
Elementary school	0	0	0
3 to 5 years after high school	57	60.6	60.6
5+ years after high school	19	20.2	80.9
Up to 2 years after high school	13	13.8	94.7
High school	5	5.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Housing situation</b>			
Other	2	2.2	2.2
Villa/single house	27	28.7	30.9
Apartment house/multi-family building	56	59.6	90.4
Townhouse/Terraced house	5	5.3	95.7
Farmhouse	4	4.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Living context</b>			
Suburbs/in outskirts of an urban area	9	9.6	9.6
Countryside	21	22.3	31.9
Urban area	64	68.1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	

#### 4.1.3 Methods of analysis

Overall, when it comes to statistical analysis methods, it ensures you make summary descriptions over a large amount of data (Esaiasson et al., 2017). As stated above, the method used for collecting the data in the quantitative part was through surveys. Further, I directed the study to be descriptive rather than explanatory. Therefore, to analyse the collected data, from 94 survey respondents, I choose to implement univariate analyses since it is suitable when it comes to descriptive research (Esaiasson et al., 2017; De Vaus, 2002).

The variables used in the survey are not ranking categorized, meaning they are on a nominal level of measurement. In this case, the nominal level of measurement sorts the units of analysis into different categories, classes and types such as characteristics around residential relocations or circumstances considered to be simplified as a result of performing teleworking. Further, to aid with processing the data, and implementing the statistical analysis, I used the software *IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0*. Further, I also made use of Excel to create some of the charts presented in the results.

The survey resulted in a large amount of data, where not everything is relevant to analyse and display. In the results section, I will account for the data chosen for analysis, which can give relevant answers to RQ1.

#### 4.1.4 Discussion of methods

As already mentioned, there are many constraints coupled with the possibility to account for an entire population and guaranteeing generalisation. In my case, the constraints in getting random samples were based on facilities which come with the fact that I am a student, with limited access to substantial data. Also, the limited time of implementation hindered the possibility of reaching even more respondents. Regarding the background information of the responders, the gender aspect was well distributed among both females and males. Further, a variety within the family situation was well scattered. However, it turned out that the majority of the responders were in the age range of 25-34, and that an urban area was the most common place to live in.

Nonetheless, the respondents still qualified as a sample group within the population, since the prerequisite when it came to participating and answering the questions in the survey was that

one had to have experience of or on a regular basis perform teleworking. Also, as stated above, I will not be able to draw generalisation claims regarding the questions asked, but as indications of possible trends and patterns.

Esaiasson et al. (2017) mention that it is desirable in the implementation of the study to have an absence of random and systematic errors, and regarding the questions in the survey, it is relevant to also mention that the question which asks what context the respondent lives in was clarified during the collection of answers. Needless to say, it is not an ideal action to modify questions, even though in this case it was made as a clarification measure. However, the outcome of this modification does not affect the reliability and validity since the following values were not of a great deal in the result reporting. Besides, it is also a practical evidence that master thesis writing is a learning-by-doing procedure.

In general, I do think that the survey consisted of well-constructed questions and that I in the end obtained relevant data to account for RQ1 (De Vaus, 2002).

## 4.2 Semi-structured interviews

### 4.2.1 Data collection

The second approach to this thesis data collection is qualitative and draws on semi-structured interviews, which aim to get more in-depth knowledge via verbal communication with an interviewee. The semi-structured approach accounts for a combination of a definite direction of the interview, with pre-written themes and questions, but it also offers an informal way of the conversation, where the questions are openly formulated with opportunities for the interviewee to interpret a little bit more freely. Since the questions are openly formulated, the interviewer should also be prepared for the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, which will broaden the intake of perceptions, and result in moderate material to analyse (Longhurst, 2016).

In the following thesis, the use of semi-structured interviews primarily acts as the method of choice to obtain well-founded perceptions regarding RQ2. The following research question focuses on how teleworkers in the countryside experience how the post-pandemic circumstances of teleworking have impacted on their everyday life. Further, RQ2 brings up whether the new circumstances around teleworking are perceived as beneficial for a life in the

countryside, and that development related to possibilities of teleworking can foster development in the countryside i.e., reaching a *living countryside*. To reach well-founded perceptions regarding RQ2, the interviews are utilised and targeted toward people who perform telework and already reside in the countryside, since they obtain relevant experience. The interviewees can give an account of their experiences as a teleworker in the countryside and display their thoughts of teleworking as an enabler when it comes to residential mobility targeted toward their local surroundings. Further, the interviewee can share accurate thoughts about the possibilities around the relationship between teleworking and countryside development.

As mentioned above, all interviewees are approached with the same overall themes and questions, and to aid with that implementation, an interview guide is prepared (see Appendix 1). Accordingly, constructing an interview guide betimes the interview session creates good prerequisites to having well-adjusted questions that couple to the research questions of the study. Also, in line with recommendations from Esaiasson et al. (2017), I constructed an interview guide to limit the risk of asking leading questions that could affect the validity in a negative way.

The overall structure of the interview guide of this thesis is divided into four separate phases. The introductory part account for relevant information about the study, and why the interview is a crucial part of it. Further, in the *introductory phase*, the interviewee gets informed about the ethical considerations that come with an interview, ensuring anonymity and the right to withdraw from taking part in the research (Longhurst et al., 2016). Not only is the introductory part important regarding information about the purpose of the study and ethical considerations, but it also offers a smooth initial stage of the interview, cuts down on possible tensions, and makes the interviewee more comfortable in the following situation (Esaiasson et al., 2017). The *second phase* is very much an extension of the first phase, presenting the interviewee with easily digested questions regarding profession and place of residence. The *third phase* focuses on the combination of residing in the countryside and practising teleworking. The questions in this phase investigate how and in what way the combination functions. The *fourth phase* aims to account for, and more deeply investigate, the approach to a *living countryside*. The interviewee is in this phase expected to think about connections to the teleworking concept as a tool to achieve development in the countryside.



#### 4.2.2 Sampling group and strategies

As mentioned above, for the interviews, it was essential that the interviewees practised teleworking in some sense and already lived in the countryside when the interview was conducted. In that way, it was a strategical sampling, where the individuals interviewed were hand-picked to fit in the suit of a teleworking countryside dweller. In particular, that was important due to catching the perceptions regarding RQ2. 5 of the interviewees were respondents from the survey since the last page of the survey contained a request for teleworkers residing in the countryside. To aid with recruiting a few more appropriate interviewees, Louise Olsson (project leader for RoRiLand at Fyrbodals kommunalförbund) reached out to participants in their ongoing project. Additionally, one of the interviewees also helped out to reach suitable individuals. In total, 8 participants took part in interview sessions for this thesis and contributed with valuable thoughts and opinions to the study. A table of the interviewees is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Interviewee information.

Interviewee number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Profession
1	Melissa	36	Female	Lawyer
2	Cleo	30	Female	Designer
3	Zara	38	Female	Project leader
4	Lisa	29	Female	Urban and regional planner
5	Ellen	58	Female	Regional developer
6	Veronica	33	Female	Strategist
7	Thomas	33	Male	Software Engineer
8	Carl	32	Male	Solution Architect

Since I was situated in Lyon, France, for 4 months of the spring semester, and in connection with that I reached out to teleworkers in a Swedish countryside context, the interviews were carried out on digital platforms or via phone calls. As stated above, 8 interviews were carried out in total, 4 of them via digital platforms such as *Zoom* and *Skype*, and 4 via phone calls.

Approximately, the interviews lasted around 30 minutes, and were recorded in the meantime to aid with transcription.

#### 4.2.3 Methods of analysis

To analyse the transcribed material from the semi-structured interviews thematic analysis is utilised. The following analysis method is one of the most common within qualitative research, however, Maguire and Delahunt (2017) mention that there are several ways to approach it. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed the most influential approach to thematic analysis which is based on a six-step framework, where you encode the material, to break it down and make it manageable, and further search for themes that are significant for the study.

Thus, influenced by the quite straightforward six-step framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I took on the work of encoding my material and started searching for significant themes that answer RQ2. Initially, I read through my transcripts several times, to become familiar with the data. Secondly, I started the coding process, where I extracted study-relevant segments from the transcripts. In the third step, I focused on finding themes within the segments I extracted. In the fourth step, I took on a review position regarding the themes found, and further considered if the themes chosen worked well in the context of the study. The fifth step involved a final refinement of the themes, where I also determined if there was a need for subthemes to capture the content more accurately. Lastly, the result writing started, where reconnections to the themes were implemented in the text. I also thought it was beneficial to quote some of the segments in the text, to further describe it in the interviewee's own words.

To facilitate the following analysis, I used the software *NVivo 12*. The software simplified the whole process of structuring the interview data, carrying out the coding and identifying which themes that are recurring and of significance among the interviewees.

#### 4.2.4 Discussion of methods

One part that could affect the reliability of this thesis is the relatively low number of conducted interviews. However, I started to obtain recurring responses and the interviewees had similar thoughts and perceptions, which points to a saturation among the themes. Furthermore, stopping at 8 interviews was also due to the thesis time frame, where the whole procedure of preparing for, and subsequently conducting interviews, transcribing them, and coding them thematically is a time-consuming process. Additionally, I didn't feel the need of conducting more interviews

due to the effort and time needed also for the quantitative part of this thesis. However, it is of course possible that new themes could have emerged out of additional interviewees, but given the circumstances of the time frame and contact network, and also a certain saturation among the interviewee's answers and expositions, this is considered to be sufficient to achieve the aim of this thesis.

Additionally, all the teleworking countryside dwellers, who participated as interviewees, live in a Western Swedish context, which is very different to the countryside context in, for example, northern Sweden. Thus, as mentioned earlier, I do not have the possibility to generalise the thoughts and perceptions among the interviewees on the full population of teleworking countryside dwellers. Also in this case, I can only account for trends and patterns.

As mentioned, the interviews were not conducted face-to-face but either on a digital platform or on a phone instead, due to purely geographical reasons. When interviews are conducted at a distance from the interviewee, there is an increased risk of misunderstandings, which in turn lowers the quality of the collected data. However, in this case, I hardly see that the distance between the interviewer and the interviewee entails bad quality. I consider that the quality is kept high since the interviewees are very used to handling digital meeting platforms, and having conversations through phone since they, in fact, are teleworkers. Additionally, the platforms used today consist of very high quality, which facilitates the exchange with the interviewer. Although, doing interviews over the phone made it a bit more challenging, and one of the recordings of the phone interviews actually resulted in bad quality. However, I was still able to capture the big part of the interview for the transcription, but an irregular background sound made some segments difficult to interpret.

### 4.3 Pilot

Before publishing the survey, and subsequently conducting the interviews, pilots were carried out. Regarding the survey, a pilot was carried out by an individual who possessed the prerequisites to participate in this thesis, with experience of or on a regular daily basis performing teleworking. The pilot helped reformulate questions and expressions for the better and gave me insight into adding and withdrawing answer options. A pilot was also carried out in advance regarding the semi-structured interview. Just as in the case of the pilot for the survey, the pilot interview was carried out together with an individual with good pre-knowledge of performing teleworking. However, the following individual did not have experience in

countryside living. Either way, the pilot interview still highlighted some issues with the interview guide and question formulation. Additionally, the pilot interview also made me more comfortable in the interview situation, which was adequate since I am not accustomed to the interviewer role.

Esaiasson et al. (2017) and Cloke et al. (2004) mention that pilot studies are significant to carry out since they demonstrate if there are errors and parts to improve. Going through the material, in that manner, entails insights into how to make the questions more understandable. Furthermore, in addition to the pilot studies, I received essential feedback from my supervisor on developing both the survey and the interview guide before publication and implementation.

## 5. Empirical findings - Survey

The following chapter will include the empirical findings from the survey. In the upcoming chapter, the semi-structured interviews will be presented.

The survey does, on a more general level, show how teleworkers perceive and adapt to the new circumstances around teleworking. How it has influenced preferences regarding the home environment, residential relocation, and one's own view of the countryside. While the semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, reveal how it actually works with performing teleworking from the countryside, and what kind of affection it has had on one's professional- and everyday life. The interviewees can also share insightful thoughts about teleworking as an enabler for a more *living countryside*. Thus, the survey forms an interesting background to the semi-structured interviews.

Drawing on the survey, I focus on presenting statistical analyses which say something about how the new circumstances of teleworking have influenced the preferences regarding one's home environment and residential location. Furthermore, the attractiveness of, and circumstances for, life in the countryside, in connection with the performance of teleworking, will also be presented. To facilitate the presentation, a division into 4 different themes will be implemented.

The first theme draws on *Teleworking and the home environment*, where responses regarding changed preferences are presented. The second theme draws on *Transformed preferences and residential relocations*, where responders in the survey share information regarding actual moving decisions where teleworking has been a contributing factor. The third theme draws on *Teleworkers' interest in the countryside*, where the focus lies on whether the utilisation of increased teleworking possibilities correlates with an interest in living in the countryside. The fourth and last theme, with a subtheme, draws on *Performing telework in the countryside*, where countryside dwellers share facilitating circumstances surrounding rural life thanks to the performance of teleworking. The subtheme draws on the potential effects of *Co-working in the countryside*.

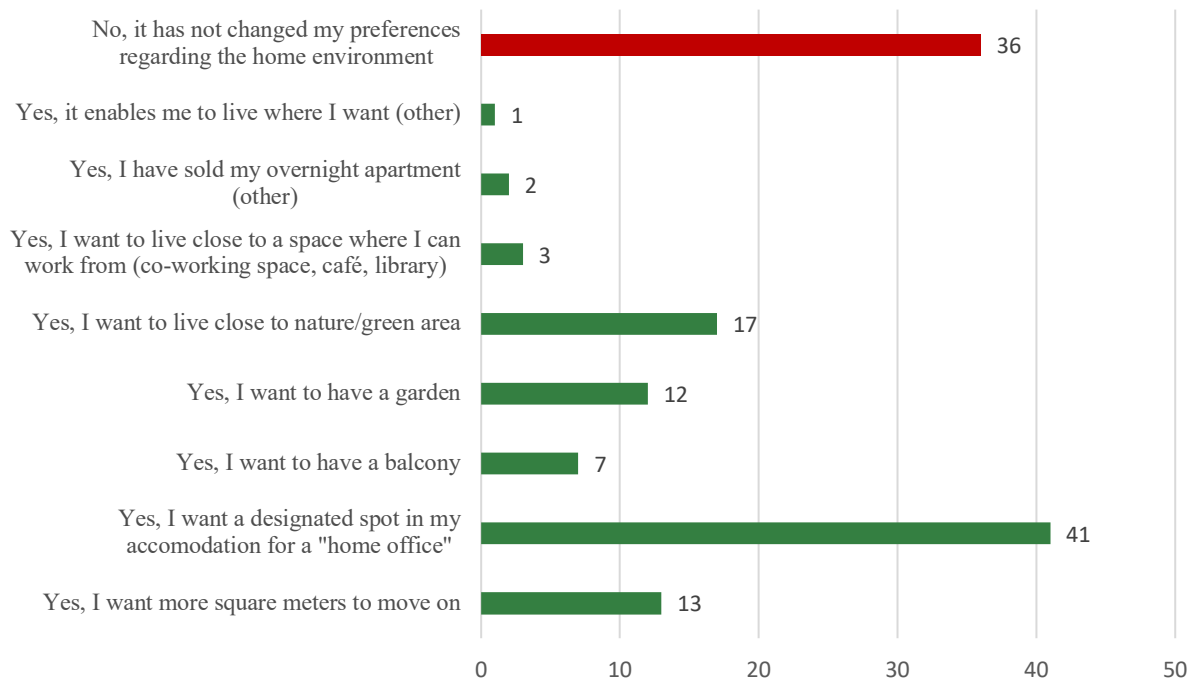
## 5.1 Teleworking and the home environment

When it comes to insights regarding the home environment, 58 respondents (out of 94) in the survey states that increased performance in teleworking has made single or multiple changes in their preferences. See Table 3 and Figure 1 below for the composed preferential insights due to teleworking.

Worth mentioning is that the 36 respondents who answered that the performance of teleworking had not changed their preferences about the home environment didn't get the chance to explain or develop their answers. According to that, it may include that the options within the following question are already fulfilled in the situation for these respondents. However, it can also mean that the following answer options are not perceived as necessary.

**Table 3.** Changed preferences regarding the home environment due to the performance of teleworking.

<b>Preferential insights</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
Yes, I want more square meters to move on	13
Yes, I want to have a designated spot in my accommodation for a "home office"	41
Yes, I want to have a balcony	7
Yes, I want to have a garden	12
Yes, I want to live close to nature/a green area	17
Yes, I want to live close to a space where I can work from (co-working space, café, library)	3
Yes, I have sold my overnight apartment (other)	1
Yes, it enables me to live where I want (other)	2
No, it has not changed my preferences regarding the home environment	36



**Figure 1.** Answers on the question “Changed preferences regarding the home environment due to performance of teleworking”. Number of answers per option is reported.

An obvious insight is the willingness to have a designated place at home for the so-called “home office”. The following will of having a designated place for a “home office” also connects to the option that many of the respondents feel the need of having more square meters to move on. Further, the possibility of easily accessing green areas and nature is also significant, especially when integrating the answer options regarding the desire to have a garden or a balcony as nature and green area variables.

## 5.2 Transformed preferences and residential relocations

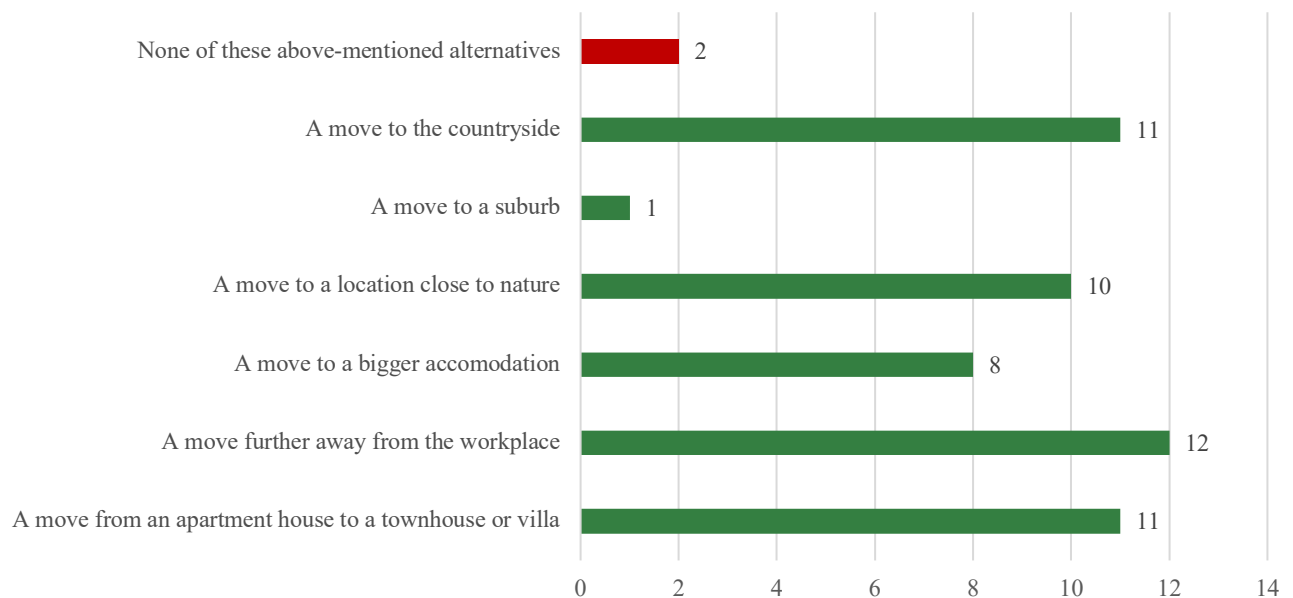
In order to see the trends around the impacts of teleworking on residential aspects, a question in the survey investigates the following relation and accounts for the responders’ residential actions and moving decisions. The question is as follows: *Has increased opportunities to telework influenced moving decisions?* The answer options are displayed in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Has increased opportunities to telework influenced moving decisions?

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Yes, partly	18	19.1	19.1

<b>Yes, to a high degree</b>	11	11.7	30.9
<b>No, not at all</b>	65	69.1	100.0
	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	

30.9 % (29 people) of the respondents account that teleworking influenced their moving decisions, either partly or to a high degree. Accordingly, it is no exaggeration to say that the following group is quite large. However, to further study the relationship between if increased opportunities to telework have influenced on residential relocation, the following respondents got the opportunity to choose 1 up to 3 options of characteristics that couple to their moving decision (shown in Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Answers on the question “What kind of residential relocation?”, regarding that teleworking influenced moving decisions. Number of answers per option is reported.

To break down this diagram, we can see that the most common option, included in the 29 residential relocations, was a move further away from the workplace. A move from an apartment house to a townhouse or villa and a move to the countryside are the two options just behind option a move further away from the workplace. Also, a move to a location close to nature is up there at the top. A significant point regarding a move further away from the workplace is that it can possibly intend that the use of teleworking has influenced to feel less detached from the regular workplace. Not least, it is interesting to see that a move to the



countryside is up there at the top, meaning that some people performing teleworking have taken a decision to actually make such a move.

### 5.3 Teleworkers' interest in the countryside

To investigate and figure out the trend if an increased amount of teleworking correlates with an interest in living in the countryside, I implemented a cross-tabulation based on two questions and their variables. The first question account for the individual preference (of 94 respondents) on the amount of performing teleworking per week. Accordingly, *how much would you prefer to telework during a working week?* The second question accounts for the interest of living in the countryside, where the variables are ranging from *already living in the countryside; plans on moving to the countryside; dreams of settling in the countryside; and no, not interested.*

**Table 5.** Cross-tabulation on answers regarding preferable amount of teleworking during a working week and on the interest of living in the countryside.

		The interest in life in the countryside?				Total
		Yes, I live in the countryside today	Yes, I have plans on moving to the countryside	Yes, I have dreams of settling in the countryside	No, not interested	
Desired amount of teleworking?	1-2 days per week	13	14	7	19	53
	3 days and more	7	7	4	15	33
	More rarely	1	2	1	4	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>94</b>

The outcome of the following cross-tabulation does not show a clear trend that an increased number of days performing teleworking correlates with that the individual already lives, has plans or dreams of settling in the countryside. Based on that perspective, a will of performing teleworking does not have to coincide with a residential location further away from the regular office, and out in the countryside. However, there are still more individuals that either already live, have plans or dreams of settling in the countryside, rather than not being interested in living there. In that way, teleworking could be interpreted as an easing factor for a life in the countryside. Additionally, teleworkers who already live in the countryside do show a continued interest in performing telework.

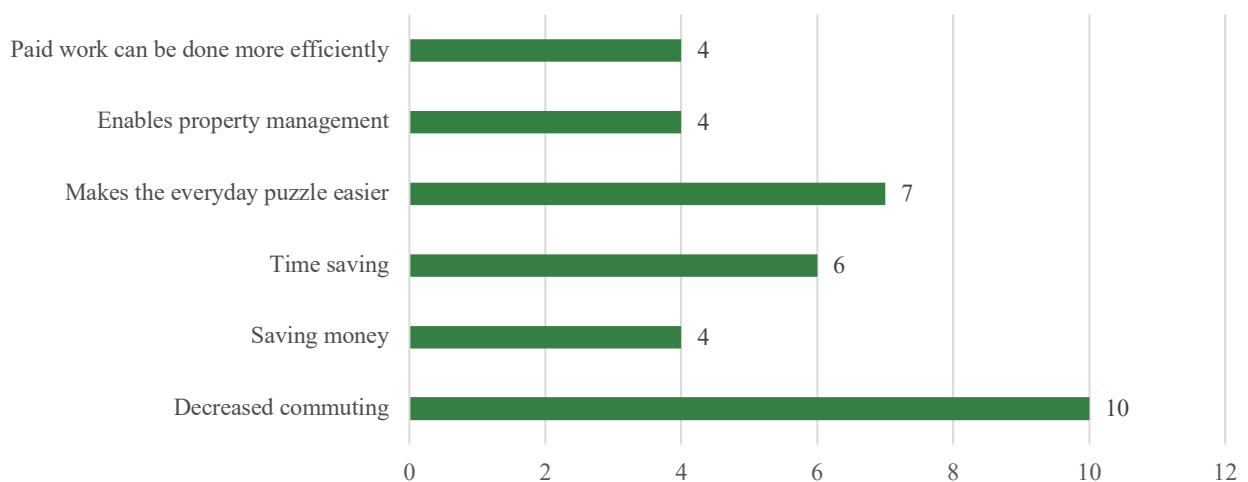
### 5.4 Performing telework in the countryside

As an additional part, preparatory to the interviews which accounts for a more in-depth interpretation of teleworking in a countryside context, teleworkers' who live in a countryside context were in the survey given the opportunity to estimate if teleworking has improved their life in the countryside. As noted earlier in the thesis, there were 21 countryside residents in total that participated and answered the questions in the survey. However, regarding the interpretation of teleworking in a countryside context, the respondents were asked: *Has telework made your life easier in the countryside?* and with the answer options: *Yes, it has made it a lot easier; Yes, it has made it a bit easier; No, it has not made any impact.* See Table 6 below.

**Table 6.** Has telework made your life easier in the countryside?

	Yes, it has made it a lot easier	Yes, it has made it a bit easier	No, it has not made any impact	Total
<b>Countryside dweller</b>	9	9	3	21

The 18 respondents who either answered *Yes, it has made it a lot easier* and *Yes, it has made it a bit easier* were further given the opportunity to explain how it has become easier. See Figure 3 below for the composed themes around facilitation for countryside residents through teleworking.



**Figure 3.** Collection of answers from a follow up-question to the ones who answered that teleworking has, to varying extents, made life in the countryside easier. Number of answers is reported.

Figure 3 accounts that teleworking is perceived and coupled with efficiency and time. On a general note, daily travel logistics is a significant part for countryside dwellers, where a lot of time is spent in a car, going back and forth between work, grocery shopping, activities, and home. What telework can foster for a countryside resident is to spend more time in the local context in general, and within the home environment in particular. My interpretation is also that the themes around easing the *everyday puzzle* and possibilities for more *property management* go hand in hand with the circumstances regarding being more efficient at work and saving time by among other things decreasing commuting. Further positive insights from countryside teleworkers' concerns the commuting aspect, were decreased negative impacts on the environment with less time spent in a car and also improved safety when not taking a risk by travelling during bad weather and road conditions.

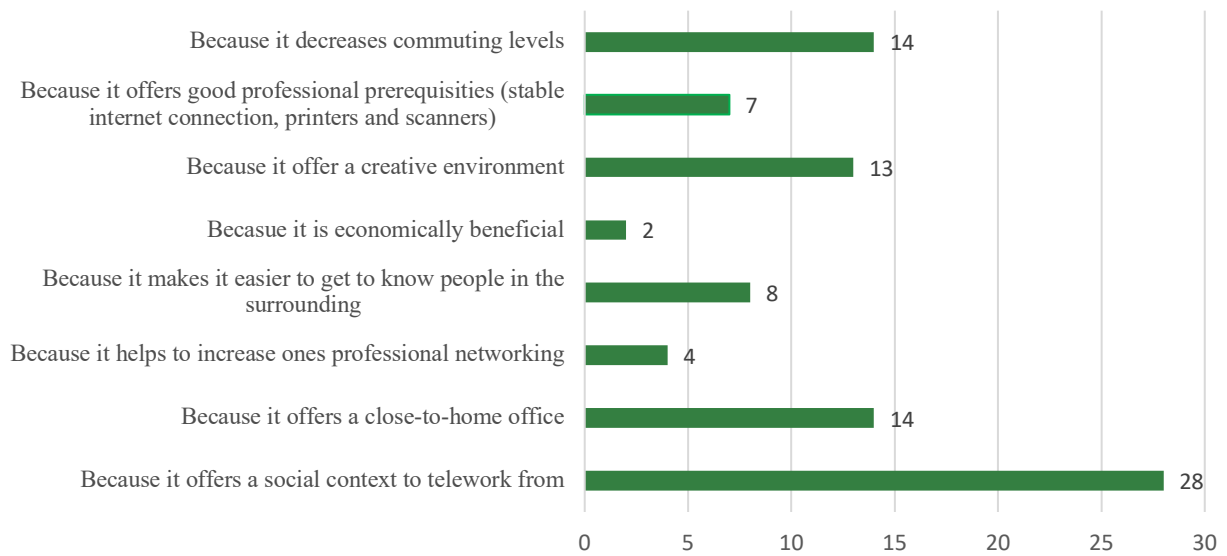
5.4.1 Co-working in the countryside

All survey respondents were asked the question whether they were interested in a life in the countryside, and for the ones who answered *Yes, I already live there, Yes, I have plans to move to the countryside, Yes, I have dreams of settling in the countryside* got approached with several follow-up questions. One follow-up question concerned whether a *close-to-home co-working spaces would make it more attractive to live in the countryside?* The answers are presented in table 7 below. The *non-respondent* variable applies to the rather large group that admitted no interest for a life in the countryside.

**Table 7.** Would a close-to-home co-working space make it more attractive to live in the countryside.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Non-respondent	41	43.6	43.6
Yes, to a high degree	7	7.1	51.1
Yes, to some degree	26	27.7	78.7
No, not at all/no opinion	20	21.3	100
	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	

Further, 33 respondents (out of 53 who were interested in a life in the countryside) admitted, either to some or a high degree, that close-to-home co-working spaces would make the countryside more attractive to live in. In Figure 4 below, the main characteristics concerning the increased attractiveness are displayed.



**Figure 4.** Answers the question “in what way would it increase the attractiveness of the countryside?”. Number of answers is reported here.

The social context a co-working space can offer is highly valued as an attractive factor, which would make life easier for a teleworker in the countryside. Further, being a close-to-home office, a creative environment and that it decreases commuting levels are also factors where a co-working space can improve life in the countryside and thus make it more attractive. It is no exaggeration to say that a significant part of the responders who have an interest of life in the countryside grant co-working spaces as a beneficial concept for the ones who already live in the countryside, but also for possible future dwellers.

## 6. Empirical findings - Semi-structured interviews

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the semi-structured interviews are meant to account for more in-depth knowledge regarding if teleworking has changed the conditions for the work-life balance, if they experience that teleworking is creating new conditions for life in the countryside, and if teleworking could be perceived as a tool to foster a more *living countryside*. Hence, the interviews, and the implementation of the thematic analysis, did result in a deepened understanding of the above-mentioned relationships between teleworking and a life in the countryside.

The thematic analysis and the coding of the transcribed interview material resulted in several themes, which will be presented as headings below. The first theme, including subthemes, are concerning the impact teleworking has on the facilitation of organising everyday life and the changed conditions for living. The second theme account for the interest in countryside living. Further, the third theme brings up perceptions, future prospects, challenges and possibilities of a *living countryside*. The fourth and last theme is concerning perceptions and possibilities with the usage of co-working spaces in a countryside context.

### 6.1 Changed conditions through the use of teleworking

A clear outcome from the interviews accounts for transformed perceptions regarding everyday life, and an improved work-life balance. This has acted as a push-effect of both moving to, and staying in, the countryside. The following outcome will be presented under the headings below.

#### 6.1.1 Work-life balance

A strong theme among all the interviews is the facilitation of the work-life balance due to the performance of teleworking. The most evident point that the interviewees take up is the decreased amount of time spent commuting, which for the many has become a real game changer, with an improved quality of life in the countryside. Nearly all the interviewees were employees of white-collar jobs, who in general have their office spaces in urban areas. A majority of the interviewees still attended their regular workplace some days per week, which includes a one-way commuting trip that could range from 30 minutes up to just over 2 hours. The days which include commuting are by many mentioned to be more stressful, energy-draining, and that it encroaches on free time.

When teleworking from home, or near home, the working day can, either way, start earlier in the morning, compared to when commuting is first needed, or the teleworker can allow him/herself to sleep a little longer in the morning. Further, when the working day is finished, then the point of departure for free time is taking place just where one most likely wants it. Nearly all of the interviewees expressed it as a feeling of being more in place of where they actually want to be. Thus, the time saved from decreased commuting can be invested in one's home and the nearest local surroundings. The utilisation of teleworking is mentioned by some of the interviewees as an enabler when it comes to doing what you long to do. For example, being able to spend more quality time with friends and family and engage in hobbies and activities.

*The possibility of working from home a couple of days per week will give you a totally different experience of living in the countryside. You get to experience the benefits of living here a lot more. - Ellen*

A recurring code that the majority of the interviewees mentioned was the possibility of “*taking care of the laundry*” during the breaks of the working day. In some ways, a typical household chore as running a washing machine, does for the interviewees really puts the easing circumstances due to teleworking into words. To be able to squeeze in daily chores or activities during the pauses of the working day prolongs the free time after work. One of many examples to express that is Zara, who experience an improved everyday life due to teleworking from home.

*A very positive development [with teleworking from home]. For me, it's about my life puzzle becoming much easier to put together. You can run a washing machine since you are home anyway, and when you turn off the computer there is not a lot of transport that needs to be done. You can do the grocery shopping before rush hours, and it is more flexible of picking up my child at the preschool. In some sense, you get so much more out of life. - Zara*

#### 6.1.2 Increased efficiency and security

A further argument, which was highlighted by some of the interviewees, accounts for higher efficiency during work hours when doing it from home. To be able to work undisturbed, at a distance from colleagues, is mentioned as a positive consequence. From experiences among the following interviewees, the transition to the increased amount of teleworking is now working

very smoothly, and many working tasks are well adapted to be done remotely from the regular workplace.

However, even if the more shielded set-up, remote from one's colleagues can improve productivity, a majority of the interviewees still mention the importance of continuing their working life in a social context. Accordingly, most of them still attend their offices on a regular basis. Also, some of the interviewees perform at co-working spaces (or neighbourhood offices), which is their office space out of home when teleworking. One of the interviewees (Veronica) captures it well in the excerpt below.

*It also facilitates that you are less disturbed, you have time to work more efficiently, and to get more done. At the office, colleagues usually come in and talk. It is very good with that buzz too, it's really needed, but sometimes you need to sit down and get a lot done. –*

*Veronica*

Additional aspects, which primarily link to the circumstances around commuting, are environmental and security reasons. Fewer days of using the car to travel to and from work are in fact lowering the individual impact on emissions, which is mentioned as a positive consequence. The interviewee Ellen emphasizes that the performance of teleworking also increases the individual security connected to commuting distances, but also when it comes to handling crises such as high electricity costs and shortage of goods.

*It [teleworking] makes it possible to stay home more often. I don't need to put 90 minutes in a car per day, and neither endangers my own safety when it comes to driving in bad road conditions and weather. [...] To improve one's own security when it comes to growing food. Also, to increase the amount of possible storage, and be able to be more self-sufficient on electricity. - Ellen*

### 6.1.3 Telework and migration considerations

Another connection between residing in the countryside and teleworking, and thus another theme, is the performance of teleworking as a push factor of moving to and consequently staying in the countryside. The consequence of less detachment to the regular workplace when performing teleworking is mentioned by some interviewees as a beneficial aspect regarding a

push for residential relocation. When work can be done from home, or very near to home, the motive to live close to the regular workplace due to commuting reasons becomes less important. One interviewee, Melissa, sees teleworking as a strongly influential aspect of why she and her family took the decision of moving to the countryside. Two more interviewees also point to the possibility of teleworking as a decisive factor when moving.

*Teleworking greatly impacted why it happened so quickly [the residential relocation]. I guess the idea was that we would move to a farm or live more rurally when our kids moved out. But the desire to live like that was so present that we couldn't resist and wait 10 more years. [...] I wouldn't have dared to make this relocation step if there was only a feeling that I might be able to telework. Now, I could instead feel calm and lean on the fact that I already performed teleworking. - Melissa*

Most of the interviewees were settled in the countryside betimes the current diffusion of teleworking, accelerated by the circumstances around the pandemic. However, there is some code that supports thoughts around teleworking as an enabler for a continuing life in the countryside. The performance of teleworking for countryside dwellers entailed many positive experiences, where the majority of the interviewees emphasizes an improved work-life balance. With a positive development regarding ICT, and good adaption by both employees and employers, many of the interviewees are very satisfied with the situation of working from home, or near the home.

*That I want to keep living in the countryside, and when I think of the future, so I assume that I will always be able to telework, then my everyday life in the countryside feels so much simpler. - Lisa*

Many of the interviewees have, as mentioned above, long-term experience of being a countryside dweller, meaning they lived there long before present teleworking practices. With a close-in-time gained experience of transformed circumstances around their use of teleworking, many states that they now appreciate their life in the countryside even more. They can now spend more time at home and in the local context, which in first-hand was what attracted them regarding their residential location.



*Those who do not want neighbours right next door, and at the same time perform teleworking to some extent, will probably be attracted more quickly to the countryside. [...] I also believe that those who move to the countryside will want to stay, I really feel that way. I am not re-attracted by city life, but the qualities that are out here are so important. - Ellen*

## 6.2 Interest in a countryside life

An apparent theme from the coding process shows that the dominant factor, behind the interviewee's decision to reside in the countryside, is linked to a central intention of a rural, rather than urban, kind of lifestyle. Some of the interviewees have almost a lifelong experience of both growing up and now residing in a countryside context, but with some years spent in a more urban context. On the other hand, some of the interviewees have for a long time lived in urban areas, for both childhood and part of their adult life, but then taken the decision of moving out to the countryside. However, the common denominator, regardless of their previous living contexts, the interviewees have at different stages in their lives felt a longing to get out into the countryside and live their life there.

Life in the countryside is stated to be attractive due to several reasons. Among what the interviewees mentioned, the slower pace in life is one positive aspect. Not having the same kind of supply of goods and possibilities, compared to an urban area, entail a more local connection and engagement. Also, the interviewees mention, from their experiences, that they perceive another kind of community and a connection to the people around them. The interviewees mention a present spirit of doing favours for each other, which for example could mean giving away eggs in exchange for borrowing a trailer to move heavy things on the property. Further, having direct proximity to nature is mentioned by every interviewee as a strongly beneficial aspect of living in the countryside. Exemplified below are excerpts from two interviews, with Ellen and Cleo, which account for the attractive force of the countryside.

*It was the lifestyle we wanted, to live rurally, surrounded by fields and forests. - Ellen*

*For me, life in the countryside seems a little bit easier. There is a different and slower pace out here, and the proximity to the forest and the lakes. It is also special with the social relationship you can have in a smaller village, which also ranges between several ages. -*

*Cleo*

Something that also shapes the interest in living in the countryside is the activities and hobbies which occupy the interviewees during their free time. For instance, self-sustaining and cultivation are mentioned as activities, which engage some of the teleworking countryside dwellers. From the perspective of engaging in activities such as self-sustaining and cultivation, the countryside context is uplifted as beneficial since the case of living there most likely offers possibilities for these activities, not least regarding the size of areas possible to use.

*The main advantage is that it enables the lifestyle I want. I want to be close to nature, be able to walk the dog, cultivate the land and grow my own food, be able to have a lot of space, and have opportunities to take on small projects. It is made possible by living in the countryside, I think. - Lisa*

### 6.3 Teleworkers and a living countryside

A significant part of the interview sessions brought up a discussion about a *living countryside*. The interviewees got the chance to share their perceptions of it and reflect upon their own context. Further, possible contributions to it via teleworking and by teleworkers were also brought up. However, the challenges which surround life in the countryside were also evaluated, together with future prospects of life in the countryside. The following result will be presented below under the headings.

#### 6.3.1 Perceptions of a living countryside

When asked the question of how they perceive a *living countryside*, there is some variation in the responses. First and foremost, to even reach a *living countryside*, there needs to be a population basis, which is mentioned by the majority of the interviewees.

Accordingly, a common denominator is when a commitment and drive are present, from the municipality, but also from the local residents. To create and maintain a *living countryside*, a mutual relationship is required between both the municipality's representatives and the local residents. Some of the interviewees mention village and neighbourhood communities as important factors for place development. The following communities engage in the local area, and to create contexts and opportunities that bring people together. The range of culture and leisure activities mentioned, by the interviewees, are important for all generations in the

countryside. It can be about traditional activities such as farming, exhibition, and workshops, but also opportunities to use a property for soup lunches or dance classes. Further, a well-functioning infrastructure and a sufficient supply of goods and services are also mentioned as important factors. The excerpts below, from the interviews with Cleo, Melissa, and Thomas, connect to perceptions of a *living countryside*.

*That there is a local commitment, a drive, and a good ability for multiple initiatives. That will generate things. You build on each other's ideas, and things happen that connect to trying to create opportunities or conditions to live and live here. [...] Even though there is a lack of financial support, there is still a present support from the municipality which points out and shows that they stand behind projects and initiatives. - Cleo*

*A range of cultural and leisure activities for the children, I also think it is fantastic with local producers. That there are school buses, the infrastructure works, and that you have access to shops for the most essential. – Melissa*

*A living countryside is for me a variety of things. One is more and consistent amenities, like a coffee shop in town that was open during regular hours, and not just during the tourist season. Another aspect is communication, just like good connections via transport to places that you might want to go to. - Thomas*

### 6.3.2 Contribution to a living countryside

A common response, among the interviewees, draws on that one big contribution to place development is, above all, to actually make the move and settle in the countryside. Many of the interviewees mention that having more people residing in the countryside, that works, pay tax, and use their money in the local supply will be favourable for place development. More people in the countryside are expected to form a population basis sufficient for the development of several amenities, and services like healthcare and improved communications. These points are raised in the excerpts below from the interviews with Melissa and Cleo.

*I assume, that when more teleworkers move out in the countryside, it enables and develops the service and infrastructure. Well-paid jobs, which are usually carried out at offices in*

*cities, and that competence are now diffused more. [...] The performance of teleworking enables that, your career is not only tied to certain specific locations. - Melissa*

*If you move [to the countryside] to a house, and take care of the house. You start to contribute to the local context, not least economically. I also think that more move-ins will lead to greater pressure on additional needs and push towards development. - Cleo*

Additionally, as mentioned by the interviewee Carl, one interesting perspective of contribution to a living countryside comes up to the surface.

*Apart from the benefits of having people with traditionally practical skills [skills within construction, plumbing, electricity etc], I do think that there is value in people moving out with a different kind of knowledge, which is perhaps a little bit more abstract. [...] I've helped the ceramic workshop with its website and booking system, and I've also helped the pizzeria with its ordering system. So, in some sense, I am the little programmer in the village. - Carl*

A further connection, regarding teleworkers' possible contribution to a more *living countryside*, lies in the fact that more free time is made possible through the use of teleworking, according to some of the interviewees. With more free time, after working hours, engagement in different hobbies and activities can increase, and many of the interviewees point to activities that can contribute to a *living countryside*. Examples from the interviewees, when more time is enabled, are the development of workshops, studios, small businesses, and the possibility to participate and initiate different kinds of communities.

*It is not enough to just telework in the countryside to influence it, it is a lot about engagement outside of work. [...] At home, we have discussed that we should initiate a platform for a "sharing economy", where you can request and exchange services. That contributes to a more living countryside, I think. - Lisa*

### 6.3.3 Challenges with life in the countryside

As in every situation, there are always two sides to the coin, thus, the interviewees reveal challenges regarding life in the countryside, but also challenges for place development in the countryside.

When asked about the disadvantages of living in the countryside, almost every interviewee highlighted the logistics around mobility as their main point. The daily communications of running errands, transporting children to school and activities, mean for a countryside dweller a significant amount of time spent in a vehicle. Further, the possibilities of using public communications are in general indifferent, which entail a car dependency.

*The difficult part is the transporting. You depend on having a car, public transport is not often the best. - Cleo*

*You [as a countryside dweller] often have to be the one going somewhere, to go grocery shopping or meet people. There will be a much bigger apparatus around that. Not as easy to go out and walk down to town. - Zara*

On the same note as mobility logistics, the non-proximity to a supply that urban areas offer, is also mentioned among the interviewees as a disadvantage. Living in the countryside is, to some interviewees, coupled with some inconveniency, where there are limited possibilities compared to urban areas. For example, the opportunity to go out to a bar or club is extremely limited, and the probability to be able to quickly run down to buy milk is very low. A life in the countryside is also mentioned not to be suited for everyone.

Further, as mentioned by some of the interviewees, the challenges of developing into a more *living countryside* could connect to proximity to bigger urban areas. The countryside context nearby urban areas are mentioned to be quite well populated, but sometimes with a lack of engagement and commitment in trying to create different activities. The supply of services, activities and goods is so nearby which could undermine the sense of responsibility in creating it in the countryside.

*It is us, the local residents, that have a big responsibility in the development of the place here. Although, I miss that kind of commitment here a bit, since we live so close to bigger urban areas and their endless supply. I think that stifles the development of eco-farms, small-scale producers, and farm shops a bit. - Lisa*

As mentioned above, the performance of teleworking does, for the majority of the interviewees, open up more free time. The following free time is by many invested in activities and different

communities, which can help develop the countryside as a further appreciated place to live in. However, many of the interviewees also mention that much of the engagement in communities, which ensures that activities are maintained, comes from pensioners. Some interviewees lifted the point that fewer people, in general, engage in activities and the strong historical spirit of associations (Swedish: föreningsandan), and voluntary engagement is not equally as present nowadays. To perform teleworking, as a countryside dweller, is said to enable more free time in the local context, which possibly can foster more people to engage in their local communities.

#### 6.3.4 Future prospects of life in the countryside

When it comes to looking into the future of the countryside, the interviewees do see themselves living there as long as possible. No one has any kind of plan or aspiration of moving, and as stated above, the teleworking part has been a positive impact on life in the countryside. On a more general level, when not looking into their own lives, almost all interviewees have high hopes for a population increase, and not least it is due to the new possibilities and circumstances around teleworking. The interviewee Veronica does, among other things, continue the discussion of two-part engagements from the municipality and the countryside dwellers.

*I really think that the possibility of teleworking can be a key factor in countryside development. Municipalities can use it to attract more residents. [...] Yet, how do we capture this opportunity. [with teleworking as one key factor for development] Efforts are required, and being proactive is also important. Be able to stand a bit in opposition to the forces of urbanization. - Veronica*

Further, some interviewees also believe in a stronger engagement from the municipalities, to further strengthen the possibilities of living in the countryside. This involves the development of infrastructure, and extended communication to improve mobility logistics. Many of the interviewees, on behalf of municipalities, emphasize the plausibility of trying to attract teleworkers to the countryside, to improve the development of the countryside with greater tax revenues and a broader customer base for services and businesses. However, these are just prospects, and the interviewees do, as stated above, emphasize actions from several parts, both within the municipality and individuals to make it work. In the excerpt below, Thomas expresses the state of future prospects well.

*Outside of cultural life and stuff like that, there are a lot of things closing down here, like schools and health care, simply because there is not a tax base enough to support it. Like, if you can get even just a handful of teleworkers' here you could fund so much. [...] It is not necessarily automatic, like it's not just as if you are teleworking from here, you contribute directly to the society. However, I think that the person who is likely to do that [move to the countryside due to the possibility to perform telework] is a bit more creative and entrepreneurial, so they are probably more able and willing to build a stronger cultural life.*

*There is also the pure economic factor, if you have a white-collar job, you are probably making more money which you can go around and invest in the local area and communities. -*

*Thomas*

#### 6.4 Co-working space

Even though the interviewees emphasize their appreciation of being able to perform telework, doing it full-time and completely from home is not desirable. The majority of the interviewees, which used an area in their home as office space, attends the office to varying degrees. The dominant factor was that they missed the social contexts, which couldn't be actualized behind their screen at home. Furthermore, other reasons that they attended the office were because of better ergonomic prerequisites, technical support and due to the performance of some work tasks. All interviewees were asked the question if they perform at a nearby situated co-working space (or neighbourhood office), but only a few did. Further, the interviewees were asked if they felt that they lacked the opportunity, and if they possibly would have used a co-working space if there was one. On that question, the majority still answered that they didn't feel that they lacked the opportunity, but if there would have been one very close by, they would probably use it. The proximity perspective was important, otherwise, they might as well visit the office sometimes a week, especially to get the social and collegial part.

The few interviewees that utilized a local co-working space uplifted them, among other things, as an important factor to obtain a social context throughout their working days. Further, some code supports the fact that. An interesting input of attending a co-working space is mentioned to be the broader mix of "colleagues", where it is possible with professionals from different sectors. The mix of professionals is said to be a fruitful aspect, with exciting conversations around the dining table, and possibilities to learn a lot from each other's different contexts.

[a co-working space] *offers me a social context, to have colleagues, have someone to talk to.*

*Having routines and a place to come to is important to me. Sitting from home in the countryside wouldn't have suited me very well. I don't get the same focus and stimulation and drive, sitting from home. It gives me energy to come to a place like this to work from. – Cleo*

*It is so rewarding to be there [at the co-working space]. Partly, it is close, which means I can walk there in around 20 minutes and don't have to take the car. Partly, I get an important context change. I really enjoy working with people who also sit and work, even if we don't work with the same things. - Carl*

With some of the interviewees, the discussion did, in a natural way, went a little deeper, with more follow-up questions and interesting thoughts on co-working spaces. Additional aspects regarding co-working spaces are thus to utilize the co-working space as a base for further activities than just for office work. The facility can be used for multiple activities, and additional communities and initiatives can emerge from the already existing functions. In that way, a co-working space (or neighbourhood office) can be seen as an incubator for activities and communities, which can foster a more *living countryside*. Whether it is small-scale farming communities, functions for bike-sharing systems, or studios and food courts, it creates facilities for countryside dwellers to meet and associate with each other, which could improve the local community and subsequently attract possible future residents.



## 7. Concluding discussion

In the following chapter, the main empirical findings will be discussed mutually i.e., both the presented result from the survey and the semi-structured interviews. The following will be related to residential mobility, which primarily implies the theoretical approach of access-space tradeoff theory. Further, this discussion part also relates to previous research around the Swedish case of a *living countryside*, teleworking, and co-working spaces.

In this thesis, the research questions asked accounts for how the performance of teleworking shapes teleworkers' everyday life. The preferences on residential relocation in general, and towards the countryside in particular, are also being explored. Furthermore, teleworking countryside dwellers account for how the increased practice of teleworking affects their work and everyday life, and if they experience that teleworking creates new conditions for life in the countryside, which in the long run can foster a more *living countryside*.

The theoretical point of departure draws, in particular, on the access-space tradeoff theory, where the residential mobility i.e. *movement of households*, is stated to primarily be coupled to a relation with good accessibility to the workplace (Phe and Wakely, 2000). However, Kim et al. (2012) argue that an increased performance of teleworking could change the following correlation within the access-space tradeoff theory, and instead rebalance the correlation to be more based on considerations around the space. The performance of teleworking should thus open up to not be as geographically bound by proximity to the workplace, since the commuting part becomes less current. Kim et al. (2012) implemented studies in SMA regarding their statement, which however could not show that the performance of teleworking accelerates residential mobility with relocations further away from the workplace. This thesis can, on the other hand, show a post-pandemic outcome regarding the same rebalanced theoretical approach, where teleworking as a practice could open up greater flexibility to put considerations around the *space* and the home environment before *accessibility* with proximity to the workplace.

The practice of teleworking has, as stated above, gone through a dramatic change in terms of its diffusion levels (e.g., Hennekam et al., 2021; Baert et al., 2020), and this will be another refreshing comparison with previous research and theories. A clear circumstance regarding this thesis draws on the fact that teleworking nowadays is a frequent form of work for a lot of professionals. Thus, it follows the same trend as displayed by recent research (e.g., Conway et

al, 2021; Hensher et al, 2021), where many working professionals are both willing and able to perform telework. The current and historically high diffusion of teleworking practices makes it interesting to see what this thesis can contribute when it comes to interpreting some effects which are said to come out of an increased performance of teleworking. Accordingly, it is of utmost interest that questions asked in pre-pandemic context and during a low diffusion of teleworking, are now being asked again.

Thus, against the background of this thesis area of research, where the circumstances around teleworking have been studied from perspectives of spatial implications, I have come to the conclusion of three main observations. The following observations account for, firstly, *transformed preferences and residential relocations*. Secondly, *changed conditions for work and everyday life through the use of teleworking*. Thirdly, *strategies and establishment of a living countryside*.

### 7.1 The first main finding

In contrast to what previous literature displayed about effects on spatial implications, above all concerning residential mobility (e.g., Mokhtarian, 1991; Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2001), *the first main finding* shows that teleworking is in this thesis linked to being a significant factor in residential relocations. There are two fundamental driving forces that underlie the noticed increased residential mobility by teleworkers. The first driving force accounts for increased pondering regarding one's home environment, which accelerates the desire of moving or renovating. The second driving force accounts for a gradual decoupling from the regular workplace due to the performance of teleworking. The combination of them both could be interpreted as rising contributing factors to substantiate desires for residential relocations, which they weren't compared to previous research. However, the following outcome in this thesis goes more in line with the indications from the more recent research, conducted during and post the pandemic, which shows a relation between teleworking and greater flexibility concerning one's residential mobility (e.g., Vogiazides and Kawalerowicz, 2022).

The ponderings and newly emerged preferences do, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, couple to the shift towards new purposes for the home environment. The following comes with desires to have a larger living space, a designated place for a home office, preferably with the possibility of closing the door, and a direct proximity to nature and green areas. Furthermore, the

completed residential relocations displayed in this thesis account for relocations to a bigger house, closer to nature and out in the countryside. Although, the most common characteristic account for a move further away from the regular workplace.

On the topic that a move further away from the regular workplace is noticed as the most common, made possible by the performance of teleworking, puts it in stark contrast to the traditional way of theorizing the access-space tradeoff theory. Just as the anticipations by Kim et al. (2012), where the equation gets rebalanced with teleworking, an increased performance of teleworking does in this thesis actually show a correlation of feeling less detached from the workplace, and subsequently downgrading it as a factor in relocation decisions. Accordingly, the following finding of teleworking as a significant and recent relocation factor is interesting, since moving also is a decision you don't make very spontaneously.

Putting the focus on the countryside, data from both the survey and the semi-structured interviews show that teleworking has been an important factor in a move to the countryside, which most likely also is far away from the regular workplace. Additionally, people who already live in, have plans or dreams of settling in the countryside, have the desire to continue telework on a weekly basis. With that said, teleworking seems to enable residential relocations targeted the countryside, and further being a facilitating circumstance for life there.

However, there is always a handful of reasons behind a decision to move, and if the move is about to be targeted the countryside, more aspects than just the possibility to perform work remotely are included. Among the interviewees, findings show that committing to life in the countryside requires some basic interests and that one is aware of the challenges of living more remote. In short, it is a certain lifestyle to live in the countryside, with a longing of being in nature, keeping up with various practical projects. Additionally, being a part of some kind of a community is raised as an important factor. At the same time, one has to be aware of the recurring logistical trials with a lot of time spent on the roads. Many teleworking respondents in the survey, who are urban dwellers, express no major interest in moving to the countryside. Thus, life in the countryside does not suit everyone, even though the performance of teleworking can act as an enabler for this specific residential mobility, and also as a factor to reduce the time spent on the roads.

## 7.2 The second main finding

In line with previous research regarding beneficial aspects of the practice of teleworking (e.g., Sturesson, 2003; Maruyama and Tietze, 2012; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Pyöriä, 2011), *the second main finding* accounts for many similar circumstances which facilitate work and everyday life. Just as mentioned by Vilhelmson and Thulin (2001; 2016), concerning that teleworkers experienced increased efficiency and well-being, these are also, among other things, factors that are revealed in this thesis's collected data.

My data indicates that the performance of teleworking has increased the quality of life for teleworking countryside dwellers. The easing circumstances that are mentioned to come with teleworking are generally experienced, by a countryside dweller, to make an even more significant impact than for someone living in an urban area. All the extra time at home, when avoiding commuting and working efficiently, creates space for commitments and circumstances that many times come with life in the countryside. For instance, there is probably more land to take care of and animals to look after, which seldom applies to an urban dweller to the same extent.

Even though the empirical findings mainly demonstrate positive consequences when it comes to performing teleworking in combination with life in the countryside, these circumstances can sometimes be hard to fully appreciate. Something that is clearly evident among the teleworkers interviewed, and among the respondents in the survey, is that teleworking full-time from home is not desirable. The social and professional exchange one gets in the office context is mentioned as very important. The following goes in line with previous research, where the performance of teleworking could be experienced as a lonely and unsocial experience (e.g., Vilhelmson and Thulin, 2016; Ojala et al., 2013; Pyöriä, 2011). The relatively large non-interest in moving to the countryside, for someone who teleworks, could connect to that many don't anticipate any social working context there. Furthermore, in order to obtain the social context, one has to put a lot of time into commuting, which for many could become a discouraging factor for life in the countryside.

However, as demonstrated by the project of *RoRiLand* with investments in neighbourhood offices, and with previous research on co-working spaces (e.g., Qvortrup, 1989; Fuzi, 2015; Tillväxtanalys 2022), a co-working space (or neighbourhood office) in the countryside could offer a near-home office, where both the social and professional context is present. Further, it

could also hold the professional prerequisites needed to complete a day's work, and the commuting distances will dramatically be reduced. Also, a relatively large proportion of the survey respondents granted close-to-home co-working spaces in the countryside as something beneficial for life there, but also for the attractiveness of the countryside per se. Accordingly, an investment in co-working spaces could therefore also be interpreted as a prompt to municipalities who tries to attract more people to their countryside.

### 7.3 The third main finding

It becomes clear, both during the interviews with the teleworking countryside dwellers, but also in previous research and from the non-governmental bills (e.g., Nilsson and Lundgren, 2014; 2017/18:2328; 2016/17:2659), that the foundation for a *living countryside* lies in a stable population basis. With a stable population basis, the municipality will receive tax revenues which can uphold and maintain several services, and small businesses will have a sufficient customer base to be operating. Thus, in order to achieve a stable population basis, the countryside needs to attract more people. *The third main finding* accounts for strategies to reach a more *living countryside*.

The interviewees envision rather different strategies, compared to previous research and non-governmental bills, when it comes to establishing and reaching a more *living countryside*. On the one hand, they mention the importance of a mutual relationship between the local residents and the municipality. Together they can initiate, develop, and maintain cultural and leisure activities, for all generations in the countryside. On the other hand, the interviewees give prominence to teleworking as a key factor in the strategy of reaching a more living countryside. Just as mentioned above, teleworking is here highlighted as an enabler to make the move to the countryside and subsequently facilitate life there. Previous research (Nilsson and Lundgren, 2014), and non-governmental bills (2017/18:2328; 2022/23:1672; 2016/17:2474), focus more on traditional and symbolic connections with the countryside, such as maintenance of the landscape and increased support for agriculture, forestry and tourism. Further, to increase job opportunities, and thus get more people to move to the countryside, investments in green industries, small businesses and renewable energy are mentioned. Thus, in a comparison with previous research, and non-governmental bills, teleworking is not particularly noticed as a well-fitted component to highlight in the strive to reach a more *living countryside*.

Even though several non-governmental bills propose increased investments in several sectors, both traditional and modern, to offer more jobs in the countryside, these are most likely jobs that are on-site. Teleworking, in comparison, open up for a more flexible lifestyle, which for a countryside dweller is perceived as very beneficial. Worth mentioning is that the majority of the non-governmental bills are from a pre-pandemic context, which leaves its mark on its content about the goals.

Why the interviewees see teleworking as a key factor for countryside development is coupled to several factors. Firstly, as mentioned above, it enables one to live rather far away from the regular workplace, as commuting no longer is as big of a factor. Secondly, the performance of teleworking enables more free time in the home and local environment, which can be used to participate in activities or engage in hobbies, which in the long run contributes to a countryside where people associate with each other. Thirdly, the situation around tax revenue is extra interesting when it comes to teleworkers, since most of them are highly skilled and well paid, which for a countryside municipality could make a big difference. Tax revenue is, as stated above, significant for the place development and to further uphold important services for the population.

On a more societal note, in the long run, the more people who move to certain places in the countryside, the more job opportunities will also open up in the nearest surroundings. Furthermore, the demography will also be improved, more socially and politically mixed, and more heterogeneous. The polarization between the countryside and the urban could, regarding these aspects, potentially be less current.

A further connection, which is noticed regarding co-working spaces, is the possibility for it to be a basis for continued development and a contributing factor to a *living countryside*. Likewise what previous research and literature show not least with project and commitments within the municipal association of Fyrbodal (Fyrbodals kommunalförbund, 2020), several interviewees and survey responders also mention that the co-working space gives them a community and friends even after working hours. Further, the co-working spaces are by previous literature (Houghton et al., 2018), some interviewees, and some survey responders uplifted as creative places to be part of, and activities not related to regular work could emerge from them, which in the long run could engage a wide range of people and contribute to a more *living countryside*.

Furthermore, regarding co-working spaces, previous research does (e.g. Kojo and Nenonen, 2017; Tillväxtanalys, 2022), as mentioned earlier in this thesis, show that co-working spaces is most common in urban areas, where the knowledge-based economy is considerably. Thus, many urban dwellers have the possibility to perform teleworking, and a subsequent occurrence of co-working spaces is offered as in a classic supply and demand reaction. Hence, the following supply and demand reaction, with increased occurrence of co-working spaces, might as well happen in a countryside context, if more professionals within a knowledge-based economy reside there.

#### 7.4 Limitations

Worth mentioning is the fact that this thesis is completed during a time period rather recent to the pandemic circumstances. Practices around teleworking, and decisions and implementations of residential relocations are slow processes. Thus, being close in time to the pandemic, which rebalanced the structures of teleworking diffusion and subsequently residential mobility in line with that, can leave its mark. Accordingly, it would be interesting to take part in future studies, when the structures eventually have settled even more, and see the empirical findings around teleworking as an enabler for residential relocation, and not least targeted towards the countryside.

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1 - Interview guide

#### **Tema 1 – *Boende och jobb***

- Kan du måla upp lite - hur det ser ut där du bor?
  - Vilken kommun?
  - Sedan hur länge har du bott där?
- Vad arbetar du med?
  - Har din arbetssituation sedan länge inkluderat distansarbete?
  - Hur det ändrats efter pandemin?

#### **Tema 2 – *Distansarbete från landsbygden***

- Distansarbetar du hemifrån eller från ett co-working space?
  - Hur tycker du att det fungerar?
  - *Om inte co-working space/grannskapskontor finns*, upplever du att det saknas på platsen du bor på? Tror du att du själv hade använt det? Varför/varför inte?
  - *Om du har en ordinarie arbetsplats*, hur ofta är du på det kontoret? Hur ser du isåfall på den pendlingen?
- Vad var det som huvudsakligen spelade in i att du bor på landsbygden?
  - Har möjligheten att distansarbete spelat in i flytten?
  - Vilka fördelar ser du med att bo på landsbygden?
  - Vilka nackdelar ser du med att bo på landsbygden?
- Har de förändrade möjligheterna kring att distansarbete påverkat (underlättat/försvårat) ditt liv på landsbygden?
  - På vilket sätt?
  - Blev det som du tänkte dig?

#### **Tema 3 – *Levande landsbygd***

- Vad är en levande landsbygd för dig?
  - Upplever du att du bor i en levande landsbygd?
  - *Om ja*, vad tror du har varit nycklarna till att det blivit så?
  - Vad tror du lockar/avskräcker med landsbygden?
- Tror du att de ”nya” möjligheterna kring distansarbete kommer göra att fler flyttar till landsbygden?
  - Är det något du har märkt av?
  - Upplever du att företrädare för kommunen uppmärksammat distansarbete som möjliggörare för boendeflyttningar?
- Tror du att distansarbetare kan göra landsbygden mer levande?
  - På vilket sätt?
  - Gör du som distansarbetare något för att främja levande landsbygd? (Fråga ej ställd alla gånger)

#### **Tema 4 – *Avslutande frågor***

- Om du gör en liten framtidsprofetia, hur tror du livet på landsbygden ser ut om 10-15 år?
- Finns det något annat du vill uttrycka?

## 9.2 Appendix 2 - Introductory email to interviewees

Hallå,

Tack för din medverkan genom att besvara frågorna i enkäten om det ”nya” distansarbetet. På sista sidan av enkäten har du svarat att du kan tänka dig att delta i en kortare intervju om landsbygdsliv och distansarbete, därav denna återkoppling.

Mitt namn är Joel Böhm och jag genomför just nu min masteruppsats vid Göteborgs universitet, där jag med intresse undersöker relationen mellan de förändrade omständigheterna kring distansarbete, vad det fått för effekt på vardagslivet, och hur det kan inverka på flyttbenägenhet och ett liv på landsbygden.

Du är troligtvis redan förbered på att intervjun inte kommer ske face-to-face. Jag befinner mig nämligen för närvarande i Frankrike, vilket medför att det endast kan ske digitalt eller över telefon. Jag hoppas det ska funka för dig.

Jag är flexibel vad gäller tidpunkt på intervju, det kan ske på dagen såväl som på kvällen. Det är helt enkelt upp till dig. Intervjun förväntas inte ta mer än 30 minuter. Ingen utomstående kommer att ha tillgång till materialet, och du kommer att vara anonymiserad i studien, dvs med en pseudonym i själva uppsatsen.

Om du fortsatt kan tänka dig att vara med på en kortare intervju, svara då på detta mail, så skriver jag till dig med förslag om dag och tid för intervju. Vill du hellre sköta kontakten via telefon, bifoga då ditt telefonnummer så hör jag av mig där.

Varma hälsningar,

Joel

### 9.3 Appendix 3 - Survey questions

Enkäten riktar sig till dig som har erfarenhet av eller regelbundet utför distansarbete\*. Omständigheterna kring distansarbete har, som du med största sannolikhet upplevt, förändrats dramatiskt i och med Covid-19 pandemin. Trender och preferenser hos både arbetsgivare och arbetstagare är intressant att fortsättningsvis undersöka. Mitt slutmål är en ökad förståelse över vart människor vill och kan bo i framtiden, som en konsekvens av det "nya" distansarbetet.

Tack för din medverkan!

Mvh,

Joel Böhm

(svaren i enkäten hanteras anonymt)

*\*avlönat arbete som utförs på distans från den ordinarie arbetsplatsen*

## **Del 1 – Erfarenheter av och motiv till distansarbete**

### **1. Hur mycket arbetade du hemifrån före pandemin?**

Varje dag  
3–4 gånger i veckan  
1–2 gånger i veckan  
Någon enstaka gång i månaden  
Aldrig

### **2. Hur mycket arbetade du hemifrån under pandemin?**

Varje dag  
3–4 gånger i veckan  
1–2 gånger i veckan  
Någon enstaka gång i månaden  
Aldrig

### **3. Hur mycket arbetar du hemifrån idag?**

Varje dag  
3–4 gånger i veckan  
1–2 gånger i veckan  
Någon enstaka gång i månaden  
Aldrig

**4. Varför distansarbetar du? Välj dina främsta alternativ nedan (max 3 st)**

För att snabbt kunna komma i gång med arbetsdagen

För att ta igen arbete och hinna klart med deadlines

För att kunna arbeta ostört

För att det underlättar vardagslivet/familjelivet

För att det ger en större frihet rent generellt

För att det är ett krav/rekommendation från arbetsgivaren

För att slippa pendla

För att det underlättar mitt val av plats att bo på

För att det är fördelaktigt rent ekonomiskt

Annat \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Hur mycket skulle du vilja arbeta hemifrån framöver?**

Varje dag

3–4 gånger i veckan

1–2 gånger i veckan

Någon enstaka gång i månaden

Aldrig

**6. Distansarbetar du något ifrån ett co-working space?**

Ja

Nej

**7. Om ja, hur ofta gör du det?**

Varje dag

3-4 gånger i veckan

1-2 gånger i veckan

Någon enstaka gång i månaden

**8. Varför arbetar du från ett co-working space? Välj de alternativen som bäst stämmer överens med din upplevelse (max 3 st)**

För att det erbjuder en social kontext

För att det ger mig en motivationsboost

För att det hjälper mig att bygga nätverk

För att det ligger närmare mitt hem än vad kontoret gör

För att det underlättar mitt vardagsliv/familjeliv

För att det är ekonomiskt fördelaktigt

För att det är utvecklande

Annat \_\_\_\_\_



## Del 2 – Distansarbete, boende och flyttningar

### 9. Hur ser din boendesituation ut idag?

I ett radhus

I ett flerfamiljshus

I en villa

På en gård

### 10. I vilken typ av kontext bor du i idag?

Tätort/stad (ej småort)

Förort till/i utkanten av tätort/stad

Landsbygd

Vet inte/vill inte svara

### 11. Har ökade möjligheter av att distansarbete/arbete hemifrån haft en direkt inverkan på flyttbeslut?

Ja, i hög grad

Ja, delvis

Nej, inte alls

### 12. Om ja (både i hög grad & delvis) Vilken typ av flytt det handlar om? (det går bra att ange fler än ett av alternativen)

Att flytta från lägenhet till hus

Att flytta längre från arbetsplatsen

Att flytta till ett större boende

Att flytta till ett naturnära läge

Att flytta ut till en förort

Att flytta till landsbygden

Inget av de ovanstående alternativen

### 13. Upplever du att förändrade omständigheter kring distansarbete har påverkat dina preferenser när det gäller boende? Välj de alternativ som bäst stämmer överens med din upplevelse (max 2 st)

Ja, jag vill ha fler kvm att röra mig på

Ja, jag vill kunna ha en designerad plats i hemmet som ”hemmakontor”

Ja, jag vill ha en balkong

Ja, jag vill ha en trädgård

Ja, jag vill ha närhet till natur/grönområde

Ja, jag vill ha närhet till dagligvaruhandel

Ja, jag vill ha närhet till lokal att jobba ifrån (co-working space, café, bibliotek)

Annat \_\_\_\_\_

Nej, det har inte påverkat mina boendepreferenser

**14. Är du intresserad av ett liv på landsbygden?**

Ja, jag bor på landsbygden idag

Ja, jag har planer på att flytta till landsbygden

Ja, jag har drömmar om att någon gång i framtiden flytta till landsbygden

Nej, inte särskilt/inte alls

**15. Om ja, jag bor på landsbygden – har distansarbete underlättat till ett liv på landsbygden?**

Ja, det har underlättat stort

Ja, det har underlättat en aning

Nej, inte påverkat

**16. På vilket sätt har det underlättat?**

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**17. Har förändrade omständigheter kring att distansarbete påverkat dina planer på att flytta till landsbygden?**

Ja, i mycket hög grad

Ja, delvis

Nej, inte alls

**18. Har förändrade omständigheter kring att distansarbete påverkat dina drömmar om att flytta till landsbygden?**

Ja, i mycket hög grad

Ja, delvis

Nej, inte alls

**19. Skulle ett bostadsnära co-working space göra det mer attraktivt att bo på landsbygden?**

Ja, i mycket hög grad

Ja, i viss mån

Nej, inte alls/ingen åsikt

**20. Om ja, ( både i mycket hög grad & i viss mån) På vilket sätt skulle det öka attraktiviteten på landsbygden? Välj de alternativen som bäst stämmer överens med din upplevelse (max 3 st)**

För att det erbjuder en social plats att distansarbete ifrån

För att det erbjuder ett ”nära-hemmakontor”

För att det hjälper till att utöka ens professionella nätverk

För att det hjälper en att lära känna folk som bor i ens närhet

För att det är fördelaktigt rent ekonomiskt

För att det erbjuder en kreativ miljö

För att det erbjuder bra yrkesmässiga förutsättningar (internetuppkoppling, skrivare/scanner osv)

För att det minskar pendlandet

Annat \_\_\_\_\_

### **Del 3 – Bakgrundsfrågor**

**Nämner gärna din jobbtitel:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Ålder?**

18–24

25–34

35–44

45–54

55–64

65+

#### **Familjesituation?**

Bor ensam

Ensamstående med barn i hushållet

Sambo/gift, utan barn i hushållet

Sambo, gift med barn i hushållet

Annat \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Kön?**

Kvinna

Man

Annat \_\_\_\_\_

Ville ej uppge

#### **Högsta utbildning?**

Grundskola

Gymnasium

Eftergymnasial upp till 2 år

Eftergymnasial 2–5 år

Eftergymnasial 5 år och mer