Flex for Success

A case study of the role of a leader in highly flexible organisations
Abstract

Due to dynamic and rapid changing markets, technology has helped companies adapt to the market conditions and forced them to undergo a transition from permanent structures to more adaptable ones. Researchers have stressed that by implementing more adaptable structures, companies have a better chance to utilize both personnel and business resources. By implementing flexibility in working hours and place, firms increase their chances of better coping with dynamic changes in the business environment and better meet the individual needs of the employees. This leads to the subjective constructed concept timeplace flexibility. One neglected aspect in previous research, is the link between timeplace flexibility and the role of the leader when employees get increased control and responsibility over their schedules and tasks. Hence, the purpose of this study is to discuss what role the leader plays in a highly timeplace flexible organisation. By using an inductive approach together with a qualitative research method, three theoretical concepts- Leadership styles in flexible organisations, organisational communication and self-management- have been identified to support the understanding of the empirical findings. The empirical data is collected from two companies, which have implemented timeplace flexibility in different ways.

The outcome of this study suggests the leader in highly timeplace flexible organisations to act as a visionary and communicate organisational goals. Emphasis is also on acting supportive and to coach the employees when they are faced with challenges. Although, individuals in a highly timeplace flexible organisation have a lot of responsibility and can somewhat be viewed to practising self-management, having a leader is considered to be significant. The direct control of the leader has decreased but instead, it can be interpreted as the control manifests itself via the internal business culture in forms of social values and norms. Consequently, the study can serve meaningful to leaders in highly timeplace flexible organisations or companies who wish to implement more adaptable structures.

Keywords

Highly flexible organisations, flexibility, timeplace flexibility, leadership, adaptation, communication, responsibility
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1 Introduction

In the following chapter, the background and introduction of the area which ought to be studied will be provided. Subsequently, a problem discussion will be conducted which will clarify the relevance of the topic. The chapter will also present the purpose and research question of the study along with delimitations.

1.1 Background

During the time of the industrial era, workers were regulated by time and place. They had to be in the factories at a specific time, by a specific machine to execute their job. The workers were obliged to relate to permanent structures in the company (Jensen, 1993). Technology has enabled the switch from permanent structures to structures which are more adaptable to the current market situation. The technological development and globalization have resulted in companies operating in a global 24-hour economy (Albertsen, Rafnsdóttir, Grimsmo, Tómasson & Kauppinen, 2008). The development is the result of the search for cost reduction and for competence of today’s 24-hour economy where companies can utilize the access of talent that is not within the borders. Companies are no longer restricted to an area where people with most relevant competence is located. Instead, the opportunity to utilize resources which are not in your time zone is given to firms (Sparks, Faragher & Cooper, 2001). Within a global 24-hour economy, companies need to develop the ability to be “on call” at all hours of the day and occasionally the night as well, to make them accessible for customers and providers around the world. The requirement for working nonstandard hours and the need for high availability is pressuring companies to undergo structural changes in order to adapt to the market environment and the demands which have been enabled by the fast technology (Albertsen et al., 2008). Companies are driven to implement structural changes which are not fixed in order to utilize resources both regarding personnel and commercial (Tallman, Luo & Buckley, 2000).

Orlikowski (1996) suggests organisations to transform in accordance with the endemic changes to advance and the changes that follow should display themselves through improvisation, innovation and readjusted work routines. Glass (2000) and Presser (1999) underline the direct competition with developing countries and the global
movement of capital as a reason for the need of flexible labour along with a more demanding domestic market, craving additional services to a better service.

1.1.1 Defining flexibility

There are different definitions and forms of flexibility (Brown, 2003) and although the concept of organisational flexibility was first given academic attention to during the 1960’s, it still does not exist a coherent definition since the concept is very broad (Kashefi, 2007). However, I claim flexibility in a general sense has always been and always is important for companies to meet market and employees demands. Kashefi (2007) refers to organisational flexibility as the willingness and the ability to readily respond to changing expectations and circumstances, which is the definition being used in this study.

It can be argued that organisational flexibility can be divided into two main groups: quantitative and qualitative flexibility (Goudswaard & Nanteuil, 2000), which can also be referred to as numerical and functional flexibility (Riley & Lockwood, 1997). Quantitative flexibility refers to the ability to adjust working hours and the number of employees in regard to changes in the demand while the latter one refers to skill content and work quality (Goudswaard & Nanteuil, 2000; Riley & Lockwood, 1997). In regard of quantitative flexibility, Beck (2014) strengthens the description of Goudswaard and Nanteaueil (2000) by defining it as work schedules such as flextime and compressed or part-time hours and diverse work activities. Flexibility in working hours and working location are two aspects which are used as a way to manage the dynamic changes in the environment where the organisation operates and as a way to accomplish both organisational and employee satisfaction (Christensen & Staines, 1990). It is suggested that employees can better manage long working hours and the set goals when given more control and responsibility when and where the work is going to take place. In addition, by offering flexibility in working hours and location, it is considered that employees are able to handle unpredictable events better and meet all their needs on and off their job (Christensen & Staines, 1990; Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin and Pitt-Catsouphes, 2008). Allvin, Mellner, Movits and Aronsson (2012) argue there are four different forms when it comes to flexible working situations among them time and location but they also add cooperation and implementation. The different situations are independent and an organisation does not have to address all
four. This study will focus on time and place which will be referred to as timeplace flexibility.

1.1.2 Control
The dynamic features of companies have resulted in a view where traditional workplace systems including a high level of bureaucratic and hierarchical control systems are outdated and need to leave room for more timeplace flexibility without traditional hierarchical control systems (Kashefi, 2007). Riley and Lockwood (1997) and Kalleberg (2003) argue that adopting a higher level of timeplace flexibility can be viewed as a strategy to cope with the volatile market and the employee’s demands. The idea arose from that a volatile market situation for a firm can be partly stabilized through decreasing bureaucracy within the organisation. Meaning, offering more individual responsibility through timeplace flexibility, it is suggested it will result in employees feeling more obliged to live up to the organisational expectations (Riley & Lockwood, 1997). With a higher level of responsibility along with unfixed working hours and place, the level of control in form of leadership decreases (Pink, 2011) while the management of the employee increases. According to De Vos and Soens (2008), self-management is partly driven by personal values which are in accordance with the individualistic perspective where personal goals are valued the most (Triandis et al., 1990). In an organisation with timeplace flexibility, this would mean that employees are to a large extent self-managed with a low to the almost nonexistent level of control. I believe control is still a present element within an organisation but has taken a different shape. Employees are given more responsibility however, they are still connected to a company and are held responsible for their work.

1.1.3 Individualistic employees
Employees endeavour to find a balance between the higher demands of work and personal life (Hobson, 2014). In order to find a good balance, it can be argued that employees have become more individualistic. In a society where individualism is cherished, it is encouraged to create and take control over one’s own life (Probst & Lawler, 2006), I would argue firms are facing individualistic employees but with a collectivistic organisational purpose. Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) define individualism as individuals who are briefly connected to each other and see themselves as independent of collectives and which are primarily motivated by their own needs,
preferences and rights. While collectivism is described as individuals viewing themselves as a part of a collective and are motivated by duties and goals set by the group (Triandis et al., 1990). Timeplace flexibility can be viewed as an attempt for the individual to fulfill one’s own needs since that is what the primary motivational factor is. Greater emphasis is placed on autonomy and task variety (Probst & Lawler, 2006), which timeplace flexibility offers. However, the question regarding how a leader is managing individuals which are loosely connected to each other but still have to function in teams can be raised.

Additionally, it is the individual to blame when the goals are not met due to the high level of responsibility timeplace flexibility gives. It is not the organisation or the leader’s fault when something goes wrong, it is the individual who has not succeeded to fully adapt to the flexibility suggests Brown (2003). I suggest it can be argued that it is not solely the fault of the employee but instead a combination of the organisation which has not succeeded to convey the aim of adopting timeplace flexibility along with leaders and employees do not know how to adapt to it. Brown (2003) accentuates that flexibility and adaptability as a survival tactic to stay in the market, tend to solely focus on employees and not leaders nor companies. Although the focus is a lot on the employee, it is the organisation that enables and the leader who facilitates timeplace flexibility. Goleman (2000) argue there are different leadership styles which are more suitable to facilitate and coordinate timeplace flexibility. The author advances by explaining that the leader needs to identify which style is the most appropriate in regard to the situation and organisation. Goleman (2000) underlines that the result of not finding the suitable leadership style to foster flexibility may create an image of a leaderless organisation.

1.1.4 Example of highly timeplace flexibility

In order to push flexibility one step further regarding time and place, Cali Ressler and Judy Thompson, former employees at the American electronics firm Best Buy, created the Human Resource management strategy called Results Only Work Environment (ROWE) (Pink, 2011). The ROWE philosophy is based on that employees are working on their own terms where the focus is on an environment where the result is the main target. ROWE is based on the common sense of the employees and allowing them to pursue the work how they like to do it. There are no working hours so the employees are able to adjust the time in order for it to suit themselves. There is no need to be at the
office every day unless one wants to but instead, it gives the opportunity to work from home or elsewhere. The focal point is to accomplish the work one is entitled to execute (Pink, 2011).

While Ressler and Thompson underline that ROWE is a fairly new philosophy, I would say it can be traced back to Management By Objectives (MBO), just in a more extreme form. The concept was developed by Peter Drucker in the 1950s and is based on setting objectives for the employees and then comparing the performance against the objectives (Sutherland & Canwell, 2004). MBO is an approach to motivate managers by setting goals for the organisation as a whole. These objectives are then communicated to the employees in order for them to follow (Antoni, 2005). Delegation is a fundamental part of MBO (Sutherland & Canwell, 2004) but Ressler and Thompson emphasis that ROWE is not about delegate work which would be the distinction between MBO and ROWE. Ressler and Thompson claim that flextime, where one can come in one hour earlier and leave one hour earlier, is only a confidence trick. It offers flexibility within an arena of control. (Pink, 2011). Although Ressler and Thompson argue flextime is offering flexibility within an arena of control but ROWE does not since the control is shifted to the individual, I think it can be claimed that implementing ROWE is solely an attempt to make employees think they are more in control over their work but in fact, the control from a leader has not decreased, it has just taken another shape and is exerted different. The employee control becomes harder to identify since it is a subtle form that is difficult to point out (Pink, 2011). It can be argued that a firm which has implemented ROWE can be viewed as a highly timeplace flexible organisation.

1.2 Problem discussion

1.2.1 Practical relevance

Organisations are trying to keep up with the rapid changes in the market due to globalization by adopting a more flexible way of working (Hopwood, 1992; Hill et al., 2008). Managers feel the need to implement a higher level of timeplace flexibility to cope with the uncertain environment along with accommodating the needs of the employees (Sheridan & Conway, 2001). Some scholars (Sheridan & Conway, 2001; Hill et al., 2008; Brown, 2003) state that the implementation of timeplace flexibility within an organisation is predominantly made for the employees to try to fulfill their needs in combination with the goals of the organisation. Accordingly, if the perspective
of the leader and the impact is put aside, it can be viewed as a problem since the leader is the one who facilitates and coordinates timeplace flexibility (Goleman, 2000). Goleman (2000) claim a higher level of knowledge regarding the impact the leader has on timeplace flexibility is required in order to make the most out of it.

According to Sheridan and Conway (2001) and Hill et al. (2008), it must be apparent whether the primary goal is in the interest of the employees or the organisation. Either focus lies on decreasing costs and increasing efficiency or the well-being of the individual whereas one or the other comes second. Although Sheridan and Conway (2001) and Hill et al. (2008) argue that the primary goal either concerns the employees or the organisation, it can be questioned if the two goals do not go hand in hand and that it is not a necessity to choose. It may be an assumption that a leader has to choose a primary goal and it can be questioned whether leaders see it as a need to prioritize. This may result in a challenge for the leader and how it is handled which is why leadership in an organisation with timeplace flexibility needs to be further studied.

The involvement of the leader is significant and that is why the issue needs to be paid more attention to. Sheridan and Conway (2001) emphasize that the management is required to change along with the organisation and not stay static. The authors advance by explaining that the management has to be responsive to changing demands and conditions and act upon those needs. This argument shows a need to further look into how leadership is expressed once an organisation has made the change into timeplace flexibility. Hochschild (1997) argues that many companies have adopted flextime and flexplace programs but which are not fully used by employees. It can be argued that this is due to not adopting the leadership which inhibits the timeplace flexibility (Goleman, 2000). Furthermore, Yukl and Mahsud (2010) argue it is essential for leaders to create an understanding of the different contexts which require timeplace flexibility. The leader needs to know how to identify the situation and evaluate which behavior needs to be applied to the situation. The authors advance by describing that a leader needs to develop skills and an understanding of their behavior’s impact on multiple objectives and how to create a good balance between those. To cope with the fast changes in the environment, it is desired that the leader is one step ahead and take responsibility for its followers (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).
Pink (2011) claims that although organisations have changed, leadership has not gone through any major changes for the past hundred years. Leadership is still founded on control to a large extent which causes difficulties and uncertainty in how to lead when the control and responsibility are shifted to the employees instead (Pink, 2011). The role of a leader might become insignificant or more significant for the employees and the organisation when incorporating a higher level of timeplace flexibility. Due to the contradictory thoughts regarding leadership in accordance with timeplace flexibility, further research should be conducted hence this study.

1.2.2 Theoretical relevance

Extended research has been conducted regarding the effects of timeplace flexibility on the well-being of the employees in the sense of work-life balance (Hill et al., 2008; Brown, 2003; Delecta, 2011; Campbell Clark, 2001; Sheridan & Conway, 2001). Earlier research displays neglect of leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations and mostly focus on the effects it has on the organisation and its employees, leaving the role and the impact of the leader out (Brown, 2003). The focus has been to a large extent on how timeplace flexibility can fulfill employees’ needs and improve their performance (Brown, 2003). The research about how a leader manages timeplace flexibility is relevant since as Goleman (2000) describes it, if the leader does not know how to manage it in a proper way, it can have an opposite effect on the team and organisation in a negative way.

According to Kashefi (2007) and Hill et al. (2008), the concept of flexibility is very wide and needs to be defined clearly when studying the topic in order to avoid confusion and difficulties. It is a necessity to state the definition which is going to be used since it is a complex subject and that there are several different perceptions of its meaning. Sheridan and Conway (2001) accentuate the difficulties of defining flexibility since the concept has different meanings in different contexts. To better understand the topic and moreover enable a closer study of it, it is necessary to focus on a particular type. In this study, timeplace flexibility is going to be used as the coherent definition in order to specify flexibility.
1.3 Research question

The problem discussion has led to the research question (RQ):

- What is the role of a leader in a highly flexible organisation in sense of time and place?

The purpose of the RQ is to find out how a leader manages a group when there are no fixed working hours or a working place that everyone comes to every day.

1.4 Purpose

This thesis intends to generate a better understanding of how leadership in a highly flexible organisation regarding time and place works. By analysing what type of leadership is used in these types of organisations, the study can show what kind of adaptation is needed from the leader when an organisation adopts timeplace flexibility in order to promote and facilitate it. Through interviews with companies who have already adopted a high level of timeplace flexibility, along with theory, will the research question be answered. The thesis aims to provide leadership insights for companies who have or are planning on to decrease stability and move towards more timeplace flexibility.

1.5 Delimitations

Other aspects except time and place will not be taken into consideration in this study due to time limitations. Hence, the focus will be on companies who have applied flexibility in terms of working hours and place. The worker perspective and the aspects of work-life balance are dimensions which are going to be left out in the study since the focus lies on the leader and how flexibility is coped with from a leadership perspective. Companies who have adopted flex time programs where the flex time is an hour earlier or later will be excluded as the focus is on companies with a higher level of flexibility such as no set working hours. The aspect of project working will also be ruled out.
2 Literature review

In the following chapter, key concepts which have derived from the empirical data will be reviewed. The chapter begins with the concept of leadership styles in relation to flexibility and is followed by organisational communication. Lastly, self-management with emphasis on individualism and collectivism will be presented. The concepts are out of interest in order to understand the relation between timeplace flexibility and leadership.

2.1 Leadership styles in relation to flexibility

A source which talks about leadership styles in relation to flexibility is Goleman (2000). I consider the source to be judicious and addresses many valuable aspects and that is why this part of the thesis is going to be founded on Goleman (2000) to a large extent. However, Goleman (2000) refers to flexibility as how free employees feel to innovate but together with responsibility to the organisation, clarity people have about mission and vision and commitment to a common purpose, which are other aspects stressed by Goleman (2000), I make the interpretation that a parallel can be drawn to timeplace flexibility. Thus, the source (Goleman, 2000) can serve as a foundation for this part of the thesis.

The wonders of how leaders should act and accomplish in their role in order to generate the best performance from their employees have been on the agenda for a long time (Goleman, 2000). The effectiveness of a certain leadership style has eluded organisations (Goleman, 2000) and when organisations are adopting a higher level of timeplace flexibility, the thought of what the role of the leader becomes relevant. Goleman (2000) argues that the reason why the issue still eludes people in organisations is that leadership experts offer advice how to adapt the leadership style in order to generate positive results. Nonetheless, the advices will sometimes work, sometimes not. Additionally, no quantitative research has demonstrated which specific leadership style generate positive results in relation to the six drivers of climate (flexibility, responsibility, standards, rewards, clarity, commitment and overall impact on climate) (Goleman, 2000). Six leadership styles have been identified, originate from different components of emotional intelligence, and separately they portrait unique impacts on the working atmosphere of a company or a team (Goleman, 2000). The different
leadership styles are coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching. They will be described further on. The leadership style can be viewed as a tool to cope with challenges that the organisation is facing. Goleman (2000) explains it as the leader senses the challenge ahead, finds the right tool (leadership style) and puts it to use. The six distinctive leadership styles were identified in a study done by the consulting firm Hay/Mcber where they studied over a thousand executives (Arond-Thomas, 2004; Goleman, 2000).

2.1.1 The Coercive style
The coercive leadership style also referred to as autocratic is characterized by extreme top-down decision-making skills and a demeaning, straightforward communication. The coercive style also aims to induce obedience in the employees in order to comply with orders of the leader (Johnson & Klee, 2007; Goleman, 2000). It is a style where the leader usually blames the employees and do not trust them to make decisions on their own.

Goleman (2000) claims the coercive style is the most ineffective one of them all in most cases. He proceeds by emphasizing that timeplace flexibility takes the toughest hit if the coercive style was to be executed in a workplace. The style leads people to experience that they cannot be trusted and therefore, there is no need of presenting new ideas to the leader since they would not be listen to anyways. The style does not offer any inputs from the employees (Johnson & Klee, 2007). The level of responsibility also decreases since the leader imposes in the employees that they are unable to act on their own which eventually creates a feeling of not being accountable for one’s own performance (Goleman, 2000). A clear negative impact on the rewards system can also be seen whereas high-performing workers seek the satisfaction of work well executed. This would be taken away with the coercive style since it destroys such personal pride (Goleman, 2000). Reduced clarity and commitment is also a result of the mentioned style according to Goleman (2000). This is due to that the leader fails to demonstrate how one person´s job fits into the bigger picture leading to employees not being able to see their personal contribution to the firm. Johnson and Klee (2007) suggest that the coercive style equals inflexible leaders who do not listen.
Despite the negative aspects of a coercive leadership style, Goleman (2000) presents some occasions when the style can work for the better. As an example, the coercive style can be suitable when a company has to make a quick turnaround and is in need of breaking failed business habits. Another example when the coercive style can come into good use is in the aftermath of a fire or an earthquake. These situations are both short-term and indicate that the style should not be used for a long-term purpose due to the effects it can have on the feelings of the employees (Goleman, 2000).

2.1.2 The authoritative style

Goleman (2000) distinguishes the authoritative style as communicating clear visions with a lot of enthusiasm. The leader is a visionary and makes the vision clear to everybody else. Furthermore, the style motivates employees by showing how their work fits into the vision and the bigger picture for the organisation. It offers employees an understanding why they do the things they do and how it matters to the organisation. By practicing an authoritative leadership style, Goleman (2000) argues that the style will act as a foundation in order to increase commitment to the organisation’s goals. Although the visions of an authoritative leader should be stated clearly and the employees ought to strive for completing the vision, the style does not inhibit flexibility according to Goleman (2000). The end of the vision will be stated but space to show the employees own means will be given. The new course is clearly set out by the leader in order for the employees to follow. Nilsson and Waldermarson (2013) along with Pauley and Pauley (2009) state that the authoritative style makes decision-making effective but the autonomy of the employees is low. This statement opposes Goleman (2000) regarding employees’ own means will be shown. Nilsson and Waldermarson (2013) argue employees are ought to follow the direct instructions given by the leader and there is no room for employees’ own opinions or initiatives.

In a team of experts with a lot of experience, the authoritative style will encounter some issues. The leader can be perceived as flaunty and the vision will not be shared. Another issue which may arise is that an authoritative leader may undermine the effectiveness of a team since other opinions except the leaders’ are not taken into consideration (Goleman, 2000). In relation to timeplace flexibility, undermining the opinions of the employees may cause more harm than good because when they are not on site, they have to be able to make their own decisions and know that the decisions will be
accepted by the leader. However, having a clearly stated vision which everybody is aware of can act beneficial both for the employees and the organisation. Since employees are not at the office, at the same time or not at all, having an evident vision communicated by the leader will somewhat give the employees a clear goal to work towards, although they do not meet up with their colleagues nor the leader on a daily basis.

2.1.3 The affiliate style

Emotional bonds, harmony and acceptance of differences are three things which are important for a leader practicing the affiliate style. The priority is the individuals and their emotions whereas the second comes goals and tasks, although the employees are well aware of the rules and guidelines of the organisation (Goleman, 2000; Vesterinen, Suhonen, Isola & Paasivaara, 2012). The leader focuses on creating strong emotional bonds with the aim to generate loyalty. It is emphasized that the style has a positive effect on communication as well (Goleman, 2000). When there is such a strong focus on emotional bonds, a thought whether it can backlash on the organisation arises. There could be a possibility that the leader focuses too much on creating these bonds that the financial performance of the firm suffers. Further, Goleman (2000) argues that by creating harmony and emotional bonds, people are more likely to share inspiration and ideas which in turn nurture flexibility. In sense of timeplace flexibility, loyalty may play a bigger part in order to create a connection to the workplace. Timeplace flexibility is in need of adjusted rules which Goleman (2000) claims fits along with the affiliate style. He continues with explaining that a leader who practices the affiliate style, does not set up unnecessary rules but instead it depends on the employee how the work is going to be completed. It is founded on freedom to decide how oneself wants to do their job in the most effective way. Additionally, characteristic of the affiliate style is the strength to construct a feeling of belonging. The well-being of the employees is highly important and thus, celebrating group achievements or having one-on-one catch ups are significant (Goleman, 2000). It also encourages the employees to talk about their personal matters with the leader (Vesterinen et al., 2012) The affiliate style refers back to the leaders’ personal characteristics as natural relationships builders and a lot of empathy (Goleman, 2000; Vesterinen et al., 2012). Goleman (2000) underlines that the style nurture team harmony, increased morale and communication and thus, are the situations where the style particularly should be used.
Goleman (2000) sounds a note of caution that the style should not be practiced alone. He proceeds by telling that the focus on emotional bonds may result in unsatisfactory work results which can go uncorrected. Vesterinen et al. (2012) suggest that the affiliative style may focus too much on the well-being and job satisfaction of the employees, forgetting the development of the organisation thus becoming an obstacle when implementing change. Additionally, the risk of the leader becoming a close friend is high which could have a large impact when the leader is trying to examine the work units and its functions from a more objective perspective according to Vesterinen et al. (2012). The downside may also be that the employees are not getting any constructive advice on improvement. Thus, employees have to settle the issue by themselves (Goleman, 2000). Necessarily, it does not have to be a downside of the style. Instead, it can be viewed as another factor fostering timeplace flexibility. The employees cannot turn to the leader with the issue because the employee or the leader is simply not there instead, the individual has to figure out a solution on its own. The result could be better problem-solving in the workplace and more ideas due to the leader not offering a solution. However, Goleman (2000) suggests that in times of complicated challenges, employees need support in terms of clear directives and if that is not offered by the leader, the worst-case scenario is a collective failure. He suggests practicing the affiliative style in conjunction with the authoritative to get the best results.

2.1.4 The democratic style

Gastil (1994) and Pauley and Pauley (2009) describe the democratic style as free from positions of authority but instead serves as distributing responsibility, empowering employees and support the group’s decision-making process. Gastil (1994) advances by explaining that the style should influence people in accordance with basic democratic processes and principles such as inclusiveness and self-determination. It is fundamental for the democratic style to keep the opinions of the employees in mind when the leader is making a decision. The democratic leader takes its time to hear out the opinions and ideas of others in order to involve the ones being affected by the decisions. (Goleman, 2000). In a democratic style the leadership becomes a social process which involves many persons and connects them as to resolve an issue together (Raelin, 2012) In return, the leader earns the respect, commitment and trust of the employees. The aim is to build consensus through participation. The democratic style supports timeplace
flexibility and responsibility due to offering the employees to speak up about their own working process and goals (Goleman, 2000).

The distribution of responsibility is a central factor in democratic leadership. The leader aspires to evoke a lot of involvement and participation in each individual to collectively determine the objectives. Instead of concentrating the leadership to one person (the leader), the intention is rather to spread it among many (Gastil, 1994). This is reflected in a more realistic way of viewing what can and cannot be accomplished in terms of personal goals but to some extent also organisational goals (Goleman, 2000). Goleman (2000) shows that a democratic style supports timeplace flexibility, however, in highly timeplace flexible organisations, the democratic style would demand people being on the same place and at the same time more often to discuss different decisions in consent with the leader. Whether if this is possible or not in an organisation where the leader is not even constant present can be a raised as a thought. Although the style leaves room for personal responsibility and engagement, Gastil (1994) underlines that a democratic leader should not ask the employees to take responsibility but instead demand it since it can be viewed as a collective responsibility to engage in democratic decision-making processes.

Since the leader is inviting people to partake in the decision-making process, it could lead to endless meetings without reaching a mutual decision except for procrastinating the decision and postpone it to another meeting. The feeling of a leaderless and confused organisation might spread among the employees. The democratic style works well when the leader has a clear vision but is in need of ideas from capable employees in order to reach the goal. It can be hard to apply a democratic style when employees are not enough informed in order to give solid advice on the issue at hand (Goleman, 2000; Nilsson & Waldemarson, 2013).

2.1.5 The pacesetting style
As the name indicates, the style is about the leader setting a pace which ought to be followed by the employees (Goleman, 2000). The pace is usually fast with high-performance standards reflecting the leader itself. It is also expected that the employees keep the same standard as the leader. The focus lies on improvement and speeding up processes. The anticipation of the employees is really high and the leader demands great
results. Instead of generating great results, this could backlash, destroying the working climate and the spirit of the employees. The clarity of how the job should be done might be clear in the mind of the leader, but more often, the guidelines are not communicated well to the employees. Timeplace flexibility and responsibility take an extensive hit since the employee does not feel any given trust from the leader nor that one is able to take initiatives (Goleman, 2000). Additionally, commitment also suffers under the pacesetting style due to lack of understanding how the personal contribution fits into the bigger picture (Arond-Thomas, 2004). However, the pacesetting style fulfils the objective of getting things done on time (Goleman, 2000)

In the context of timeplace flexibility, the impact of the pacesetting style at a workplace does not necessarily have to be negative as Goleman (2000) argues that the style mostly is. If all employees are highly motivated and skilled, a leader with a high pace and standard might instead push the employees in the right direction, creating good results. On one hand it could develop a higher level of trust in a timeplace flexible organisation since the leader is not monitoring the employees but trust them to deliver great results, on the other hand it may be a challenge for everyone to maintain the same pace as the leader when oneself is in charge of structuring and planning the work.

### 2.1.6 The coaching style

As the name reveals, the style is about coaching the employees to find their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to their personal career goals. The leader takes on the role of a counsellor and offers support when employees are in doubt of how to contain their goals. Although the responsibilities of what is needed to be done are clear, a delegation from the leader is common when practising the coaching style (Goleman, 2000). Short-term failure is accepted if it leads to long-term learning. Goleman (2000) argues the coaching style is the least commonly used style due to leaders do not have the time to coach and help people grow. Despite the positive effects the coaching style may have on the employees, Goleman (2000) claims the style put extensively focus on the personal development which may leave out the financial performance of the firm.

Communication is a central part of the coaching style which fosters dialogue. The coaching style is particularly good for timeplace flexibility since it creates a freedom and trust to complete the task but also offers the support of the leader. The constant
communication helps the employees understand what is expected of them and how their work is contributing to the benefit of the company. The coaching style cultivates clarity, responsibility and the ability to solve problems (Goleman, 2000; Yukl, 2013). According to Goleman (2000), the style also fosters commitment. When a leader shows trust in an individual, the person is keen to return that trust in form of good accomplishments. Yukl (2013) stresses that an important aspect is to let the employees make the suggestions of improvement on one’s own instead of telling it. But in order for it to be rewarding, the employees have to be open to the possibility to receive the coaching. If that is not the case, Goleman (2000) argues the style would not work. Continuously, the author says it is not either suitable when employees are reluctant to change. The style may also be insufficient when the support and coaching are received from colleagues or if the employee has extensive knowledge within the field (Yukl, 2013). To enhance the coaching, it is significant that the leader has expertness within the specific field in order to make the coaching more trustworthy and later on, to be followed (Yukl, 2013).

Organisations which have adopted timeplace flexibility rely on employees to be willing to change and improve. If that is not the case, there is a big risk the timeplace flexibility will backlash or not work at all. Goleman (2000) argues the coaching style generates freedom and trust but the need for communication is high. It fits onto timeplace flexibility rather well but the risk of employees valuing their own benefits above the organisation’s may cause an obstacle for the continuous growth and development of the firm. Furthermore, in an organisational climate where changes happen rapidly, there might not be enough time to coach the employees in a meaningful way.

2.1.7 Fluid leadership vs. situational leadership

The study of Goleman (2000) states that the best way for a leader to encourage timeplace flexibility, responsibility, clarity and commitment is to combine the different styles. He argues that the best combination is a usage of authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching. The style depends on what is needed for the situation. The leaders can be described as fluid in their way of leading. The focus is to get the best result and that is why the leadership is not static. One could say that what is described by Goleman (2000) is what Yukl (2013) refers to as situational leadership. Situational leadership was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard with the aim to specify
which leader behaviour is suitable to use depending on the employees “maturity” in relation to the work tasks (Yukl, 2013). An employee with a high level of maturity does have the confidence and ability to complete the task with not extensively involvement from the leader whereas an employee with low maturity is in need of a more task-related leader behaviour due to lack in confidence and ability. Yukl (2013) explains that effective leaders evaluate the situation and adapt their behaviour in an attempt to meet the task and relationships demands.

Although a parallel can be made from what Goleman (2000) describes as “fluid leadership” and situational leadership, a distinction can also be done in the sense of the employee’s responsibilities. The fluid leadership is not founded on employees to grow into their role and gain the ability to fulfil the work task. It is already provided that the individual has the competence and ability to achieve the goals. The situational leadership is more based on the personal growth of the employee and along with the development, the leader adjusts the leadership accordingly. The given framework in a timeplace flexible organisation is that one has to have enough confidence to plan and manage the tasks from the beginning, not develop it over time. Timeplace flexibility applies to all individuals in the organisation, to the same extent.

The findings of the Goleman (2000) study determined that the authoritative style has the biggest positive impact on flexibility, clarity and commitment whereas the democratic one has the largest on responsibility. The overall result shows that the authoritative leadership style has the most positive impact on the working climate but the author emphasizes that no style should be relied on exclusively.

2.2 Organisational communication

Emphasis on organisational communication was put in the interviews as an important factor for timeplace flexibility. Nilsson and Waldemarsson (2013) state that a more communicative form of leadership can be identified in organisations. The communicative side of a leader is used to inform about processes and influence others in reaching the common goals. Papa, Daniels and Spiker (2007) explain humans that live in a contemporary society depend on and contribute to complex and interacting systems of organisations. The authors continue by stating that organisations are constituted and their existence is based on the interactions of the people who at some
point contributed to the constitution of them. It is the concerted actions of the people who are related to the organisation which creates it. The foundation of the concerted action is communication. The organisational communication is influenced by and influences internal (business culture) and external factors which take place in a complex open system. Organisational communication consists of the flow of the messages and the emotional and practical resources of individuals (Goldhaber, 1993).

Papa et al. (2007) present two distinctions where one can view organisations as containers in which human action and interactions take place whereas the second is organisations is human interaction. As goes for the “container” concept, it is argued that communication takes place within the organisations and is restricted to flow of messages and information. Organisation is human interaction suggests communication is more than the flow of information. It is a more complex and multidimensional process through which organising takes place. However, the “container view” can be as a discursive practise where knowledge is created stepwise. Papa et al. (2007) describe organisational communication as consisting of several processes and structures with various transient interactions. The scholars go on to explaining that organisational communication is partly about creating a shared meaning but to a larger extent it is a way of creating social realities in ways that are coordinated and managed.

If organisational communication ought to be viewed from the traditional perspective, organisations are seen as objects and the communication within is an objectively observable activity which for example can be measured and classified (Papa et al. 2007). Furthermore, there is the interpretative perspective in which organisations are seen as cultures. In regard to the beliefs and values which permeate an organisation, this perspective tries to unravel the values and beliefs which are the cause of the actions to examine the organisational communication. The organisation is subjective instead of objective. However, Papa et al. (2007) clarify by viewing the organisation subjectively is not a matter of imagination but instead, the organisational reality is socially constructed via communication and shared meanings. Thirdly, there is the critical perspective where the organisations are viewed as instruments of privileged classes. The focus lies on the difference between privileged groups and disadvantaged organisational groups. Owners and executives are among the privileged groups and workers and
minorities are classified as disadvantaged groups. Attention is paid to how the relationships are created and maintained between the two groups.

The overall fundamental part of leadership is communication with individuals and the knowledge of managing people in different situations such as to inform about the goal and how it can be reached. The leader needs to be able to call to the employees’ intrinsic motivation in order to support and strengthen them. Organisational communication is both characterized by being subjective as well as objective. There is a need for the leader to have empathy and show understanding and acceptance which refers to the former while clarity and structure refer to the latter (Nilsson & Waldermarson, 2013). The objective part of organisational communication comes out as more important in timeplace flexibility. It may be referred to the different interpretations there are in an organisation and the ambiguity of the language (Nilsson & Waldermarson, 2013).

Along with communication comes the informational part. Segerfeldt and Zimmer (2002) argue information is to be seen as a tool to create communication with employees, customers and the market. Communication is a way to identify market changes and hear the employees’ opinions and later on use the knowledge to adjust the business.

2.2.1 Downward and upward communication

Papa et al. (2007) describe downward and upward communication. The first handles the issue of message transmission from upper levels to lower levels in a hierarchy where the latter on concerns communication from lower to higher levels in the organisation. Downward communication can be considered as a tool for managerial control. The formal way of communicating can be ineffective in many organisations (Papa et al., 2007), and the ineffectiveness in highly timeplace flexible organisations could be a fact since the typical roles are blurrier. The upward communication can be seen as a two-way communication between leaders and employees generating morale.

2.2.2 Diagonal communication

Diagonal communication involves communication to cross both levels and departments of organisations. Three types of diagonal communication are described by Papa et al. (2007), quality circles (QC), lattice design and heterarchies. By creating groups of employees in order to solve problems in relation to product or service QCs are
constructed. The communication is limited to a group of people for it to be improved with a specific goal. QC often involves parties from different levels whereby diagonal communication is constructed. The lattice design refers to non-hierarchical organisations. With the existence of no bosses, employees are finding their own teams and communication channels. Direct communication is highly valued in lattice organisations and employees commit to the tasks of the organisation.

Heterarchies can be described as self-organizing non-hierarchical systems within organisations that are influenced by lateral accountability (Hedlund, 1986). The knowledge is spread out through the organisation as is the accountability. The heterarchy facilitates rapid organisational change to answer to the market changes because the excellence of the employees becomes more relevant than others depending on the task to solve (Aime, Humphrey, DeRue & Paul, 2014). It is argued that heterarchy encourages employees to engage in innovation and creativity instead of relying on the leader (Papa et al., 2007). The success of the firm is everyone’s responsibility and Aime et al. (2014) claim implementing heterarchy improves team functioning. The autonomy increases where there is heterarchy and leads to a higher need for communication and coordination due to complex interdependence within the organisation. A firm which runs according to heterarchy structures also has to consider the aspect of continuously learning. A fundamental aspect is diagonal communication between all individuals in the company. The challenge is to flatten the hierarchy but not the diversity of the team. Although interdisciplinary teams exist, the individual oneself has to be valued. The principles found in QC's can be found to a larger extent within heterarchy where the mission goes beyond quality. Heterarchy does not solely refer to one limited group but instead it applies to the entire organisation. The decision-making process is a negotiating process where everyone is involved and more or less equal in sense of power with the aim to satisfy the mass (Papa et al., 2007).

Highly timeplace flexible organisations can be aligned with heterarchies. This demands extensively diagonal communication whereas all employees are involved or informed in order for the firm to work smoothly. As an attempt to distribute knowledge and accountability as referred to in heterarchies, implementation of highly timeplace flexibility can be an option. Although the existence of lateral accountability is a visible element in both concepts, the role of a leader might play a more significant role in
highly timeplace flexible organisations in terms of diagonal communication and coordination.

2.2.3 Perceptions of the message
The clarity of messages and communication plays a major role in highly timeplace flexible organisations. The indistinctiveness of messages contributes to uncertainty among the employees of what the leader or colleagues want to communicate (Nilsson & Waldemarson, 2013). To enhance the possibility of increasing the clarity of messages, an agreement of norms and morals is suggested to reach a coherent understanding based on a similar interpretation. Clear communication with the employees is essential to anticipate and manage changes in the market (Segerfeldt & Zimmer, 2002). Targeting is a way of clarifying what is to be accomplished by the organisation (Segerfeldt & Zimmer, 2002) and in a highly timeplace flexible organisation, it is later up to the individuals to reach the target.

The interpretation of a message can be viewed as a chain reaction among employees. If the message is not clear from the beginning, several interpretations will be created depending on the following discussions leading to confusion and uncertainty (Kahan & George, 2010). On the other hand, if the leader manages to create a clear message, the power that follows can have a tremendous impact. The same message will spread but with insights from the employees, leading to follow a mutual path to achieve the vision. It is not about changing employees’ behaviours and thinking but instead, create a conversation which permeates the organisation. Kahan and George (2010) and Papa et al. (2007) argue communication is not solely about getting the message out, in order for it to be received successfully, interactions need to take place to create a common ground regarding the direction of the company.

Pauley and Pauley (2009) state there are six types of how one can perceive the organisation and thereby, the message. Reactors perceive the organisation through emotions whereas Workaholics do it through thoughts. Workaholics seek information and want others to share their thoughts.Persisters perceive the organisation through their opinions and often expect others to ask what their opinions are. Then there are the dreamers who use reflection as a primary tool to create an understanding. Lastly, there is the rebel who uses reactions, and promoters who use direct action. In an organisation,
there can be all six different types, which means the message and the response portrait themselves very different. This could be a cause for misunderstandings due to not offering employees time to make their individual perception. Pauley and Pauley (2009) suggest a leader identify the personalities through listening to the words they are using, in order to reduce the chance for misunderstanding and adapting the way of saying it in relation to the personality of the receiver. The outcome is individualized communication characterized by leader changing approach depending on the personal traits of the employee.

### 2.2.4 Leader-member exchange

The perception of communication that employees experience can be affected via leader-member exchange (LMX). The relationship has a clear impact on how satisfied individuals are with the quality of the communication in interpersonal, group and organisational contexts. The concept of LMX is based on that leaders have limited resources regarding social, personal and organisational relationships. Thus, the distribution of these resources cannot be equal but instead have to be divided selectively towards individuals. The interaction between leaders and employees is not all the same therefore, the LMX relationships vary in quality. LMX relationships can be divided into high and low relations. The high-quality withhold a lot of information exchange, mutual support, trust and input in decisions whereas the low-quality relations are more formal with less support and trust involved from the leader. The relationships are not isolated since they are a part of a larger, organisational context thus, it becomes a social system (Mueller & Lee, 2002). The perceived communication satisfaction is essential for the leader to know the message has been received as intended. Hecht (1978) defines communication satisfaction as how the employee responses to the message exchange and if the response fulfils the expectations of the leader. To achieve high-quality LMX relationships, the leader has to focus on communication in an interpersonal context involving feedback and supervisory communication referring to upward and downward communication. The flow of lateral information and message accuracy are criteria in group contexts and corporate communication and communication climate is a part of organisational contexts. A leader has to be aware of the three contexts (interpersonal, group and organisational) to achieve high-quality LMX and reach a high level of communication satisfaction thus, it becomes a multidimensional construct. The definition of the relationship can easily be defined by the employees depending on the
outcomes they receive. Formal and informal rewards are more likely to occur in high-quality where the employees experience high communication satisfaction with leaders which would be the opposite in low-quality LMX. Mueller and Lee (2002) establish that high-quality LMX relationships have a strong positive effect on employees’ perception of communication satisfaction. If the leader has established high-quality LMX relationships with the employees, it is most likely that the relations will influence the relationships between group members in a positive way as well.

Leaders in highly timeplace flexible organisations offer autonomy, opportunities to participate in decision-making and helping to fulfil personal goals which are aspects Mueller and Lee (2002) identify as components for high-quality LMX relationships. For leaders to create communication satisfaction in highly timeplace flexible organisations, the establishment of high-quality LMX relationships should be out of interest. Since communication in relation to timeplace flexibility is out of extensively relevance, it might be facilitated through creating those relationships and employees experience higher communication satisfaction. However, the argumentation which Mueller and Lee (2002) provide regarding the need for a leader to divide the social, personal and organisational resources can be seen as hindering the facilitation of communication in regard to timeplace flexibility. It can be speculated whether some relationships need to leave room for others to flourish. If that is the case, the impact of low-quality LMX in highly flexible organisations will take a harder hit since the lack of trust and support are non-existent element, leading to challenging the structure of the firm. Thus, the leader has to strive for establishing high-quality LMX with all employees, dividing the resources equally for the timeplace flexible structure to function. By focusing on those kinds of relationships including all three contexts, the communication satisfaction may increase and act beneficial for the firm.

2.3 Self-management

Timeplace flexibility involves employees to decide when and where they want to work by themselves. Employees have to coordinate and manage their own activities to ensure reaching their personal and company goals (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Furthermore, self-management involves self-instructions toward achieving these goals and planning for one’s behaviour patterns (Manz & Sims, 1980). Therefore, it can be argued that employees in highly timeplace flexible organisations are practising self-management.
Individuals are driven by creating their own work identity and personal values are important to care for whether the personal values correspond to the objectives of the company or not (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Timeplace flexibility gives the opportunity for employees to personalize their work, but it also has to correspond to the objectives of the firm in order to create a common goal and affinity. Manz and Sims (1980) claim that the role of a leader dealing with self-managed employees can act helpful for them to develop and support skills as goal specification, self-administering and self-observation. It is argued by Manz and Sims (1980) that when employees gain a lot of task knowledge, the need for leadership decreases and instead it can be viewed as a substitute for leadership. The individuals would be influenced by the task knowledge rather than direct actions from a leader. On the other hand, by the leader embodying the practises of self-management, it can inspire and demonstrate how it can be done and then evaluate their own work. The leader has to see the development of the employee and thus, adopt the leadership accordingly. Initially, the focus is on performance-related behaviours whether later the focus should shift to the development of self-management. The function of the leader then becomes more encouraging and reinforcing processes e.g. goal setting instead of leading employees directly. The shift involves less direct control over employees. Langfred (2007) also emphasizes the importance of leaders giving their employees the skills of managing themselves and not stand by and waiting for them to figure it out on their own. An essential for self-management to successfully work is clear self-instructions (Manz & Sims, 1980).

Self-management enables increased timeplace flexibility in adapting the working structures in regard to the individuals’ tasks and situation (Langfred, 2007). The organisation will still have a collectivistic goal which has to be emphasized in self-management. It might be considered a contradictory where the values and goals of the individual have to come in first place but still have to contribute to an overall common goal. It can be a clash between individualistic and collectivistic values.

2.3.1 Individualism

In a society like Sweden or USA, individualism is a clear feature and something which has started to colour business cultures as well. The strong urge for autonomy and being in charge of one’s own life is reflecting the adaptation of business structures (Nilsson & Waldermarsson, 2013). Hofstede (1984) describes individualistic persons as self-
centred, competitive rather than co-operative and low loyalty to the organisation they work for. The achievements and values of the person are the driving forces and motivation where the firm has to make adaptations to respond to the personal values along with achieving the organisational goal. The requirement of a lot of responsibility and being able to manage the time and work tasks demand the firm to conform itself to the individuals, not the other way around. Companies have to respect personal goals as something which stands above the organisational goals (Goncalo & Staw, 2004). The challenge is to find a balance where the strong personal aspects can serve the company goal beneficial (Nilsson & Waldermarsson, 2013). If it is achieved to communicate the organisational goal, the group will still consist of independent persons who all have unique traits (Goncalo & Staw, 2004). Individualistic people will stand their ground and maintain their opinions in the face of opposition, thus if the organisational decisions do not align with the personal values, difficulties may arise.

The identity is based on individual interests creating a self-concept and the creation of an identity is up to each person. Due to the own creation of identity, difficulties may arise to emotionally and behaviourally adjust to social groups and view oneself as an essential part of a team since limited value is put into social groups (Gundlach, Zivnuska & Stoner, 2006). Goncalo and Staw (2004) claim individualistic values should be avoided in a company because it can create conflicts within the group and incite unrealistic opportunism due to the focus on personal goals. However, the authors underline an identified benefit of individualism in form of creativity and suggest individualistic groups are more creative than collectivistic groups. Even if the group is instructed to be creative, the outcome remains. If creativity is sought, individualistic employees will have a bigger opportunity to realize it because Goncalo and Staw (2004) suggest they are more likely to present ideas which are not according to the group values. Thus, conformity of a group might act limited to creativity but create group cohesion to some extent. Noordin and Jusoff (2010) account for individualism being the outcome of rapid social change and disputes leading to resolution of existing groups. Additionally, high social mobility also leads to the non-creation of groups. Nonetheless, Goncalo and Staw (2006) argue the formation of groups will take place since individualism in organisations can be referred to as horizontal individualism meaning that the individual is somewhat equal in status with others, the person is independent but so is the others, creating cohesion.
Furthermore, Manz and Sims (1980) argue a group consisting of individualistic team members have a negative influence on the overall team performance. Stone-Romero and Stone (2002) suggest it can depend on persons which identify themselves as individualistic may have a hard time when being placed in team-based structures such as organisations. The challenge of the organisation is thereby to find a way where the benefits of individualism can be treasured although it is in a team-based structure. To reap the benefits of individualism in organisations, Gundlach et al. (2006) propose leaders to implement high task interdependence. While doing so, individualistic persons will strongly identify with the team because the energy and time spent working together on teamwork will enhance the personal feeling of identification with the team. When task interdependence is low, the opposite happens due to lack of time and energy spent not working together which decreases the feeling of team identification for individualists.

Gundlach et al. (2006) claim that a distinctive individualistic person can also have collectivistic traits due to the isms exist along two separate dimensions. This means the qualities of individualism and collectivism are not mutually exclusive.

2.3.2 Collectivism

In contrast to individualism, collectivism care for the group’s own good. The emphasis is on the interdependence between the individual and the group (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). The individual is dependent on the well-being of the group in order to maximize its performance. The priorities of the employee are the group harmony and how one can contribute to reaching the collectivistic goals (Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Nilsson & Waldemarson, 2013). Harmonious relationships are a fundamental aspect of collectivism which permeates the culture (Hofstede, 1984; Noordin & Jusoff, 2010). The thinking is based upon a “we” rather than an “I” which develops a high loyalty towards the organisation and a strive to do good for the sake of the organisation in order to fulfil the company goals via productivity and cooperation (Hofstede, 1984; Goncalo & Staw, 2006).
The actions and interactions are carried out in an interdependent spirit where the individuals act out in a highly cooperative approach and not separately. In collectivism, the joint efforts and accomplish the goals together are moral values which are pushing the group and individuals forward. The personal goals and values become less important to the individual than the goals of the organisation which makes the person identify more with the organisation than prioritizing oneself (Hofstede, 1984). By giving in to personal needs and values on behalf of the group, the collective membership is what really matters and by intertwining emotional and cognitive behaviour, the individual becomes one with the group. Collectivistic persons are identified by the group itself and are in need of belonging to a social unit in order to gain an identity through a social context (Gundlach et al., 2006). Social identity precedes both emotion and behaviour of an individual thus, making it essential to create strong bonds with a group. The emotions and behaviour of a collectivistic person changes depending on the group affiliation where the behaviour is influenced by the norms and interests of the group. The transition from thinking and behaving as an individual to thinking and behaving as a team member comes naturally for a collectivistic person. Task interdependence requires people to work together to reach the goal and by creating high task interdependence the chance of persons developing team identification rises. On the other hand, if task interdependence is rather low, team identification decreases due to little time spent working together (Gundlach et al., 2006).

The meta-perception of collectivists is based on a sociocentric view of reality underlining interpersonal interdependency. Individuals are responsive and aware of how they come across to others since the self and identity is created through social interactions. Social relationships are more important than the ego and thus, collectivistic people ought to be more likely identifying and interpreting social cues which will facilitate the adaptation to the social group. Additionally, collectivists are more prone to be open to constructive feedback regarding their social behaviour in the team and change it correspondingly for the better (Stone-Romero & Stone, 2002). In relation to timeplace flexibility, a collectivistic culture would contribute to an open climate where employees are able to give constructive feedback on how the interaction should take place. Since the social interaction is not practised every day in highly timeplace flexible organisations, the need for knowing how to act in social groups may be higher.
It is essential that everybody is acting in unison in order to make what is best for the firm (Hofstede, 1984). Although, the importance of knowing and striving towards a common goal, timeplace flexibility challenges the suggestion of a group which has to act in excessive unison to reinforce the feeling of collectivism. While it can be proposed that an essential part of organisations are individuals contributing to a business collective goal, the suggestion that they have to work in great unison can be questioned with timeplace flexibility. Although the employees are working towards common goals, the option of choosing where one is doing their job may scatter the group and challenge the unanimous since everyone is working separately. However, it can also be suggested that timepace flexibility puts greater emphasis on unison because employees can be dependent on others work in order to complete their own. Thus, it puts greater prominence on unanimous and becomes more relevant in a highly timeplace flexible organisation because it is more difficult to impact someone else’s work although one is dependent on it.

Collectivism nurtures organisation loyalty, interdependency and joint obligation to the company. Additionally, a more informal communication system based upon cooperation and coordination is created to achieve the organisational goals. Individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive groups which offer support and protection in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 1984). This could result in a clash between national and business culture. If the national culture promotes individualism and the business culture collectivism, the exchange of loyalty for integration in groups might not be relevant since it is not of interest for the employee to be loyal. Although, it is a matter of what exceeds what. Goncalo and Staw (2006) argue collectivism may affect creativity in a negative way which would be bad for the company since creativity is the spark for innovation and can be considered as a highly important competitive advantage. Furthermore, a collectivistic organisational culture can generate more social control in terms of acceptance of social norms and the strong interpersonal ties created within the group (Goncalo & Staw, 2006), which could act as a way for leaders in highly flexible organisations to practice control over their employees.

2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter different leadership styles in relation to timeplace flexibility, organisational communication and self-management have been addressed. To begin
with, leadership styles in relation to flexibility is out of interest since several distinctive styles display parts which act beneficial for timeplace flexibility. This indicates situational leadership as the most suitable style to promote timeplace flexibility since distinctive characteristic for the presented different styles can be applied. Furthermore, it is essential to have a good organisational communication for timeplace flexibility to function well. In the chapter, different ways of accomplish a good communication have been described. Diagonal communication can be seen as extra interesting since it is contributing to creating a good dialogue between the individuals and the leader. Also, seeing highly timeplace flexible organisations as heterarchies is something I would like to highlight because it provides an understanding of the structures in highly timeplace flexible organisations. Finally, self-management has been accounted for where concepts as individualism and collectivism are brought up as well. An interesting aspect is that individualism does not have to exclude collectivism and the other way around but both the isms can exist in an organisation.
3 Methodology

In this chapter, the course of how the study has been conducted will be explained and accounted for. The chapter will present the research approach, the collection of data along with the chosen method for data analysis. The chapter will be concluded by a discussion of quality.

3.1 Research approach

The research approach demonstrates the correlation between theory and empirical data. There are two general approaches, deductive and inductive, which can be used to gather new knowledge (Hyde, 2000). Additionally, one can combine the two research approaches which are called abductive. But it is not to be seen as a third research approach itself (Gummesson, 2000). Abductive involves the researcher to construct a theory, gather empirical data, and make it possible for the researcher to go back and forth between theory building and empirical data (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Which approach to use is to be decided by the clarity of the theory from the beginning (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Hyde (2000) describes the deductive approach as a way to test existing theory with the concepts found in the empirical findings. The existing theory is constructed by the researcher and serves as a foundation to examine if the empirical data dismisses or strengthens the presented theories (Kovács & Spens, 2005; Thomas, 2006). Since this study derives from an empirical framework rather than from a constructed, existing theoretical framework, the inductive approach has been applied which will be accounted for more thoroughly.

3.1.1 Inductive approach

Through empirical data, the researcher interpreters and identifies concepts or themes ought to be valuable for the study, which is what is defining the inductive approach (Thomas, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). No general frame or assertive theory is presented on beforehand but instead, the observations will contribute to the generalisations composing the theoretical frame (Andreewsky & Bourcier, 2000; Kovács & Spens, 2005). Considering the shortage of linkages between existing theories and timeplace flexibility and leadership, the inductive approach is suitable for this particular study since relevant concepts can derive from the empirical data. By letting the creation of the theoretical framework occur through the empirical data, a clear link between the topic
and the theoretical framework emerges which was not visible from the beginning. The
made interpretations of the empirical data are based on an overall understanding of all
of the gathered data together. When there is limited knowledge about the concept Elo
and Kyngnäs (2008) suggest the inductive approach as suitable. In accordance with their
argument, the approach was used to get a broader understanding of what is relevant in
relation to timeplace flexibility and leadership which previous research could not
provide. Furthermore, the inductive approach is in no need of structured methodologies
which could cause restraints for the researcher (Thomas, 2006). By not being limited to
structured methodologies, it offered an opportunity to examine the topic more freely
without any given specific frames and identify relevant theoretical frames supporting
timeplace flexibility and leadership in the empirical data. Additionally, the concept
timeplace flexibility is a subjective constructed concept in relation to this study,
therefore, the inductive approach was best applicable to investigate the influencing
factors and thus, provide additional insights.

Some scholars (Thomas, 2006; Overmars Verburg & Veldkamp, 2007) argue the
inductive approach is not as strong as other analytic approaches and therefore, easily
reproducible. Nonetheless, the importance of this study was to base it on insights from
companies who are practising timeplace flexibility and by doing so, withhold the
richness of the phenomena which Creswell (2013) argues the inductive approach is
better suited for than the deductive. Furthermore, the inductive approach has been
interpreted according to my own means which implies it has not been followed
meticulously.

3.2 Research method

Quantitative and qualitative are the two acknowledge research methods when it comes
to deciding which approach to choose (Saunders et al., 2016). The purpose of the thesis
and the nature of the research question is what the research method is founded on and is
guiding whether the study should have a quantitative or qualitative approach according
to Holme, Solvang and Nilsson (1997) along with Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009). If
the phenomena can be quantified or the aim is to measure variables which are able to
assume numerical values, the quantitative approach is useful. The mean of quantitative
research is to measure numbers or amounts (Dhawan, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). On
the other hand, the aim is to gain a more extensively understanding about the topic
under informal circumstances, qualitative research serves as a better tool to acquire the wanted data (Dhawan, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, a qualitative research has been applied to this study due to the informal starting point and to the previous limited research within the area.

3.2.1 Qualitative method

Fisher and Parmentier (2010) and Hyde (2000) state that the qualitative method is appropriate when the research question starts with an inquiry adverb such as “what” and when the aspiration is to gain a broad understanding via interviews or observations. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman, (2004) argue the focus lies on the meaning of the empirical data and that the qualitative method relies on an inductive logic of inquiry. Based on the inductive starting point of this study, the qualitative method was appropriate to get a wide understanding and particular insights related to timeplace flexibility. The chosen method offered valuable understandings and perceptions of persons practising leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations. Thus, it provided the study with specific experiences and richness of the data which ought to be fundamental for the study to be conducted. Furthermore, Huberman and Miles (1986) explain that in-depth explanations and connections to the topic can be acquired through the qualitative method. It is significant for this study since there was no theoretical frame on beforehand to relate to and therefore, the provided explanations gained via the interviews served as a basis for the continuation of the study. The interest lies in the experiences and the opinions of the interviewees regarding the role of the leader in a highly timeplace flexible organisation and the differences in the perceptions of the interviewees. Hence, the qualitative method is perceived as most suitable for this study.

Saunders et al., (2016) describe the qualitative method as a manner which is correlated to an interpretative philosophy and the researcher has to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings related to the concept being studied. The sensemaking takes place through the interviews based on the subjective construction of the concept timeplace flexibility which indicates the usability of the qualitative method. By attempting to create a meaning to the subjective concept, flexibility in the method is needed. This is offered by the qualitative method, giving the researcher the possibility to find new areas of interest (Saunders et al., 2016). Since the inductive approach has been applied, the qualitative method goes well in line with that to leave room for new areas...
of interest to arise during the interviews. Additionally, it is out of interest to attain a closeness to the interviewees in order to understand the concept through social interactions with individuals with the relevant experiences (Dhawan, 2010; Holme et al., 1997). Based on the provided arguments, the qualitative method suits this study the best. Furthermore, the study has been conducted in an exploratory nature where open questions with the aim to discover the underlying causes of timeplace flexibility have been used. Saunders et al. (2016) explain exploratory studies to be used when the researcher is in need of clarifying the issue if there are uncertainties regarding the precise nature of it. Supported by aforementioned argument, this study has been conducted in an exploratory nature as the precise nature of timeplace flexibility was uncertain in the beginning and was in need of clarification and insights from experienced people.

3.3 Research design

The purpose of the study decides how the research is going to be designed and with the purpose as the starting point, a plan forms and how to accomplish it (Merriam, 1994; Thomas, 2011). Thus, the purpose of this study is to get an understanding of the leader role in highly timeplace flexible organisations, the plan begun with finding interviewees in highly timeplace flexible organisations which could contribute with their experiences and opinions. Later on, the answers served as a basis in order to construct a literature review which would support and show theoretical links. There are a variety of research designs such as case study, comparative research and survey and sampling etc. (Denscombe, 2014; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) argues case studies are preferred when the research question starts with an inquiry adverb and when it is wanted to gain understandings about a present phenomenon. Merriam (1994) adds that in accordance with a qualitative method, case studies contribute to better understand the phenomenon. Case study as a research design has been used in this study. Due to the limited official knowing about companies which have implemented timeplace flexibility to a larger extent, case study became a suitable choice. Although, if more companies would have implemented timeplace flexibility, case study would still have been chosen to get a deeper insight into the concept.
3.3.1 Case study design

Case study design is used not to examine general elements but instead focus on specific aspects (Thomas, 2011). Case studies can either be regarding a single case or multiple cases (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 2014). For this study, two cases have been used making it a multi-case study. The use of two different cases provided the study with various inputs unrelated to each other but with the common component of both implementing timeplace flexibility to a large extent. This offered different inputs, giving the study several perceptions of the same phenomenon. It is seen as more valuable as it clarifies the concept out of different perceptions instead of doing a single-case study where opinions based on the same circumstances only would have been attained. I argue a multi-case study offered a broader understanding about timeplace flexibility. Notable to add is that the focus is not on the specific cases but instead on the concept itself. The cases serve as examples to give the concept a context. A multi-case study can also be considered to be more credible due to researchers have the opportunity to identify and link similarities and differences while comparing cases (Merriam, 1994; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014).

To examine whether the perception about timeplace flexibility differs or not, the usage of a multi-case study was necessary. This gave a more extended comprehension whether the apprehension of leadership in a highly timeplace flexible organisation would be similar or show upon larger differences depending on different circumstances. The focus is on gaining additional knowledge but not present a general result. Since the study has been conducted during a limited period of time, the time limitation has to be taken into consideration. This is causing restraints in the search for companies which have implemented a high level of timeplace flexibility. However, the two cases are to be seen as sufficient due to the given circumstances.

3.3.2 Sampling

When deciding which units to be studied, it is referred to as sampling. There are two different types, probability and non-probability sampling where the latter one suits better together with a qualitative method (Merriam, 1994). Probability sampling is useful when the findings are to be generalized on to a wider population related to the topic. Nonetheless, this is not the aim of this study, therefore, non-probability sampling has been used in accordance with purposive sampling (Denscombe, 2014). The
purposive sampling involves interviewees being exclusively selected in relation to their knowledge or connection the topic (Denscombe, 2014). The two cases in this study have been selected based on their knowledge and perception of leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations. Both have implemented timeplace flexible structures but not in the exact same manner. Therefore, offering different views regarding the same topic. Both companies are operating within the IT sector. However, this was not a criterion.

3.3.3 Cases

The following respondents participated in the study in order to gather the empirical data.

Company one: Meridium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mats Lindblom CEO/Digital strategist</td>
<td>60min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>2018-04-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Olsson Project Manager</td>
<td>51min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>2018-04-05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Case Meridium

Company two: Invise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik Fernström Founder</td>
<td>54min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>2018-04-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Lidman Project Manager</td>
<td>32min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>2018-04-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Lindgren Account Manager</td>
<td>30min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>2018-04-06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Case Invise

3.4 Data collection

Data collection can take place either through collecting primary or secondary data (Saunders et al., 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) claim that data can either be difficult to measure or concrete and measurable. The importance of the data should not be reduced to whether it is presented in an oral or written form. The essential is the interpretation of the data and the transformation into information made by the researcher
Saunders et al. (2016) argue the contribution of secondary data is often forgotten because the focus lies on collecting primary data. Although, it should not be overridden.

### 3.4.1 Primary Data

Saunders et al. (2016) describe primary data as new data which has been conveyed by a person familiar with the particular phenomenon. In this study, the primary data has been collected via interviews which Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue is one of the most used strategies in combination with a qualitative method. Interviews were chosen to collect primary data because of the opportunity to collect accurate data related to the main concept of the study. Additionally, in combination with the inductive approach, interviews were appropriate to gain more explicit explanations regarding timeplace flexibility and thus, facilitate the identification and interpretations of valuable aspects.

### 3.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is classified as data which has been gathered for another purpose but by reanalysing and put it in a different context, it can become useful again (Saunders et al., 2016). By taking the secondary data in addition to the primary data, the contribution to the study becomes greater and more interesting. Secondary data which has been used in this study comes only from the companies’ web pages in order to present a company description.

### 3.4.3 Structure of Interviews

Three categories of interviews can be recognized: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). Merriam (1994) describes structured interviews as questions set up on beforehand which the interviewer needs to ask in a specific order. The order is applied to all interviews to recreate the same conditions and is not to be changed. Semi-structured interviews are founded on questions constructed in advance but do not have to be questioned in a specific order. The aim is to develop a conversation which will cover the questions meant to be asked and the themes related to the topic (Yin, 2014). Many times, unstructured interviews are used when there is a knowledge deficit about the topic and no questions can be prepared on beforehand. Instead, the aim is to get the interviewee to engage in a conversation about the topic (Merriam, 1994).
Due to the knowledge deficit regarding the relation between timeplace flexibility and leadership, unstructured interviews have been used. The challenge of preparing questions based on limited previous knowledge made the choice of using unstructured interviews evident. The desire was that a conversation based on timeplace flexibility would emerge, and letting the interviewee communicate the experiences and opinions of one own without being guided by any particular questions. The unstructured interview also allowed relevant follow-up questions to be asked depending on which way the conversation took. This meant the same questions were not asked during all interviews, but instead were adapted depending on what the interviewee talked about. For this particular study, unstructured interviews offered the interviewees to give their personal perception and understanding of the topic, generating a broader picture of the causes affecting timeplace flexibility. To facilitate the engagement in conversations, all interviews were conducted face-to-face. I argue face-to-face interviews simplify the interview process when unstructured interviews are used because small indicators such as body language are easier to detect. This facilitates a fast respond and follow-up questions. Although all interviews had the same starting point by letting the interviewees explain how they viewed timeplace flexibility, they developed into different conversations but talked about similar topics. The interviews were conducted between April 5th and April 20th, 2018 and lasted between 30-60 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed to easier show similarities and differences in the data. However, Dencombe (2014) suggests that it is not necessary to transcribe the entire interview but instead focus on the relevant parts in relation to the topic. Thus, irrelevant parts in relation to this study have been left out in the transcripts.

3.5 Quality of research

It is essential that the research can assure reliable and valid knowledge and demonstrate how concepts of the study are relating to the existing research. Furthermore, by presenting a thorough methodology, it enhances the credibility of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). The importance to account for validity and reliability in qualitative studies is greater since it is founded on assumptions regarding reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state the terms of validity and reliability do not refer to qualitative studies. Instead, the rigor of the study should be based on dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability.
3.5.1 Dependability

The study can be seen as dependable if it is conducted by two researchers which have independently examined the same phenomenon under the same circumstances leading to matching conclusions. Another option is for a researcher to observe the same phenomenon but on different occasions where all of the observations separately lead to the same conclusion. It is important to present adequate information about the phenomena which ought to be studied along with information about the social context where the phenomena occur (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability in this study is based on the phenomenon, timeplace flexibility, being examined at different occasions by the same person. I have had five interviews at two different companies, where three interviews took place on the same day but separate, and two interviews on separately occasions. After analysing the interviews, I concluded that all five reached a somewhat similar conclusion, ensuring the dependability. In addition, adequate information about timeplace flexibility has been presented contributing to the dependability of this study.

3.5.2 Credibility

Credibility derives from if the reader finds the conclusions in the study to be trustworthy. It can be enhanced by describing data collection techniques and how the data has been handled (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transcription of interviews and recording them are suggested to increase credibility. The aim is to provide the basis to allow an independent review of the data collected and analysed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

All of the interviews in this study have been transcribed in order to make the study more trustworthy. However, since I am Swedish and all of the interviewees are as well, the interviews were conducted in Swedish in order for the interviewees to be able to express themselves unlimited. It was seen as more valuable to get in-depth and expressive answers, due to the choice of the inductive method, instead of trying to reach more credibility and conduct the interviews in English. Thus, the transcripts are in Swedish, somewhat decreasing the credibility of this study. By providing a thorough methodology chapter, data collection techniques have been accounted for making this study more credible.
3.5.3 Confirmability

To ensure the rigor of the study, the findings conveyed can be independently confirmed by the interviewees in terms of “inter-subjectivity”. An option to achieve it is to let the interviewees audit and agree on the interpretation of the answers made by the researcher and the conclusion of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, respondent validation has been used in this study to try to exclude misinterpretations and reassure the interpretations of the empirical data as it was intended to be in order to create more trustworthiness for the study. Denscombe (2014) suggests respondent validation as a way to try to ensure the propriety of the collected data. Respondent validation means after the empirical data has been compiled and interpreted, it is checked by the interviewees to reassure the material has been interpreted correctly. If that is not the case, the compiled material can be modified to secure trustworthiness (Denscombe, 2014; Merriam, 1994; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.5.4 Transferability

The transferability depends on to what extent the findings of the study can be generalized into other sceneries. In order to do so, the researcher must present detailed explanations of the research context and the processes which constitute the study. By doing so, it is possible for the reader to decide if the findings are applicable to other settings or not (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By describing and arguing for the steps of this study’s research process, transferability can somewhat be obtained since it provides a better comprehension of how the conclusion has been reached.

3.6 Method for data analysis

Yin (2014) describes data analysis to consist of examining, categorizing or in other ways recombine the empirical data to present the empirically based findings. When using case studies, the analysis shall start with putting all the transcripts and collected data together (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). The next step is to reduce the data into themes through a process of coding which will finalize in a table or discussion. The usage of coding is highlighted since the data is divided into meaningful sections (Creswell, 2013). Graneheim and Lundman (2003) describe codes as labels of meaning. The importance of coding is that it should make sense in the particular context and divide the empirical data into categories is a fundamental part of the qualitative content analysis, which is one way of analysing text data.
The qualitative content analysis is a flexible method and the aim is to create an understanding or knowledge regarding the phenomenon in the study. It can be separated into three distinct approaches which are directed, summative and conventional. Depending on the origins of codes and coding schemes, the analysis has its starting point in one of them. The directed approach is based on a theory or relevant research findings that will show the direction for constructing the codes. A summative approach is based on comparing and counting relevant keywords and then understand the underlying context. Whereas in a conventional content analysis, the codes emerge from the empirical data. The conventional approach is commonly used when there is limited previous research regarding the phenomenon and it is desired to create a description of it (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The conventional content analysis has been applied in this study due to limited previous research and to the applicability of allowing categories emerge from the collected data. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) argue that researchers get deeply involved in the data and by doing so, get new insights. This can also be referred to inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which matches the chosen research approach for this study. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain the conventional content analysis is based on words being read separately which show upon key concepts or thoughts, to identify codes. The starting point of analysing the text data was to read all the transcripts as a whole to gain an overall understanding of what the interviewees had said. By underlining key concepts and thoughts, units of significance were identified in all texts. The key concepts and thoughts were then highlighted in different colours to show coherence and facilitate the creation of categories. The interviews were handled case wise to make patterns evident for each case. The coding resulted in four different categories for each case where some were identical and others not. The result of this will be presented in the discussion chapter in accordance with Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggesting that the conventional content analysis unfolds into a discussion regarding relevant theories and empirical findings. Later, the data of all eight categories were scrutinised in order to find common denominators to create overall categories. This resulted in the creation of the categories leadership styles in relation to flexibility, organisational communication and self-management, which constitutes the literature review.
I argue inductive category development has taken place because key concepts arose from the data collection based on underlined key concepts and thoughts. The first categories arose from carefully audit the transcripts and notes and highlight keywords. Later on, a second coding took place which resulted in the theoretical concepts used in the literature review. Although the study has not completely followed the conventional content analysis, much inspiration has been taken from it and interpreted in my personal way to code the gathered data. Since the conventional content analysis is considered to be flexible, this has made it possible for me to adapt it in order to fit this particular study and can be viewed as a simplified version of it.
4 Empirical findings

The upcoming chapter will introduce the collected empirical data of this study. The empirical findings are presented case by case where the identified codes in each case is presented. Every section starts with a brief description about the company as well as the interviewee. The term timeplace flexibility was left out during the interviews since it is a subjective constructed concept. Instead, topics related to the concept were discussed. By analysing the empirical data, different key concepts for each case emerged.

4.1 Meridium

The company started its journey in 2002 and has today around 60 employees, 40 located in Kalmar, Sweden, and 20 employees located in Stockholm, Sweden. Meridium is a turnkey supplier of web solutions such as web analytics and needs analysis for design and development. The headquarters is in Kalmar and a couple of years ago they started to develop participatory management where the title boss was taken away. The employees are working in autonomous teams which are in charge of deciding how they want to work and in charge of all the decisions regarding the team. The teams are also involved in decisions concerning the organisation and the essential is that no one has a bigger mandate to act and decide than anyone else. It is up to each one of the teams to decide regarding working hours and place if someone wants to come in later or work from elsewhere. The interviewees from Meridium were Mats Lindblom and Maria Olsson. Lindblom is the founder and CEO of the company and works as a digital strategist in Kalmar. He got inspired to implement participatory management because he questioned hierarchies and thought there were limitations to optimize the work of the teams. Olsson started working at Meridium five years ago in Stockholm. She is working as a project manager, although the aim is to not have any project managers, there is a need for it in Stockholm due to that the office only has existed for a couple of years and is learning how to use and adapt to participatory management.

Meridium is considered a highly flexible organisation in this study because of the opportunity given to the employees to control their own working process, their time and place. Based on the two interviews, key concepts emerged which were commitment, internal business culture, autonomous teams and leadership coaching.
4.1.1 Commitment

Lindblom describes that the change towards participatory management was something that everybody in the company felt intrigued by and wanted to work towards. He says “[…] I have been interviewed by many and they ask how difficult it has been to implement this, and I think it has been within everybody’s DNA […]”. Nonetheless, it is essential to get everyone to realise the value of being able to affect their own work. Lindblom states that sometimes the change will take a little bit longer and the transition is more difficult because one has to recognize that the organisation is dependable upon individuals. And if the employees are not willing enough to change or adapt, it would not have an impact on the organisation. Therefore, he is very keen on acknowledging the organisation as a learning organisation where it is not all about opinions but rather decisions based on substance.

The emphasis is on commitment towards the company, although he knows he cannot demand the same level of commitment from everybody. Each one is different and has different situations to relate to. Lindblom exemplifies this by saying “We are all different, different family situations. Someone is single and can work a lot while someone else is a single parent, struggling to get the daily activities to go together. It is not possible to require the same.” It becomes a natural outcome of life where not every individual can show the same commitment. Although Lindblom in his position as a leader, wishes to push more people to engage and take responsibility, he is aware of that the organisation will never reach 100% committed employees. But the more commitment among the employees, the better it is for Meridium and the purpose is to get the number of people who engage to increase. The commitment level is based on personal ambitions and incentives. “Engagement demands a big interest and I think it is not about money or carrier goals or something like that, but instead it is about incentives.” Lindblom declares. It has to be accepted that the commitment level is different but it is also important to acknowledge the ones with great engagement. Lindblom explains his vision about his leadership as “A wise man said that the less I am seen and the less I do, more things will happen.” He continues by saying that he has a vision that the aim and the purpose of the organisation are going to be so clear that there is no need for a CEO but instead, the organisation will function as a living organism. However, for that to become possible, the same vision has to be shared completely within the company, which for now is a challenge.
Another challenge Lindblom sees is the difficulties in gathering everybody all at once due to timeplace flexibility. Few meetings are mandatory but to ensure the information gets out to everybody and to facilitate for the employees, the staff meetings are recorded and the meetings are sent online for one to watch as well. However, he views it as his assignment to create commitment and interesting meetings that people want to attend, instead of having them mandatory. He continues by explaining that along with globalization comes a threat towards the organisation in the sense of people are able to work wherever they want. Lindblom states “I think we need, if we are going to be competitive, to use the Swedish culture with participation and knowledge and engagement in order to survive long-term.”. Additionally, he foresees that the next generation is going to be more demanding when it comes to timeplace flexibility, “I believe the next generation is going to demand this type of organisation with increased flexibility and responsibility”, and predicts individuals are going to choose companies to work for based on their personal core values. If the company’s values and the personal values do not match up, the search for a workplace will continue.

Maria Olsson emphasizes the value of being able to partake in decisions regarding the company and believes it generates a lot of commitment. Through participatory management, the employees are included in the decision-making process regarding the organisation. By involving the employees, they feel included in the organisation since the decisions regard them as well instead of decisions being made above their heads. She perceives it as beneficial for the commitment since being involved in decisions makes it easier to see the impact of them and therefore, the desire is to make decisions that are both good for the firm and the employees. In addition, she explains that they have stopped sending emails within the organisation and instead post all the information on their intranet, “Instead of just emailing one particular group, the information is posted for everyone to see so one feel more included and can make another impact.”

Olsson also raises the importance of seeing the organisation as an organisation in a learning process where everyone needs to practise. She draws upon the example of giving feedback where she thinks that with more practice, people will feel more comfortable with giving constructive feedback. However, not all individuals are
comfortable in an organisation like this who strives towards creating a lot of commitment. “Some think it is really comfortable having someone that just walks in and points with their whole hand. They do not want to be involved with different tasks such as recruiting, so it is not for everyone, that is how it is.”

4.1.2 Internal business culture

The internal business culture is not formed by written policies or instructions, explains Lindblom. He believes policies should emerge from the internal business culture for the employees to believe in them instead of them being desktop products. When policies are just constructed and put on paper, there is really no one who believes in them or wants to follow them. Lindblom states that it might look good on paper, but if no one believes in them, no one will follow them either. As an alternative, he believes in creating an internal business culture which displays these policies. He exemplifies by describing it as followed “If I get to choose, I believe in creating a culture where we together set up the rules. Somewhat how it is done in a family. You do not write down a lot of rules but instead, you create a framework to relate to. You create some kind of agreement of how it is acceptable to act.”. Just as in a family, things go wrong. But Lindblom accentuates that it is an organisation in a learning process and if so many things are right, it is not essential to focus on the wrongdoings. He also compares the policy-making to traffic, “There is no one in the traffic who decides who goes first but you have a framework that everyone in the traffic knows about and how it works because it has such a clear purpose.”. Lindblom underlines that a part of his vision is that the employees have to be aware of the organisational purpose and goals that the internal business culture will come as a result of it.

Lindblom acknowledges the difficulties of changing the perception of decision making, that it is still a part of the internal business culture to not completely feel comfortable to make decisions. And he also welcomes a more open feedback culture. His wish is that the internal business culture will encourage employees to make themselves the owner of the problem meaning that if someone does not understand anything, raise the question instead of waiting for someone else to do it, he clarifies it “[…] I am the one that has a problem which I do not understand. It is not Mats who is the problem, who does not explain it correctly.”.
Lindblom says that he can see differences between the office in Kalmar and the office in Stockholm. In Stockholm, there is no internal business culture to rely on and the office is not imprinted by the culture, making the challenges to transition bigger. The offices are at different levels because not all have the same feeling for the brand. In Stockholm, many of the employees have had other jobs before starting at Meridium while in Kalmar, many started their jobs after their studies which Lindblom thinks leads to a feeling of proudness of the brand. It is important to create and spread happiness among the employees and the participatory management has generated a feeling of community. Also, it has helped with reducing the suspiciousness regarding organisational information since everything is transparent. Lindblom says “[…] we are incredibly focused on the staff feeling good.” However, he thinks that timeplace flexibility may somewhat harm the internal business culture and elaborates “I think it would be great if more people were at the office more often because I believe you miss out on the community feel and the buzz in the hallways.” He is slightly concerned about the social aspects taking the toll of timeplace flexibility. Nevertheless, the focus is on the task and if the individual is more productive late afternoon, then it is alright to start working a bit later.

Olsson describes that her aim is to act as a team leader as little as possible since the goal of autonomous teams is to involve everybody in everything. She draws the parallel to the Kalmar office, “[…] the reason why we have team leaders in Stockholm is because we have different conditions with new teams and also higher staff turnover, so it is a different need here. We have different challenges in Stockholm than Kalmar, there it is another type of stability.”. She considers the need for a team leader is because when there is a high staff turnover, there might be a bigger need for structure and the internal business culture has to be well implemented. The need for a team leader decreases after a while and Olsson says “We have worked together for a year and I feel the need of a team leader is much smaller today than it was a year ago.”

Olsson experiences unclarity regarding who is making the final decision about things not related to the teams. Although she sees the participation in the decision making as positive, both in her project manager role and when she gets to partake in organisational decisions. The open internal business culture contributes to an environment where everyone communicates how they are feeling and which improvements can be done.
Olsson states “When we talk about improvements, it is not that individual. Instead, it is about what we can do better in the projects but it does open up for one to be a bit more open regarding one’s own weaknesses as well. And this brings us one step further in giving constructive feedback. And that makes us get to know each other better.”

4.1.3 Autonomous teams

The organisation is divided into autonomous teams. Lindblom explains they implemented the structure because they saw limitations to optimize the work and hinders to create commitment. It was experienced that the decision-making process was too far away from the people it was about and unable to see and experience the daily work of the teams. Lindblom mentions “[...] the decision process was quite slow which resulted in the problems being seen, the classic nothing-happens mentality, I have said something many times but the board does not do anything.”. He continues by explaining that there were many small things which hindered the teams from optimizing their work. Lindblom recognizes a small mistake in the starting phase where they said all boss positions will be taken away. In reality, that was not the case but instead, it came down to nobody having more power to act than anybody else. Yet, many leaders and unofficial leaders took a great responsibility for the organisation and Lindblom describes as “We have become more leaders now but what we did wrong was that we were not clear with communicating that it is the title boss that disappears but the persons who have been bosses before have practiced good leadership and done a lot of the things which have to be done in an organisation.”.

The aim was to get the teams to engage in decisions, not take over all of the responsibility. “All teams are not the same, there are individuals within the teams that have different ways of organizing themselves and some persons are not fitted to have that type of leader role in the teams, then you have to make sure there is support.”, says Lindblom, emphasizing that focus is on creating a foundation of support for the teams. He experiences that the teams can be a bit static, although the organisation is a highly timeplace flexible organisation. The teams can be perceived as having their own subcultures and get really close to each other in the teams which hinder coherent interpretations of visions and learning from each other, “It has come to my knowledge that if one helps another team or is working with that team, one may experience that it is a whole new world. One gets easily caught up in the “own” team but when working
with other teams, one can get a whole lot of new ideas and new ways of working in the “own” team.”. Lindblom aspires to make the teams more flexible in the sense of changing teams and sees it as “Instead of changing company, one can change teams.”. The focus is on the teams feeling good, even when it comes to taking on projects. If no team wants to work with that specific project, it gets turned down. “We are not driven by closing any deal, we are driven by closing the right deal that feels right for the organisation.”, states Lindblom and explains that the company is a service organisation with the desire to sell what the teams want to work with.

Olsson also describes the reason for the implementation of autonomous teams is to bring the decision making closer to the ones who are actually involved in the matter instead of having a boss with poor understanding making the final decision. Olsson underlines that without an assigned boss, the collective responsibility increases along with a lot of individual responsibility as well, “It is founded on that everybody takes responsibility, not only the individual responsibility but also responsibility for each other [...]”. Since she is a project manager, she feels a bit more responsible for complete tasks but she can also often see that someone else is taking the responsibility and is in charge of different questions and tasks. Olsson emphasizes that she has noticed a change where others in the team are taking on more responsibility and engage in the decisions, resulting in sharing the overall responsibility for the success of the project instead of it only being the leaders, “I can see a change from before and maybe that has to do with the teams taking on more responsibility, even for the company. The team takes a larger responsibility within the little group but also overall for the organisation.”. Olsson addresses that although the team responsibility increases, there still has to exist a lot of support.

Olsson resembles the teams with small islands within the organisation, “It might not be perceived as individualistic but rather that all teams have their own ways. It is, to a large extent, up to each and every one or each and every team to do it their own way.”. The individuals become really close in their own teams and Olsson underlines that it might need an extra effort to create a community feeling with other teams. However, the feeling of fellowship in the own team is so deep that she mentions that everyone in the whole organisation is closer to each other now than when it only was one, large team. Olsson mentions some challenges with timeplace flexibility. She explains “It can be
difficult when we are having joint staff meetings. The person might not be active before arriving because the person is doing other stuff or sleeping-in.”. It can become tough for the employees to synchronize and therefore, the emphasis is on creating team agreements regarding how the team wants to work and also take into account the people one work with in the team.

4.1.4 Coaching leadership style

Lindblom describes himself as “I am not that kind of person who likes to keep track of details, I trust people. I want to be involved in the bigger picture, the missionary work, but in the daily work, I see no point of interfering.”. He continues by explaining that his leadership is based on conveying visions and demonstrating how participatory management can work beneficial if one wants it enough. He believes that his leadership style is somewhat situational and characterizes it as “I am basing a lot of things on gut feelings and I believe I am quite good at reading people, how they experience and interpreting things.”. Lindblom considers he has improved at asking questions and listening instead of only taking input or review information from one part only, but instead create a correct image as possible. He says “It is never black or white but there are always nuances towards one way or another. I have become better at asking the organisation questions instead of providing them with the solutions.”. This has resulted in a more coaching leadership style where he is trying to restrain himself to offer the solutions and instead try to figuring out the underlying cause of the issue and helping the employees reaching their own solutions.

As a result, Lindblom has received feedback that he might come across as a bit unclear in some of his decisions, “Because I am not the person who provides the answers and convincing people my way is the right way, I may be perceived as I am not making clear decisions.”. The employees wish for him to communicate if he is going to change and why he is changing his previous way of viewing an opportunity or a problem. To meet the wish of the employees, Lindblom says “I am trying to be as clear as possible when it comes to talking about visions, targets and when it is fact. What is in the near future and what is far away.”. He expresses the importance of getting the employees to understand where the organisation is now and where it is heading. Lindblom expresses a finalizing thought “When it comes to my leadership, my thought is to step outside of the
organisation, slowly but surely, in order to view the organisation and see that the problems are getting solved without me.”

Olsson says that her leadership has become more supportive and coaching as the organisation has transitioned. She explains that leaders and employees have to practice to adapt to that and exemplifies it by talking about the office director. “He [the office director] has practiced on letting go of the control and not interfering in details, so he has taken a step back. And we have to practice on not turning to him in all questions. Especially when it regards more difficult questions. It has been nice to easily just turn to someone. Now we have this problem, how are we going to do it? And now we get the question back “You have to come up with a solution in the team.” That can be a challenge.”. Olsson recognizes that people do not turn to her as a project manager when they are facing a challenge and asking her to solve it. Instead, the issue is solved by the team. The participatory management has involved the responsibility to be divided between more people and Olsson thinks she has gotten more help with the responsibility and says “If you think about a traditional project manager who makes a lot of decisions on its own, I am trying to be inclusive. Everybody is present when a decision is made and I think it is better and is favouring the feeling of responsibility.”.

To summarise, Meridium consists out of autonomous teams where the teams make the decisions and have the responsibility to together complete the assignments. It is important that each individual feels committed towards the team and the organisation in order to make well-founded decisions. Although it is up to the teams to decide how they want to work and act, it is also important that there is a support to rely on from the leader. Commitment and support are generated via the internal business culture, which has to be well founded and integrated into it to work beneficially for the teams.

4.2 Invise

Invise was founded in 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden, and has today around 25 employees. The company is working with inbound marketing and other digital solutions. Gradually, they started to implement free working hours meaning that all the employees decide when they want to work as long as they are working 40h each week. The employees also have the opportunity to work from elsewhere, either at home or after working at Invise for a year, one has the possibility to work from another location such as abroad if
it goes in line with the working tasks. It is up to the individual to try to find a routine that fits oneself and keep track of the worked hours. The employees are working in small teams which facilitate communication and increase commitment and an overall understanding of the company. The interviewees from Invise were Fredrik Fernström, Maria Lidman and Marcus Lindgren. Fernström is one of the founders and got inspired to implement free working hours by ROWE. He realized that he was most efficient during the evenings and thought his employees should also have the option to work when they felt they were as most efficient. Lidman is working as a project manager and ux-designer. She is working with the company’s different web projects and makes sure the developers and designers are keeping their deadlines. Lindgren is working as an account manager and has worked at Invise for almost a year.

Invise is considered a highly flexible organisation in this study because of the employees deciding over their own working hours and that they can choose where to work from either if it is from the office, home or abroad as long as it goes along with the tasks one has to accomplish. Based on the three conducted interviews, key concepts emerged which were employee responsibility, internal business culture, the individual’s need and clarity in communication.

4.2.1 Employee responsibility

Fredrik Fernström questioned the purpose of fixed working hours and viewed it as a way of controlling the employees, “I especially disliked two things. One of them was that I had to be a good example and be here a specific time although I did not think it suited me really well. And the other thing was that I disliked telling someone they were late.”. If a person is doing a good job, the focus shifts from the accomplishment to the fact the person is being late. These thoughts resulted in the implementation of free working hours. Fernström emphasizes that as a leader, he feels like he has the ultimate responsibility, especially when things do not go according to plans. “If things go well, it is me and the team who have the responsibility for it and if it goes bad, I feel a little bit more responsible because in the end, I am steering the ship.”. However, the free working hours do not serve as a control function according to Ferström and he underlines “The more control I apply, the more I am going to feel that I have to be there [the office] the whole time to maintain the control and that is the wrong focus.”
To a large extent, the timeplace flexibility is based on employee trust and responsibility. Fernström describes it as “[...] if I give someone responsibility, a majority sees it as “I have given them a responsibility and they want to care for it”, trust is mutual and that is my perception of it.” He explains that he considers a hierarchy to resemble military ways of doing things and that is not well adapted to fast and dynamic organisations like Invise. Fernström enjoys sharing his responsibility with his employees and considers giving responsibility makes him feel happy and proud. The thought behind implementing free working hours was not because it would get people to work harder, Fernström says and adds “A lot of people believe it is about me giving a responsibility, work harder to keep it.” There should not be a negative driving force behind it but instead, the responsibility should facilitate the work, declares Fernström. He exemplifies it “It should facilitate a routine. Changing an ordinary toothbrush for an electric toothbrush, the toothbrushing becomes a bit more effective. That is my wish for free working hours, an easier way to do a good job without feeling you have nothing to lose.”

Maria Lidman emphasizes the trust she feels towards her team. She can see a minor inconvenience when for example a developer is not on site and a customer has an urgent matter but she says things like that just have to be sorted out. “I experience that things always resolve even if people are not at the office, many are working at home since it is a part of the free working hours, but they are still available.”. Lidman underlines that everybody is adults and take responsibility for their own work and to be punctual. Her task is not telling people what to do but instead, reassure that the deadlines are kept and that the team together accomplish the assigned goal. She thinks the free working hours contribute to people feeling confident to complete tasks when they want to but are aware of that things have to done on time.

Lidman says “I think I do not have to be the one making all the decisions but instead, the persons being an expert on development, of course he or she is going to make the decisions how it should be done in this particular case.” The accent is on making the employees feel as experts in their field as a leader. Since everybody is deciding over their own time, it is up to the team how good the project is going to be. Everybody has a collective responsibility, both towards each other but also towards the organisation.
Marcus Lindgren addresses the increased trust that comes along with timeplace flexibility, “In the same way I work freely, my colleagues do it as well.”. The suspiciousness one can feel towards the colleagues not doing their job because someone goes home earlier, has disappeared and Lindgren says “Here, one has to let go of all thoughts about others because with free working hours, it is about you trusting yourself but also your colleagues.”. Lindgren describes it is all about one doing the work based on one’s own prerequisite and when one is as most productive and effective, as long as it does not affect the client negatively.

Lindgren sees it as a modern way of working which does not demand that one has to work harder based on the given responsibility. “I feel like along with the freedom you give, you want to show and keep it earned by doing your job.”. He experiences the given responsibility as generating loyalty. The opportunity of doing what is best for oneself is highly valued and therefore, one is loyal to preserve that way of working. Lindgren mentions “[...] I think one becomes more self-managed and that one does not need support all the time from the bosses to make a decision.”. His point of view regarding the leadership is that everybody in the organisation is steering the ship together, but with directives.

4.2.2 Internal business culture

Many of the web developers and programmers started out coding and building web pages due to their interest in gaming. They were gaming at nights and simultaneously they got interested in coding and so on, which created a strong culture. Since the company is dependent on developers and programmers, it was desired to maintain that culture and the driving force to conduct the work when it suited the individual which was the beginning of free working hours. Fernström explains that with this background, it became natural that it was a part of the company and the internal business culture.

Fernström sees the timeplace flexibility as something which has strengthens the internal business culture. He explains his thought about it “My perception is that it [the internal business culture] has been strengthened because often things get mechanically and everybody has the same routine and I can experience that to become habitually and not that exciting after a while.” He proceeds by telling that the internal business culture is permeated by a community feeling and that the freedom given to the employees is
contributing to it. The internal business culture also affects the decision-making process. There is a need for discussion and making one’s own opinions heard so the internal business culture has to foster a friendly discussion climate. Fernström states “It is quite common that I say “We want to go here, this is the thing we want to achieve, and we want to become better at this” and what we have to do is discuss the different questions together.”. The aim is to solve it together but Fernström underlines that it is difficult to involve all 25 employees in all decisions.

Lidman does not want the others in the team to feel like she is the project manager that only tells people what to do but says “I want it to feel like we are the same team who work towards the same goal.”. She continues by explaining that she feels as a part of the team who supports and coaches them and not as a boss. Although people have a lot of responsibility, Lidman believes people still find it comforting to have a leader which can provide support and coaching in uncertain situations. Lidman describes that Invise feels like a family and cannot see timeplace flexibility causing any harm to that. “I think people feel it is fun to come into the office and therefore, they come here. Most of us are working from the office but then there is some working from home twice a week but there is no one working from home for an entire week.”. The internal business culture is what is attracting people to come into the office, to have a chat with their colleagues and being a part of the community. Everybody knows how it is working and there are structures to follow and keep in mind although one is in control of one’s own working hours.

Lindgren says it is the internal business culture which aids timeplace flexibility and that is why people do not abuse it. He accentuates the value of having leaders who apply the timeplace flexibility as well, “Because their [the leaders] lifestyles will fit into their work, they need to do what they have to do in the mornings in order to perform on top. And I think that is very impressive, how they choose to spread it to the whole organisation instead of just keeping it on a management level.”. He proceeds by underlining that although people have the chance to work from anyplace, persons choose to come to the office. Because people are not at the office every day, Lindgren believes that when one chooses to work from the office, the time spent there maximizes and the group becomes closer. “[...] I view it as it creates more happiness when everybody is gathered occasionally or when just some stay until the afternoon.”. He
raises the internal business culture above free working hours, as a primary factor which is spreading happiness and not the other way around. Lindgren describes the internal business culture as “I would say our business culture is based on that we are a firm who should think in a modern way. We should think about how we can make it best for the clients and at the same time be a strong company internally. How shall we think and feel internally pride, how shall we become comfortable with each other and our leaders, how shall we be comfortable in our surroundings, everything is prioritized and that makes our business culture strong in the sense that everybody is striving towards the same goal.”. He highlights that one feels as a part of the company and that the leaders are seen as colleagues with a little bit more responsibility for the overall company.

4.2.3 The individual’s need

Fernström is meticulous to point out that every individual needs to find its own routines for creating a “schedule” and that everyone needs to keep track of the hours worked, “It is up to each one to create a strategy for what free working hours mean to you”, he says and continues with saying that everybody can easily adapt it to their own life situation. Fernström recognizes that he has had to adapt his leadership to the implemented timeplace flexibility. He describes it as “It [the leadership] has changed because it has almost become a reversed responsibility. The leadership becomes more, on one hand, it is the visionary part, communicating where we are heading and get everybody gathered around what we want to accomplish and the energy which is borne from it. On the other hand, it is a reversed responsibility. I have to inform everyone that the free working hours serve to make all feel better [...].” Fernström states that the most important thing is for him to see that the employees are happy and feeling good, which leads to him practice a supportive and coaching leadership style. He says he would have practiced it anyway and not because of the high level of timeplace flexibility, but now the focus is different.

Fernström explains that the needs of the individual are a central part and elucidates “We always try to motivate the entire group and the team but I know I have to work with each individual because each and every one has different goals and ambitions and driving forces and to be able to work with each one and make them feel as they are taking a step forward is really valuable, really important.”. Fernström considers the timeplace flexibility to fulfil each individual’s need and it contributes to people not
feeling stressed about being punctual. Timeplace flexibility makes each person more distinctive according to Fernström. “We think it is interesting to know which ones like to come into the office early in the mornings, which ones coming into the office “the ordinary times” and which ones coming in late.”. Regarding people choosing to work from else, Fernström does not see how it could inhibit the development of the organisation unless everyone chooses to be out of office the same day but it is not a slight indication that it would be the case. He also views it as something positive for him since he can apply it as well. Fernström encourages working from elsewhere once in a while and thinks variation is good, “By working from elsewhere, might give you huge reawakening! And that contributes to the work of the colleagues in the office, and they might notice they are getting a darn good job from their colleague working elsewhere and that strengthens everybody and contributes to success.”.

Lidman states “I experience that it is... I am the boss of my own life and then I think free working hours is... It is just how it is supposed to be.”. She continues by underlining that she, as an individual, wants to be in control over her own work and time. Although she puts emphasis on her personal rights as an individual, she says the organisation does not consist of individual players since they are working as a team with a collective goal. Lidman feels that the leaders give a lot of space to do what she wants. Yet, she is comfortable knowing they will assist her if needed. She portraits it as “They [the founders] are very good leaders in that way they let you fly when you can but at the same time, they help you and look after you when needed.”. The focus of the leadership is to make the personal and working life of every individual to go together, states Lidman.

Lindgren considers the leaders to show the collective goal for the employees and welcomes a leader mentality who thinks more about the individuals and not only what oneself thinks about leadership. Furthermore, he emphasizes that it is nice to be a part of a company where the leaders trust him to do the work when he sees it is needed. Lindgren describes his take on free working hours “I felt that free working hours for me was an opportunity to structure my day in the best possible way, so I could get as much out of my energy and, if I wanted to work out during the lunch break, in the morning or when it fits me and still do my job in the best possible way.”. Lindgren says it is about
the individual and when one feels like one is being most efficient at work. However, the leaders still keep track of the job getting done, he adds.

Lindgren explains how he is applying free working hours “I have a six-month-old daughter at home now and I feel it was six months ago I started to apply free working hours differently. I feel I want to work, start a bit later so I can spend some more time with my daughter in the morning and that is fantastic because I become happier and I am doing a better job than if it would have been the other way around and I would have been forced to start early in the morning and not receiving that happiness and then I am just sitting at work, thinking about that I want to go home as soon as possible.”. It is about creating the conditions to make a better job.

4.2.4 Clarity in communication

Fernström states that the leadership involves symbolizing the goals of the company and to show the direction for the employees. He is emphasising that it is up to him to be able to communicate it in a clear way so everybody is onboard what is going to happen, “Each and every one is a part of and forming this company. And this means everyone has to be a part of and making their opinions heard regarding how to reach the goals and so forth.”. It is essential to have a clear communication, especially in a relatively new business area such as inbound marketing. Fernström says he has gotten the feedback from employees that he needs to work on being clearer in his messages. He is aware of that sometimes, implementing changes or decisions may take a bit longer, especially now when the company has grown, and therefore it is needed to be clearer and hold on to the messages a bit longer before everyone is aware of it. “I am certain many people appreciate that we have worked extra hard on clarity in communication the last six months. It creates a better trust because one knows where we are going with the entire company.”. In sense of the free working hours, Fernström does not experience any difficulties in communicating them, “[...] it is so easy to be clear regarding the free working hours and the guidelines that one has to keep track of the worked hours by oneself, having a somewhat balanced pattern, it is working.”. In a company that is operating in a business which did not exist 4,5 years ago, clarity in communication becomes even more important, enhances Fernström.
Lidman thinks timeplace flexibility puts more pressure on clarity in messages because it is easy to communicate what one wants in a meeting face-to-face but she has to think about being clearer when she needs to write it down. She says “I experience that I have to have a clear communication in our online project tool in order for one to be able to accomplish the work tasks anywhere without having to ask someone questions.”. However, it is not about a one-way communication but also persons have to feel comfortable asking questions or saying something when they do not understand instead of just trying to figure it out. She clarifies “So, in the end, it is about good communication both ways, both for me constructing the tasks, I have to be super clear with what has to be done but also the one receiving the information, that person looks at it, sees what needs to be done, and if the person does not understand, ask directly and we will sort it out instead of the person just wondering about it and it ends up wrong.”. Lidman concludes with emphasizing three things for the leadership to work smoothly in a highly timeplace flexible organisation: openness, communication and clarity.

Lindgren experiences the leadership within the organisation to be very democratic and there is a wish from the leaders to hear what the employees think and have to say about how it is possible to bring the company forward. He says “I think they [the leaders] want to hear what we think and feel because they understand we are a large part of the company they have built and they understand the thought and energy one should put on the individuals because that is what is the company, all persons working with our clients, taking care of the dialogues and practical things, there is where the company is.”

To summarise, it is up to the individual to decide the working hours and place at Invise. The internal business culture is important to create a community feeling and an environment where people feel comfortable to make their opinions heard. The internal business culture also fosters support, both from the leader and colleagues. The individual’s needs are in focus and how one can combine work with the personal life in the best possible way. This is to create happy employees that are doing a better job because they are satisfied. To make sure all employees are striving towards the same goal, communicating collective goals clearly is essential.
5 Discussion

The following chapter will contain a discussion, where the empirical findings are discussed and connected to the literature review in order to understand the empirical data. The structure of the discussion will follow the structure in the literature review.

By discussing and analysing the empirical findings and connect them to relevant theories, the empirical data can easier be understood. The discussion will be presented according to the concept in the literature review with insights from all interviewees.

5.1 Leadership styles

Out of the gathered empirical findings, it can be found that all of the interviewees emphasize and value how the leaders communicate their visions. Lindblom at Meridium and Fernström at Invise, both underline it is essential to communicate a clear vision to the employees. The other interviewees highlight the need of receiving a vision from the leader which indicates the importance of the leader stating the visions for the company. This can be linked to Goleman’s (2000) description of the authoritative leadership style where a part of the style relates to communicating clear visions and seeing the leader as a visionary. Goleman (2000) argues it offers an understanding to the employees how their work contributes to the good of the organisation and can explain why all interviewees see it as an important part of the leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations because visions show the way of where the organisation is heading.

The interviewees from Invise accentuate the individual’s need and differences as an important factor which leaders have to acknowledge in highly timeplace flexible organisations. It is mentioned as a reason for the implementation of timeplace flexibility and Fernström acknowledges it is important to see the different goals and ambitions everyone has. Also, Lindblom (Meridium) stresses individual differences which a leader has to take into account. One cannot demand the same from everybody nor from the teams. Both Lidman and Lindgren at Invise consider it valuable that the leaders and organisation cater to their individual needs. This is something which Goleman (2000) and Vesterinen et al. (2012) relate to as a part of the affiliative leadership style and can be seen to encourage sharing inspiration and ideas in the organisation. The style does well for team harmony and communication which all interviewees highlight as
important to make the organisation function well. Although Goleman (2000) claims that the affiliative leadership style does not offer hands-on problem solving to the employees, this is something Fernström and Lindblom view as something good in relation to the highly timeplace flexible organisational structures the companies have and they want their employees to figure out the problems on their own.

At Meridium, the employees are divided into autonomous teams to facilitate the decision-making process and to encourage that everyone’s opinion is heard. Also, at Invise it is important to take the opinions of the employees into account when making a decision this would mean a democratic leadership style is practised in the organisations according to Gastil (1994) and Pauley and Pauley (2009). Another aspect is also the distribution of responsibility which Fernström and Lidman at Invise and Lindblom and Olsson at Meridium, all address as significant to make timeplace flexibility function well. Lindgren at Invise sees the increased given responsibility from the leaders as something good which contributes to him doing a good job. Lindblom (Meridium) states the value of commitment to the company which can be described by involving the employees in the decision-making process according to Goleman (2000). The significance of employee involvement, responsibility and commitment are apparent in both organisations which consequently imply a democratic leadership style is practised (Gastil, 1994; Goleman, 2000; Pauley & Pauley, 2009).

The empirical data shows that an important part of the leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations is the support and coaching given by the leaders. Lindblom and Olsson at Meridium accentuate that the organisation is learning and therefore, the support and coaching become significant when individuals are trying to solve problems. Although the individual responsibility is high, the need for leader support is still essential in order for people to feel comfortable making decisions and trying new things, which is a shared opinion by Lidman and Lindgren at Invise as well. A vital part of the leader support is asking questions regarding the challenges ahead of the employees and how to solve it together which both Lindblom (Meridium) and Fernström (Invise) raise as important. The need for support and coaching can be aligned with Goleman’s (2000) explanation of the coaching leadership style. This means the support and coaching are important for the employees to realize their own weaknesses and strengths. According to Goleman (2000), the coaching leadership style goes well in
hand with timeplace flexibility which can explain why the interviewees indicate it as an important factor. The need for extensively and good communication within the organisation is also underlined by all interviewees which also can be linked to the coaching leadership style (Goleman, 2000). Also, something Goleman (2000) and Yukl (2012) bring up is the encouragement of clarity, responsibility, commitment and problem-solving ability which are related to the coaching leadership style and can create an understanding why it is partly being practised in highly timeplace flexible organisations.

Lindblom (Meridium) is basing his leadership on gut-feeling and states he sees it as situational since he is doing what feels right for the moment. Olsson (Meridium) emphasizes that within the autonomous teams, there can sometimes be someone else who takes charge of the project and she, as a project manager, has to adapt to that. Also, Fernström (Invise) stresses that since he takes a large interest in the personal goals and ambitions of his employees, each individual is different and is in need of different support and the leadership has to be adjusted accordingly. Aforementioned can be identified as fluid or situational leadership (Goleman, 2000; Yukl, 2012). Lindblom (Meridium) and Fernström (Invise) both adapt their leadership according to what is needed in the current situation which can be explained as a way to meet the task and relationship goals in the companies (Yukl, 2012). Grounded in the abovementioned discussion, the leaders and employees in the two companies highlight distinctive aspects which can be connected to specific leadership styles. Since the distinctive aspects solely correlate partly to the specific leadership styles, it can be further aligned with situational leadership which can be derived from Goleman’s (2000) argument that a combination of different leadership styles inspires timeplace flexibility, responsibility, clarity and commitment, which are all wanted attributes that the interviewees address. The leadership styles identified in the empirical data are authoritative, affiliative, democratic and coaching which is aligned with the proposition by Goleman (2000) as the ultimate combination to gain the wanted attributes.

5.2 Organisational communication

A shared vision within the company is something Lindblom (Meridium) and Fernström (Invise) both accentuate as very important. Both of them have gotten the feedback from employees that their visions are not clear enough to be followed and it is something they
are working to improve in the sense of stating what is a vision and what is fact. Lindblom is emphasizing the importance of trying to get all employees to share the same vision for the company as he has. This is something which Papa et al. (2007) refer to as a fundamental part of organisational communication. The creation of a shared meaning within the organisation will facilitate how the firm is managed.

Lindgren (Invise) sees it as the leader’s task to communicate the collective goal and Lidman (Invise) addresses that the clarity of the messages becomes even more important in a highly timeplace flexible organisation when they have to be put down in writing. Both Lidman (Invise) and Lindblom (Meridium) share the opinion that it is not solely about how the leader is communicating the message but also, the employees have to say something when they do not understand. The shared visions will help create an internal business culture. However, it can be seen from the other way around as well, the internal business culture is helping everybody to see the same visions which Segerfeldt (2002) brings up as an option to clarify the messages of the leader. By creating an agreement of norms, it is more likely a similar interpretation of the messages takes place among the employees.

The community feeling is something which permeates both companies and Olsson (Meridium) underlines that an open internal business culture makes people feel comfortable to communicate how they are feeling and make them more open to improvements. Also, Lidman (Invise) and Lindgren (Invise) are sharing the opinion that the internal business culture supports timeplace flexibility. Due to the role the internal business culture plays in both companies according to the interviewees, it can be connected to the interpretative perspective (Papa et al., 2007) which tries to explain the norms and values in a company in relation to the employees’ actions. This would explain the great role internal business culture plays in relation to communication and the creation of a shared meaning. Papa et al. (2007) state the internal business culture is founded in shared meanings rising from good communication and can be linked to Lidman’s (Invise) keywords regarding leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations (openness, communication and clarity.). The need for it as all interviewees stress can be explained by the opportunity to better anticipate market changes (Segerfeldt, 2002). Both Fernström (Invise) and Lindblom (Meridium) consider their
organisations to be dynamic in a rapidly changing business sector which can be linked to Segerfeldt’s (2002) argument.

The gathered empirical data indicate Meridium and Invise to use heterarchy systems because of the self-organizing, non-hierarchical systems in the companies (Hedlund, 1986). Lindblom and Olsson at Meridium state the reason for implementing autonomous teams was mostly because the decisions were to be made by the people actually having the knowledge related to them. Lidman at Invise underlines how important it is to make the individuals feel as experts within their field and letting them make the decisions related to it. In line with Fernströms (Invise) opinion about how a hierarchy is not suited for fast and dynamic organisations, it goes in line with Aime et al. s’ (2014) explanation about how the knowledge and responsibility are spread out through the organisation. Heterarchy also facilitates fast responses to market changes since the employees are able to use their expertise and act upon it. Heterarchy increases autonomy, which both Lindblom and Olsson at Meridium highlight as an important factor for the organisation. At Meridium teams are autonomous whereas at Invise it is more the individuals who are autonomous. The autonomy is emphasized as important by all interviewees and can be associated with heterarchy since autonomy increases in organisations with heterarchy. Furthermore, heterarchy is in need of good communication which has previously been addressed in this discussion as an important factor. Lindblom and Olsson stressed it is important to acknowledge that the organisation is continuously learning which is something addressed by Aime et al. (2014).

Although there is a high level of autonomy in both organisations but it expresses itself differently, the need for support from the leader is a present aspect which has previously been discussed. All of the interviewees express that information exchange in form of communication, support and input in decisions are valuable factors and can be linked to the significance of the leader establishing high-quality LMX relationships with the employees (Mueller & Lee, 2002). Lindblom (Meridium) perceives that with the implementation of the participatory management, the organisation has gotten more unofficial leaders which can facilitate the creation of high-quality LMX relationships in the organisation. Since not everyone is turning to the official leader resulting in more
high-quality relationships being established without other relations have to leave room for them due to the limited resources of a leader (Mueller & Lee, 2002).

Fernström (Invise) pinpoints the aspect of involving the employees in the decision making-processes and they have to be able to make their opinions heard but it is up to him to show the direction. Due to the growth of the company, Fernström has perceived that he needs to give the employees more time for the message be understood. This is something Pauley and Pauley bring up (2009) and can be explained that all individuals perceive the message and the organisation according to six different types. The different perception types can be a cause for misunderstanding (Pauley & Pauley, 2009) and explain why all interviewees emphasize on clear communication as a substantial part of the leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations.

5.3 Self-management
The element of self-management contributes to the emergence and implementation of the heterarchy systems in the organisations. Although it expresses itself differently in Meridium and Invise, both Lindblom and Fernström raise it as a factor to fulfil the needs of the employees which they consider very important. This means the companies are fulfilling the needs of the employees which Goncalo and Staw (2006) explain are necessary so the personal values can be pleased firstly in order to, later on complete the organisational goal. Without the personal values being satisfied, the individual would not have the motivation to achieve the organisational goal (Goncalo & Staw, 2006).

Lindblom (Meridium) predicts individuals are going to demand more self-management and care for their personal values more than the values of the company. This prediction can be linked to De Vos and Soens (2008) which state individuals are driven by their personal values more than the objectives of the company. Fernström emphasizes that timeplace flexibility is based on trust, personal responsibility and the individual managing her or his time. The motive to give the employees the opportunity to manage one’s own time can be found in De Vos and Soens (2008) argument that it ensures the individual to reach both the personal and company goals.

At Invise, Fernström and Lindgren accentuate the needs of the individual as a reason for timeplace flexibility, when the person feels most comfortable working and how it best fits the individual’s personal life. This is addressed by Gundlach et al. (2006) as a way
for individualists to create an identity. Since the identity is based upon self-concepts, it can be difficult to identify as an essential part of a team. However, this was not addressed by any of the interviewees. Instead, Olsson (Meridium) perceives that the persons in the company do not become individualists due to timeplace flexibility. Still, the teams create a strong collective feeling of belonging on their own which might make it harder to relate to other teams. Lidman (Invise) experiences that everyone is focusing on their own work but that the collective goal is what everyone is striving for to accomplish. This can be linked to Goncalo and Staw (2006) where they argue individualism in organisations can be seen as horizontal individualism in order to understand it. Consequently, all employees have the same premises and independence within the organisation causing no difficulties in establishing groups because people can relate to and understand each other.

Lidman (Invise) emphasizes that everyone has a collective responsibility, towards each other and the organisation, which goes before the individualistic goals. Lindgren believes one becomes more self-managed when given the opportunity of adapting the work according to one’s personal life. Fernström (Invise) states it is up to each individual to create its own working routine and it is the needs of the individual that matters. Fernström emphasizes that although he tries to motivate the entire group, it is important to support the employee in their individual goals and ambitions. He proceeds by stating each individual becomes more distinctive as a person. Manz and Sims (1980) explain that the role of a leader working with self-managed employees becomes more supportive. The leader needs to support the employees in order for them to develop goal specification and skills on how to self-manage in order for timeplace flexibility to work well. It can be linked to Fernström’s explanation why he sees a need for working with the individual. Lidman (Invise) highlights the importance of feeling in control of her work and time. Nilsson and Waldermarsson (2013) describe it as it is the need for control of one’s own time and life that is demanding businesses to adapt their business structures which would explain the implementation of highly timeplace flexibility into the organisations.

Lindgren (Invise) emphasizes on a leadership which focuses more on the individual and not only how the leader wants to manage the organisation, it is about creating the conditions for the individual to make a better job. Langfred (2007) highlights leaders
providing their employees with skills of managing themselves instead of waiting for the individuals to figure it out on their own. This means conditions are created by the leader so the employee can improve the working process.

At Meridium where the employees work in autonomous teams, Lindblom underlines that the team get really close to each other and start to create somewhat subcultures to the internal business culture which can prevent all individuals in the organisation to make a similar interpretation of the leader’s vision. The opinion is shared by the colleague Olsson who explains that each team has its own way of doing things. The subcultures can be seen as informal communication systems which Hofstede (1984) describes are based upon cooperation in the teams. This facilitates achieving the group goal and eventually, the organisational goal and the strong bonds created in the teams offer support to the individuals (Hofstede, 1984).

However, Lindblom emphasizes it is up to the teams to set a framework for the individuals to suit the collective. This is also something Olsson underlines that if the team does not have a framework, it can be hard to synchronize the whole group. This can be linked to Goncalo and Staw (2004) which explains that even if an overall vision is shared, the organisation will still consist of independent individuals with different personality traits meaning if no mutual agreement is reached, the teams will consist of independent persons. Fernström (Invise) states the community feeling in the company is strengthen by the employees when they are doing their own thing because it prevents the company to get caught in a specific routine. The emphasis is on internal business culture, subcultures and the community feeling by the interviewees can be connected to Goncalo and Staws’ (2006) argumentation regarding organisational cultures serving as control systems. Via social control based on accepted norms and values, individuals know what is socially acceptable and what is not in the organisation. If the norms are broken, it will immediately be addressed by the other persons. Due to lack of permanent structures and rules, the social rules may play a bigger part and how control is practised in highly timeplace flexible organisations.

Also, Lidman (Invise) highlights the collective goal and it is important that the team is working towards the same goal. Lindgren (Invise) considers that a part of the leadership is to show the common, organisational goal for everyone. This is a shared view with
Fernström, who sees symbolizing the goals of the company and showing the direction as part of the leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations. The emphasis on collective goals can partly be aligned with collectivism according to Hofstede’s (1984). Joint efforts and accomplish organisational goals are cherished in collectivism and overtrump the personal values (Hofstede, 1984). Although the interviewees underline the collective organisational goal as important, it does not surpass the needs of the individual. Also, Goncalo and Staw (2006) and Nilsson and Waldermarsson (2013) address group harmony and collectivistic goals as priorities before personal goals of the employees of collectivistic nature. Collectivistic goals are raised as important by the interviewees but not as a priority over personal goals which Fernström (Invise) and Lindblom (Meridium) acknowledge in their roles as leaders.

Lindblom perceives it is important that he demonstrates how participatory management can work beneficially for all the employees as well. Also, Lindgren (Invise) points out the value of having leaders practising the timeplace flexibility as well and sees it as inspiring. This is something Manz and Sims (1980) discuss as an important factor when a leader is working with self-managed employees. By personifying the timeplace flexible structures, the leader is showing how the employees can apply it to their situations and guide them indirectly.
6 Conclusion

This chapter will exhibit the answers to the research question, which derives from the discussion conducted in the previous chapter. Furthermore, theoretical and practical implications of the thesis will be given. Limitations along with suggestions for further research conclude this chapter.

The competitive conditions of business and the demands of employees to be in charge of their own lives pushes companies to increase timeplace flexibility. The wish for higher motivated and effective employees results in a more self-managed business structure which can facilitate to combine the personal life and the working life. Although the goal of the organisation cannot be overlooked, leaders have to balance guiding employees and reassure the financial performance of the firm. As a result, leaders in highly timeplace flexible organisation have to adapt the leadership according to the different demanding situations. By increasing timeplace flexibility, the employee responsibility increases and the individual’s needs are taken into account.

The study has led to a conclusion that the role of the leader in a highly timeplace flexible organisation is very versatile but based on some fundamental pillars. The leader must create commitment among the employees to the overall organisational goal in order for the employees to feel as their work matter. Commitment is important in highly timeplace flexible organisations because individuals are responsible for their own work and if they work elsewhere than the office, commitment is valuable since there is no one pushing one to complete the work. An essential part of the leader’s role in highly timeplace flexible organisations is to be responsive to the employee’s individual feelings. I argue when the needs of the individual are highly valued, the demand of the leader increases in the sense of recognizing and identifying when the person is in need of support or guidance. It puts more pressure on the leader to notice a malfunction behaviour since the employees or the leader is not on sight every day. The individual responsibility is high in timeplace flexible organisations but does not exclude the need for support and guidance from the leader. By supporting the employees, the leader gives enough security for the employees to try on their own but knowing there is support in times of needs. The role of the leader in highly timeplace flexible organisations is not to keep track of everything but instead partake a supervising role to ensure the
organisational goals are met. Since the individuals have a lot of responsibility to complete their own tasks, the interfering of the leader is unnecessary.

The core of leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations is communication. The need for clear messages becomes more vital to reduce misunderstandings when individuals are not on the same place, the same time. The clarity of the message also fosters a coherent understanding of the organisational goal. A clear communication is needed when the collective goal is communicated. Although, highly timeplace organisations are influenced and driven by individualistic values, the collective goal is what keeps the organisation on the same path. The challenge for the leader is to find a balance to satisfy both the individual and collective goals. The foundation of timeplace flexibility is yet to fulfil individualistic values and are prioritized over collective. However, by fulfilling the individual needs, it can be seen as a contribution to the collective good. The interdependence between individual and collective values are essential and dependent on each other where the individual values are motivating and making the person more effective and the collective values showing the way. The collective goal is in need of the leader demonstrating it and communicating it which leads to a visionary role.

The direct control of the leader is less visible in highly timeplace flexible organisations. Instead of direct control from the leader, it can be concluded the control is practiced via the internal business culture. By establishing a strong internal business culture based on a feeling of community and familiarity, individuals are keen not to break the social norms and values constructed in the organisation. Thus, ensuring employees to do the assigned work. It is the internal business culture which serves as a subtle control function whereas the leader enables the structures of the internal business culture.

I argue leaders in highly timeplace flexible organisations are influenced by situational leadership because of the need to adapt the leadership both to every individual but also to the collective as a whole. Although the employee responsibility is high, the leader responsibility becomes more evident when something goes wrong since in the end, it is still up to the leader to make sure the whole company is successful. That is also why I consider the leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations cannot be aligned with MBO. This means the leader would have to be the expert in all areas to be able to
estimate the needed work time in order to delegate the tasks and goals for the employees. Delegation is not a significant part in highly timeplace flexible organisations due to the employee responsibility. The leader is playing a bigger role than anticipated even though, the responsibility of completing task has shifted to the employees and they are managing their own time and place. The need of a leader in highly timeplace flexible organisations is still apparent for the individual, collective and organisational well-being. By offering direction in form of communicating collective goals and give support, but not interfering with the individual tasks, the leader partakes a role as a visionary and supervisor.

To finalize and answer the research question, the role of a leader in a highly timeplace flexible organisation is to tie all loose ends together. This means the central role of the leader is to be a visionary and communicating the collective goals to the entire group and make sure the message is coherently interpreted. While at the same time, act supportive, coaching and care for the individual’s needs which can be related to focus on soft values. The control manifests itself as the internal business culture instead of direct control from the leader. I argue, taking these aspects into consideration are essential in establishing a good leadership in a highly timeplace flexible organisation.

6.1 Theoretical implications

There is limited research regarding the connection between timeplace flexibility and leadership in organisations. Little has been done in the research area on what the role of the leader is in organisations which have adopted a high level of flexibility in regard to time and place. However, extensive research can be found on the impact timeplace flexibility has on the well-being of the employees. Yet, research on the influence of timeplace flexibility on leadership is underdeveloped. By conducting this study, an addition to the research field regarding the role of the leader in timeplace flexible organisations has been made. Findings of the study indicate the leader to have a meaningful role in the organisation with emphasis on soft values.

Thus, a theoretical contribution on the area has been made by presenting relevant theoretical concepts in accordance to timeplace flexibility and leadership. The study demonstrates the link between leadership styles, organisational communication and self-
management in relation to timeplace flexibility and leadership to easier understand the connection. Hence, it can serve as a suggested theoretical framework for further studies.

6.2 Practical implications
The empirical findings indicate that the leader plays a significant role in highly timeplace flexible organisations although employees have a lot of responsibility and somewhat practise self-management. Thus, an understanding of the components of a leadership in highly timeplace organisations is valuable in order to adapt the leadership in accordance with the organisational structures. An increase in highly timeplace flexible organisational systems is predicted and therefore, the knowledge regarding the role of the leader can simplify the transition from permanent structures for organisations. The attained knowledge from the study can also be of interest for leaders to know what kind of traits and skills to develop in order to enable and facilitate timeplace flexibility for employees.

6.3 Limitations
The number of companies that have implemented highly timeplace flexible systems are known as few which caused a limitation in gathering empirical data from various companies, in various sectors. Both cases operate in the IT-sector and make the results difficult to apply to other companies operating in other sectors. The findings are based on two cases and five interviews whereas additional interviews would have provided extensive data. Another limitation was that timeplace flexibility took its expression differently in the two companies, participatory management at Meridium and free working hours and place at Invise. Although the companies showed similarities, studies within the specified timeplace flexibility could show upon more detailed results.

6.4 Suggestions for further research
Because of limited research in the field of timeplace flexibility and leadership, there are multiple potential interesting research areas. In relation to this study, the further research suggestions presented can be viewed as an extension of this study or seen as more interesting in my opinion.
• **Research regard internal business culture as a control function in highly timeplace flexible organisations.**

   By looking at an organisation’s internal business culture, it can be seen what factors are contributing to establishing it and to what extent it can serve as a control function when there is less direct control from the leader. By doing so, a deeper knowledge can be acquired regarding the importance and impact of an internal business culture in highly timeplace flexible organisations.

• **To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership in highly timeplace flexible organisations.**

   Since soft values are emphasized in the leadership of leaders in highly timeplace flexible organisations, it could be interesting to see if there is a connection between emotional intelligence and the leadership in this type of organisations. By doing so, wanted characteristics of a leader can be identified and what a leader should focus on.
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