

# **ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

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**A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ACTIVITY-BASED  
WORKING ON EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF JOB QUALITY**

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## **One Size Does Not Fit All: A Qualitative Study on the Impact of Activity-Based Working on Employees' Perceptions of Job Quality**

### Abstract:

In the ever-changing modern economy, novel approaches to mobile and flexible office practices to support knowledge-intensive work are emerging. One such concept is activity-based working (ABW), which has shown to have both positive and negative effects for organizations. The aim of this thesis has been to study the influence of ABW on employees' perceptions of job quality, in an empirical context that has not yet given the individual characteristics and needs of employees much consideration. A study with 47 employees working within eleven different organizations using activity-based flexible offices has been conducted through asynchronous online interviews via a web survey. The empirical data collected was then analyzed with six dimensions of job quality combined with the integrated workstyle approach. One of the main findings was that the perceptions of ABW seem to be largely shaped by the employees' respective job descriptions. Further, this thesis also considers whether or not ABW could potentially be a management fad.

### Keywords:

Activity-based working, activity-based flexible office, new ways of working, workstyle, job quality

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## Definitions

**New ways of working (NWW):** “Non-traditional mobile and flexible work practices, settings and locations using sufficient ICT tools—as a novel approach to improve the performance of a knowledge-intensive organization” (Ruostela et al., 2015). In this thesis used as an umbrella term, under which ABW is included as one such approach.

**Activity-based working (ABW):** A workstyle used by organizations involving an A-FO layout.

**Activity-based flexible office (A-FO):** An office type distinguished by two features: (1) workspace diversity and (2) non-territorial desk-sharing (Babapour and Rolfö, 2019).

**Traditional office:** An office type where “people are located according to the department they work for, or their hierarchical position” (van Koetsveld and Kamperman, 2011).

**Workstyle:** “A recognisable and accepted system, which influences how people work with each other and with the provided workspace and tools” (van Koetsveld and Kamperman, 2011).

**Job quality:** A context-specific version of the ten dimensions of job quality identified by European Commission (2001), encompassing: (1) work environment and health, (2) communication and technology, (3) flexibility and work-life balance, (4) autonomy and intrinsic motivation, (5) skills and work performance and (6) relations and social belonging.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Much like the Industrial Revolution did more than two centuries ago, the Information Revolution is fundamentally changing the way we live and work today. Exponential technological advances and digital breakthroughs are having a profound effect on how we communicate, learn and socialize, and an increasing number of organizations has consequently begun to redesign their approach of organizing and managing people (Maitland and Thomson, 2014). Central to this new approach is the focus on autonomy, flexibility and work-life balance, whereby employees have the ability to decide when they work (temporal flexibility), where they work (spatial flexibility), and how (e.g. through which communication medium) they work. These flexible workstyles, referred to as *new ways of working* (NWW), have received a lot of praise, as they intend to not only support contemporary knowledge work, but to also make work processes more efficient and reduce organizational costs (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012).

One such concept is the office design strategy termed *activity-based working* (ABW), where permanently allocated private offices and desks are discarded, and the office space is rearranged with various areas tailored to support different work activities; such as meeting areas, hubs for group work, cubicles, lounges, phone booths and multimedia rooms (Parker, 2016). The interest in activity-based working has been growing rapidly across Scandinavia in recent years (Leesman, 2017), and the workstyle is progressively introduced to companies in countries such as the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand (Van Koetsveld and Kamperman, 2011).

Despite the promise of the *activity-based flexible office* (A-FO) to provide better employee satisfaction and increase productivity, a number of problems with the workstyle has been observed in the research literature. While some organizations see major benefits and improvements associated with the implementation of ABW, others seem to experience negative effects. It appears to be a way of working that simply does not fit all organizations (Skogland, 2016). In the academic sphere, a lot of attention has been paid to the overall functional effects of ABW on the organization as a whole, while little consideration has been given to the individual employee (Wohlers and Hertel, 2017). This leads to the question of what aspects concerning the employees as individuals could contribute to the explanation of why activity-based working is beneficial for some, and disadvantageous for others.

Within the management field, there are trends and fashions that come and go—transitory managerial beliefs and concepts aimed at encouraging better organizational performance (Gibson and Tesone, 2001). These interventions, generally expressed as “management fads”, are often widely accepted, but seldom universally applicable. The

authors find the huge growth in popularity of ABW, together with its seemingly varying success, as a good reason to explore whether it is actually worth the hype, or if this trendy “must-have” could potentially be just another management fad.

## 1.2. Literature Review and Research Gap

### 1.2.1. New Ways of Working

Despite their immediate association with the changing modern economy, NWW practices are by no means new. As early as 1969, the Austrian architect Hans Hollein created an art installation called the “Mobile Office”, which served as a demonstration of Hollein’s vision of the workplace in the age of telecommunications (Van Meel, 2011). Contemporaneously, influential management writers and academics started to anticipate the rise of a “post-industrial society”, in which factory production would give way to knowledge work, and information technologies would play an important role (Drucker, 1969; Toffler, 1970; Bell, 1974).

One of the earliest extensive studies on “radically new” office concepts is a field experiment from 1970, when a group of IBM product engineers moved into a new, non-territorial office space without walls or permanent work stations (Allen and Gerstberger, 1971)—a project that turned out to be successful. In a later study for a Los Angeles-based insurance company, the American researcher Jack Nilles, who coined the term “telecommuting”, found that an option to work from home or satellite offices would be beneficial to the company, although people may be hesitant due to the strong social function of being physically at work (Nilles et al., 1976).

While new office concepts were much discussed in the 1970s, they were in no way mainstream in management practice. But in the past few decades, information and communications technology (ICT) has undergone rapid development, and we increasingly rely on knowledge and good ideas rather than physical labor (Blok et al., 2011). In parallel to this, hierarchical structures have gradually been replaced by more flexible network models, and research on different aspects of modern workspace design and its potential for creating business value has flourished (De Paoli et al., 2013). After ten to 20 years of experimentation, there is a growing body of research showing both positive and negative effects of NWW. Alternative offices have been found to facilitate working, socializing and learning (Haynes, 2007; Heerwagen et al., 2004). Studies also suggest they are considered to increase employees’ motivation, job satisfaction and productivity (Vuolle, 2010; Peponis et al., 2007; Veitch et al., 2007). Negative impacts comprise employees’ perceived privacy, increased noise, distractions, loss of status and lack of individual control over the work environment (De Croon et al., 2005; Maher and von Hippel, 2005).

Earlier research points out that the impacts of NWW initiatives are not self-evident and that there is a further need for empirical evidence on how the introduction of different types of flexible office practices affect operational objectives (Blok et al., 2011; Laihonon et al., 2012). Several contributions have been made to provide such evidence. Some studies suggest there is a variety of business performance benefits that may be achieved using NWW practices (Ruostela et al., 2015). As many of these have focused on outcomes for business value, few studies have addressed pros and cons for employee outcomes (Blok et al., 2011).

### 1.2.2. Activity-Based Working

The idea of activity-based working was first introduced by Stone and Luchetti (1985) in their article “Your office is where you are”. Eleven years later, the Dutch consultancy firm Veldhoen + Company established ABW in practice, and has since promoted and installed the concept in many organizations worldwide (Parker, 2016).

In the research literature, A-FOs are held to be beneficial, as they may reduce operating costs, increase organizational flexibility, facilitate a more pleasurable and sustainable work environment, increase employee satisfaction through individual flexibility as well as promote an image of being a low-hierarchical and modern organization (Bodin Danielsson and Bodin, 2008; Van der Voordt, 2004; Vos and van der Voordt, 2001; Bradley, 2002). They have further been argued to increase collaboration and flow of information and learning, contributing to a sense of community, and thereby boosting productivity (Blakstad and Andersen, 2013; Vos and van der Voordt, 2001; De Paoli et al., 2013; Allen and Gerstberger, 1973). In comparison to traditional offices, A-FOs have been found to receive higher scores in terms of job satisfaction, health and well-being (Danielsson and Bodin, 2008), as well as lower reported levels of distraction (Seddigh et al., 2014).

Research on A-FOs are, however, characterized by mixed and contradictory findings (Gorgievski et al., 2010; Vos and van der Voordt, 2001; Ruostela et al., 2015). For instance, Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2011) found that employees working in A-FOs showed low levels of productivity, health and satisfaction. Meijer et al. (2009) revealed, in contrast, that A-FOs had no or limited short-term effects on fatigue and productivity, and even positive health effects in the long-term. Similarly, Orbach et al. (2014) found that employees working in A-FOs, as opposed to traditional offices, had a stronger internal network and a higher proportion of face-to-face contact, while Millward et al. (2007) found the exact opposite.

In comparing two organizations which both used A-FOs, Van der Voordt (2004) found a decrease in perceived productivity and satisfaction in one, while an increase in the other. Due to the inability to personalize the office space (e.g. by displaying physical artefacts) to the same extent as in a traditional office, A-FOs may lead to employee

identity threat, reduction in psychological privacy, perception of crowding and general dissatisfaction (Elsbach, 2003; Brunia and Hartjes-Gosselink, 2009; Brown, 2009; Hirst, 2011; Gorgievski et al., 2010; De Croon et al., 2005). Other studies show, on the contrary, increased organizational value and high satisfaction levels (Allen and Gerstberger, 1973; De Paoli et al., 2013; Blakstad and Andersen, 2013; Ruostela et al., 2015).

Although the implementation of A-FOs is an ongoing trend, underlying mechanisms why A-FOs might lead to different consequences than traditional offices are still unclear. Moreover, the empirical studies investigating the impact of A-FOs on individual employee factors such as health, satisfaction, motivation and productivity are surprisingly few. Apart from the existing empirical data, the underlying psychological mechanisms that could explain why and how A-FOs influence the well-being, attitudes and behavior of employees are thus still unclear (Wohlers and Hertel, 2017).

### 1.2.3. Management Fads

In the second half of the 20th century, management fads, such as MBO (1950s), sensitivity training (1960s), quality circles (1970s), total quality management (1980s) and self-managed or self-directed teams (1990s), came and went, which suggests there is a life cycle to management fashion (Gibson and Tesone, 2001). The literature about management fads and fashions has received a lot of attention, and both journal and newspaper articles and professional books have been written on the topic (Gibson and Tesone, 2001; Newell et al., 2001). Miller et al. (2004) compared fads to more long-lasting management practices—the “classics”—and concluded that fads often fail to do justice to the challenges they address. Some theorists, however, argue that while it is easy to dismiss management fashions as bootless inventions with no actual solutions to “real” issues in management and organization, it can still be valuable to examine them as examples of powerful rhetorics that shape management understandings and practices (Gibson and Tesone, 2001).

To the authors’ knowledge, no extensive research on the possible faddish nature of ABW has been done to date—something that is not completely unexpected, considering the difficulty of thoroughly assessing whether or not an ongoing management trend will turn out to be a fad.

## 1.3. Purpose and Research Question

Previous research on activity-based working provide conflicting findings regarding the effects of an A-FO on organizations and their employees. The purpose of this thesis is to study the influence of ABW on perceptions of job quality, in an empirical context that has not yet given the individual characteristics and needs of employees much consideration. The focus is thus on real usage and satisfaction levels, related to work

tasks, needs and preferences among practitioners. To fulfill this purpose, we will attempt to answer the following research question:

*How does activity-based working influence employees' perceptions of job quality?*

#### 1.4. Delimitation

The study is delimited to analyze ABW from an employee perspective, with a focus on how the respondents themselves perceive the workstyle, in light of their work task differences and individual preferences and needs. The research question excludes a specific focus on the results of the implementation of A-FOs and whether they are positive or negative for the respective organizations. Since the aim of the study is not to analyze how perceptions of job quality in A-FOs differ between organizations, it is not a cross-case study, but rather an attempt to get a nuanced view of employees at large through a sample of people from several different organizations using A-FOs.

As the study is conducted with an exclusive focus on employees that are directly affected by the office design they work in, the thesis is further delimited to only analyze the research question from the perspective of employees with knowledge-intensive occupations. The authors have thus consciously excluded people with occupations that require a lot of work outside the office. The largest group of people who are actually working according to the principles of ABW are the employees. However, since we are interested in the views of both employees and managers, and how they might differ, people in managerial positions are also included in the study. Top executives are excluded from the sample, due to their likely involvement in the implementation of ABW and the consequential risk of their responses being biased.

Further, the study will focus on employees working in A-FOs that are concentrated in the Stockholm region. In 2017, Stockholm was responsible for 46 percent of all employment in Sweden, and the city attracts labor from the whole country (Stockholms stad, 2017). All organizations that the employees in our sample work for are Swedish organizations, and the authors have considered the fact that a similar study conducted with employees from organizations in different countries could result in different findings. National culture is, however, something the authors have chosen not to look at specifically in this thesis. Sweden is one of the countries where ABW has grown the most popular recently (Leesman, 2017), and Swedish organizations using A-FOs are therefore of particular interest.

#### 1.5. Expected Contribution

This thesis contributes to and expands the literature on activity-based working by examining activity-based flexible offices in Sweden, with an exclusive focus on employees and their individual differences, preferences and needs. Moreover, it extends

the research on ABW by paying attention to and analyzing whether or not ABW could potentially be a management fad. The results can also be used in management practice, as a guidance for implementing and/or managing A-FOs in organizations with diverse workforces, or even as an indication that a traditional office might in some cases be more appropriate.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

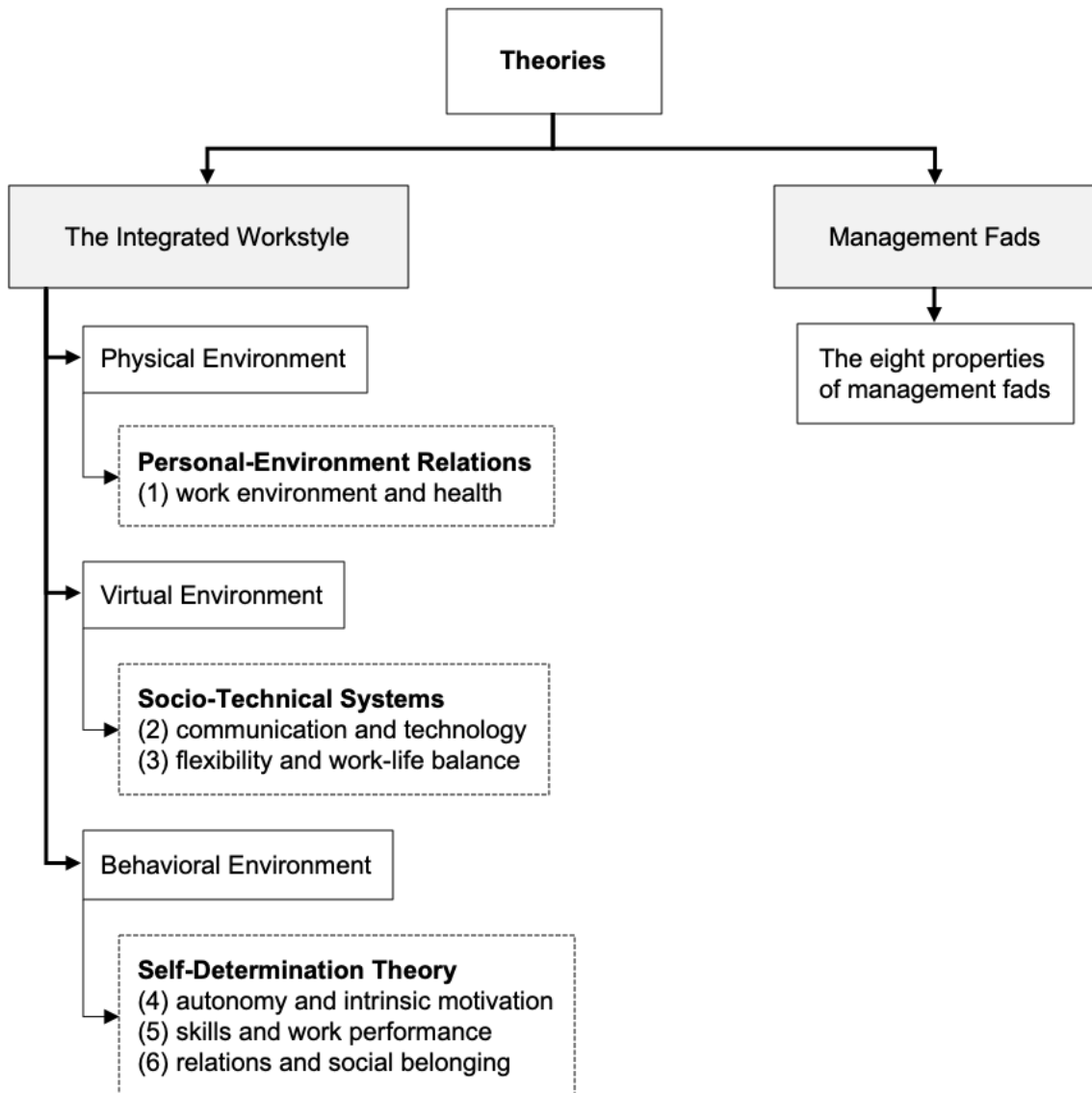
#### 2.1.1. Use of Theory

As the primary theoretical perspective of this thesis, the authors have chosen to use the *integrated workstyle approach*, according to Van Koetsveld and Kamperman (2011). Since both Van Koetsveld and Kamperman represent Veldhoen + Company, the first company to consult in and implement ABW in practice in the 1990s (Parker, 2016), their workstyles framework seems like a suitable approach. It takes into consideration the *physical environment*, the *virtual environment*, and the *behavioral environment*, and combines the three into one “integrated new workstyle”. One of the interviewees in our study described activity-based working as “a balance between office, technology and human”, which resembles the integrated workstyle approach and suggests that these three dimensions could form a useful framework.

To complement the integrated workstyle approach, the authors have chosen to use the *eight properties of management fads* (Miller, et al., 2004) as a support theory. The reason for this is that the authors believe an assessment of ABW on these different properties could be a good way to explore the potentially faddish nature of ABW.

The authors argue that arranging the theoretical framework in this way will provide a nuanced understanding of the most relevant factors to the research question of this study. The following concepts will be presented and explained throughout this section.

**Figure 1.** The theoretical framework



2.1.2. The Integrated Workstyle

According to Van Koetsveld and Kamperman (2011), workstyle projects are “projects that always adopt an integrated approach, not just technology or office fit-out”. As illustrated in Figure 2, a coherent new way of working is achieved when changes are made in all three components of this integrated workstyle. The physical environment concerns how activities in the office (such as reading, writing and collaborating) are facilitated through measures in the physical work environment. The virtual environment is where information is disconnected from time and place, and where all kinds of knowledge exchange is supported, through the use of technology—as opposed to the

traditional office. The behavioral environment is concerned with the organization of activities, such as the ability to self-govern the way in which you work.

European Commission (2001) has identified the following ten dimensions of job quality, with both objective and subjective elements: intrinsic job quality; skills, life-long learning and career development; gender equality; health and safety at work; inclusion and access to the labor market; work organization and work-life balance; flexibility and security; social dialogue and worker involvement; diversity and non-discrimination; and overall work performance. Authors in the academic literature have provided slightly different conceptualizations. Rubery and Grimshaw (2001) groups job quality into three dimensions: employment relations and protection; time and work autonomy; and skills and careers. Clark (2005) notes that both objective aspects (e.g. financial rewards, hours of work and job security) as well as subjective aspects (e.g. job content, autonomy and relations at work) are important in the analysis of job quality. Handel (2005) further examined workers' perceptions of job quality along four dimensions: material rewards; intrinsic rewards; working conditions such as stress, workload and danger; and the quality of interpersonal relations.

The authors have, with regard to the temporal and geographical context in which ABW is investigated in, put together a new version of the dimensions of job quality based on the definitions presented above. The dimensions included in this version are: (1) work environment and health, (2) communication and technology, (3) flexibility and work-life balance, (4) autonomy and intrinsic motivation, (5) skills and work performance and (6) relations and social belonging. These six components have then been combined with the integrated workstyle approach. This way, different dimensions of job quality can be assessed on the basis of the different environment types that constitute a workstyle.

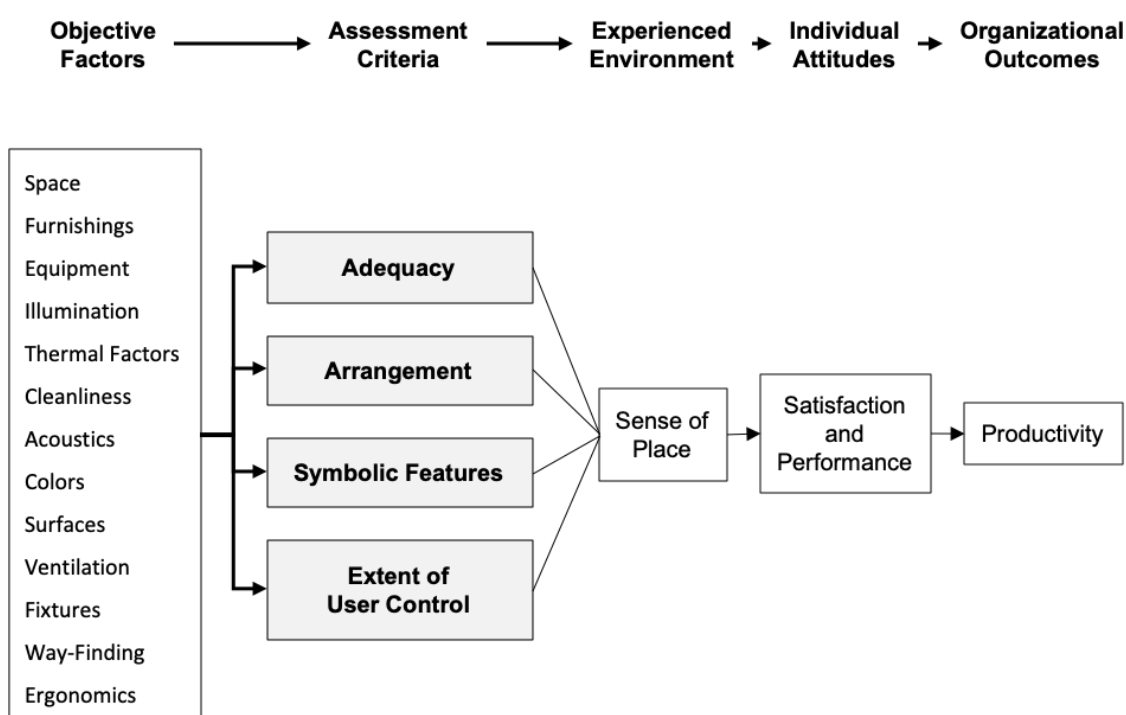
**Figure 2.** The integrated workstyle approach



## The Physical Environment

The physical environment will be analyzed using the *person-environment relations model* (Carnevale, 1992). In this conceptual model, office environments are composed of a set of objective factors, which are assessed and evaluated based on four criteria: adequacy, arrangement, symbolic features and extent of user control. Employee assessments of the objective factors result in a “sense of place” (Steele, 1981) that, in turn, leads to an effect on organizational objectives (see Figure 3). The authors have chosen to focus specifically on the objective factors space, furnishings, equipment, cleanliness, acoustics, way-finding and ergonomics, since they are the most appropriate when looking at ABW in particular.

**Figure 3.** The person-environment relations model



## The Virtual Environment

Socio-technical systems (STS) theory explains the interaction between social and technological factors, and seeks to enhance job satisfaction and productivity by focusing on the relationships between people, technology, and the work environment (Torraco, 2005). The theory was originally developed by Trist and Bamforth (1951) to explain the paradox of falling productivity despite improved technology, but it can be applied to the modern-day concept of telecommuting. One of the principles of STS is *minimal critical specification* (Cherns, 1987), which states that, no more should be specified than is absolutely essential regarding how to do tasks, in order to encourage workers to find solutions on their own. Telecommuting provides employees with the freedom to decide

how and when to do their tasks, which implies a certain responsibility. According to Cherns (1987), this responsibility is positive, since it increases the employees' power.

### **The Behavioral Environment**

The self-determination theory (SDT), as a key motivation theory, posits that individuals can be motivated through extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and explores a person's interaction with their environment through the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs—competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000a; Deci and Ryan, 2000b). According to the research by Deci and Ryan, people are self-motivated and curious by nature, and this intrinsic motivation can be disturbed by, for example, extrinsic rewards. And when the three psychological needs are fulfilled, motivation can be reached.

#### **2.1.3. Management Fads**

Many new ideas and concepts in management practice are established in hopes of finding a “quick fix” that any organization then can embrace to improve all kinds of organizational objectives. Such innovations may transform some companies for the better, but they are seldom suitable for all of them. Miller et al. (2004) conducted a study in which they compared management fads to more durable practices and techniques—the “classics”—in an attempt to tell the two apart. After having identified some fads and classics on the basis of their life cycles, they explored which properties distinguished the two, and came up with the following eight characteristics or warning signs that are common to all fads (and which the classics do not have): simple, straightforward; promising results; universal; step-down capability; in tune with zeitgeist; novel, not radical; legitimacy via gurus and star examples; and lively, entertaining. We will use these properties to explore the possibility of ABW being a management fad.

## **2.2. Discussion of Theory**

The authors see a potential risk with limiting the theoretical framework to only one view of how a workstyle should be conceptualized, when there might be other dimensions and factors contributing to the full understanding of how employees are affected by ABW, which could give a misleading picture. The authors still argue that the chosen framework, with the six new dimensions of job quality interlinked with the integrated workstyle approach, covers and explains the most fundamental aspects, while simultaneously being adjusted to fit the context of ABW in contemporary work environments specifically.

Important to note, however, is that the actual theories used within the different environment types are not context-specific to ABW. The person-environment relations

model, for example, was first presented in a time when ABW as an office concept still had not been adopted in practice. Carnevale (1992) also mentions that the model only provides a partial explanation for environmental influences, by observing objective factors and individuals as isolated from each other, while the nature of individual-environment relations, in reality, are interactive.

SDT has been criticized for only including three basic psychological needs and thus excluding other needs that other researchers consider to be important; for example a sense of security, self-esteem and safety (Pyszczynski et al., 2000). It is therefore important to consider that there are other needs that also play a role in terms of intrinsic motivation.

The theories used in relation to the integrated workstyle approach are closely linked to the empirical data, while the management fad theory is not. The authors have thus considered that the interview data is insufficient to be able to draw any conclusions about ABW through the eight fad properties alone. In addition, Miller et al. (2004) have themselves described their list of properties as “incomplete and imperfect”. The management fad analysis will, due to these aspects, be more speculative than evidence-focused.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Choice of Method

#### 3.1.1. Constructivism and Interpretivism

This study is based on the constructivist ontology research perspective, where both the authors' and the interviewees' experiences are social constructions that are constantly reworked. Constructivism reflects the social reality of each individual as opposed to the natural reality (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Through this perspective, it is assumed that social reality cannot be objective and thus cannot be measured objectively, but can only be interpreted. Given this, the study captures the subjective image of job quality linked to ABW in a way which would not have been possible with an objectivist approach.

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), hermeneutics refers to “the theory and method of interpretation of human action” and interpretivism is described as being concerned with “the empathic understanding of human action rather than with the forces that act on it”. Hence, with the aim of studying the ABW concept by understanding how employees are affected by it, the hermeneutics approach was adopted. This approach has been crucial in the authors' attempt to elicit and interpret the interviewees' true experiences and perceptions regarding ABW.

#### 3.1.2. A Qualitative Study With Abductive Reasoning

A qualitative study was, in line with the hermeneutics and the constructivist ontology, needed when the aim is to understand how ABW influences employees' perceptions of job quality (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Unlike traditional face-to-face interviews that often seems to be the typical qualitative interview method, the authors have chosen to conduct asynchronous in-depth online interviews, partly due to the current circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative social science researchers have recently started to show interest in online interviews, with one of the reasons being that asynchronous qualitative survey interviews allow researchers to overcome different practical considerations, such as distance (James and Busher, 2009). But online asynchronous interviews are not only relevant during problematic circumstances; when it comes to overcoming distance, online asynchronous interviews also generate descriptive and reflective data (James and Busher, 2006). This method was chosen in order to gain a deeper understanding of the individual employees, while at the same time having a sufficient number of respondents to be able to draw any conclusions.

The study was conducted according to an abductive process, since theory and empirical data were gathered in parallel and thus shaped one after another. This process would not have been possible to achieve with a purely deductive or inductive method (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

## 3.2. Sample

### 3.2.1. Organizations

After some online research, eleven Swedish organizations, both within the private and the public sector, that use A-FOs were found. Since the study aims to capture individual employee perceptions of job quality, the type of organizations chosen was not considered to be decisive. The authors simply strived to collect employees independently from their employers. The organizations found were Telia, Scania, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Unionen, Akavia, Swedbank, The Swedish Transport Administration (Trafikverket), Försäkringskassan, Vinnova and Örnsköldsvik Municipality (Örnsköldsviks kommun) (Hjalmarsson, 2020).

### 3.2.2. Interviewees

The authors chose to get in direct contact with the interviewees themselves via direct message on LinkedIn, and not through their employers. The direct message that was sent out can be seen in Appendix 8.1. During the search process, two search filters were filled in: current workplace and location. The sample of interviewees was then hand-picked among the first employees generated in the search results. In order to get as honest and insightful interviews as possible, top management was excluded with the assumption that they might be biased in their responses. Furthermore, outside vendors and store staff were sorted out, simply because people actually working in the A-FOs are the relevant interviewees for this study.

Twenty employees from each of the eleven organizations were contacted via direct message, resulting in 47 interviewees. The spread of employees from the different organizations is advantageous, since there are some interviewees from each organization. For further description of the interviewees, see Appendix 8.3.

## 3.3. The Interview Process

### 3.3.1. Collection of Empirical Data

As mentioned, the authors have put together a new version of the dimensions of job quality based on the European Commission (2001) definition. Thus, the authors' definition of job quality shaped the online survey. The survey, which can be seen in Appendix 8.2, was constructed with open-ended questions with prompts to take good time in order to respond extensively. In line with the constructivist ontology research perspective, the authors put great emphasis to familiarize themselves with the ABW environment in order to try to understand how expressions and concepts would influence interviewees from such an environment. Great emphasis was also placed on

asking open and neutral questions by using words and sentences that contained as little value as possible.

After just over 20 interviews, the authors experienced that they had reached empirical saturation. Subsequently, an equal number of interviews were conducted to further validate the results. This, by reason of the unconventional method choice: online asynchronous interviews. With nearly 50 qualitative responses, the authors felt confident in ensuring empirical saturation. Theory could now be applied to empirical data and it could be concluded that further interviews would not have increased the understanding of the topic.

### 3.3.2. Processing and Analysis of Empirical Data

The basis for the theoretical framework was set before the empirical gathering, although it has been revisited in line with the selected abductive method. Both during the empirical gathering and once the empirical data was collected, the authors made repeated reviews of the empirical material and actively mapped the results according to the chosen main theory: the integrated workstyle approach, and the sub-theory: management fads. Hence, the presentation and the analysis of the empirical data is structured according to the theoretical framework (see Figure 1). When presenting the empirical data, the authors have made minor adjustments to quotes to improve the understanding of the reader. Made clarifications are illustrated by brackets.

The authors have actively chosen to be partially limited to already set theory. But, in true abductive spirit, one important empirical finding got to shape large parts of this thesis. When collecting the empirical data, according to the authors, the most crucial finding was revealed; that the perception of ABW seems to be largely shaped by one's job description. This finding has been taken into greatest consideration.

## 3.4. Ethical Considerations and Implications

It has been of utmost importance for the authors to conduct an ethical study in line with the ethical principles in business research when collecting and processing the empirical data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). For instance, potential interviewees were via the direct message on LinkedIn informed about the purpose of their participation and how their answers would be used, before they agreed to participate or not. To ensure the interviewees' anonymity as promised, the authors have decided to anonymize age and gender, since the assessment was made that information such as this is not relevant to the study as a whole. It is the fact that the interviewees are human beings with their own feelings and opinions, and nothing else, that has been relevant.

### 3.5. Discussion of Method

The quality of this qualitative study will be assessed by the criterion *trustworthiness*, proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and referred to in Bryman and Bell (2015). Trustworthiness consists of four equal criteria: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. To achieve credibility, the unconventional method of doing a written qualitative interview may have contributed to objectivity. The data is the interviewees' own words. However, it can never be guaranteed that the authors' choice of words and alike, that was used in communication with the interviewees, did not shape their responses, and thereby are not completely authentic. Regarding transferability, the way in which the study was conducted has been described in detail under the method section. This in order for others to make their own assessment of whether the study's results are transferable to other subjects or not. In order to increase the degree of dependability, the authors' approach to the subject has been carefully described during the method section, similar to how transferability was dealt with. The thesis has also, to some extent, been reviewed by a supervisor and a supervision group. Concerning confirmability, there is a risk of having chosen the hermeneutics approach. The authors' prior knowledge, personal values and assumptions affect interpretation and can make it difficult to generalize the results. Neutrality has nevertheless been the guiding principle when performing the research.

James and Busher emphasize in an article that asynchronous online interviews evoke "issues affecting the credibility and trustworthiness of the research design of the study", but still they put it like this: "Despite these dilemmas, the article recognizes the contribution that web-based approaches can make to research by allowing researchers to hold asynchronous conversations with participants" (2006, first paragraph).

## 4. Empirical Material

The empirical section is divided according to the theory, which was adapted and revised according to the respondents' answers.

### 4.1. The Physical Environment

The 47 interviewees work or have worked in an A-FO layout. However, the interviewees state that the office layouts are not identical, there are discrepancies to some extent. Twenty of the interviewees testify that their office is entirely ABW-adapted, meaning the entire office consists of non-territorial desk-sharing. Remaining interviewees testify that there are some exceptions from the A-FO layout. The exceptions may be that IT, customer service and/or telemarketers have fixed desks due to landlines or large servers. It may also be the top executives who need privacy. The most common reason for fixed desks is "personal needs" such as illness, allergy, age or ergonomics. Interviewee 11 explains it like this: "A few [of my colleagues] have individual rooms, limited in time, I think, for medical reasons. A medical certificate is required."

Six out of 47 interviewees have worked in an A-FO all their professional life. 70% of the others, who have experience from other office concepts than ABW, still prefer to work in an A-FO:

It fits my way of working. Quick information, communication and decision-making. I have many different types of work spaces to choose from depending on what task I have for the day and what mood I'm in. (38)

After all, 30% prefer traditional offices. Reasons for this are stated to be that in A-FOs, they have difficulty concentrating, and that it is time-consuming to "run around" and look for a suitable office space. Other stated reasons are that they lack the sense of community that permanent desks can provide, and they miss stability, predictability and a sense of calm. After a day at a traditional office, they may feel more rested.

We don't have permanent places and there isn't room for all employees, because dropouts are expected. This means that if you don't get to work very early, you may not get a proper office space, but instead have to sit on some sofa, you cannot choose active, medium or quiet, etc. I easily lose concentration by being interrupted and the tasks take longer. The idea is that during the day you should be able to sit in a quiet place during the hours you need it, and then move to an active, etc. This does not work because the places are too few. Brain scientists have long since condemned this type of workplace. But money rules and the staff must submit to the furnishing [...]. (12)

Regardless of what office type the interviewees prefer, many of the disadvantages with A-FOs are recurring. There are perceived difficulties with telephone calls, noise level and hygiene:

[It is] easy to interfere [with colleagues] during phone calls. (11)

[I am] experiencing that it can often be difficult to take phone calls in the open office space. (22)

The lack of respect for other people and that you don't show consideration by taking telephone calls in a booth or similar. (27)

Some do not respect the sound rules and speak loudly. (19)

Can be a little too high noise level if you have open office space. (24)

Our team works with audio/video and often in groups. [I] get the feeling that we often disturb others when we sit so openly. (8)

I don't like having to tidy up after the one who sat on the seat before me every day. (2)

[It] sometimes feels messy in the spaces, people don't always clean after themselves. (37)

The interviewees were also asked about their expectations of ABW before they started working that way. Some had no expectations, some were hopeful and others were worried. Regardless of expectations, most people seem satisfied. But what is interesting here is that it turns out that ABW may not be used to the extent originally thought:

I thought it would be interesting and fun that there would be more movement in the office and more exchange of discussions. It has lived up to my expectations regarding discussions. But in practice, our office is not activity-based, employees remain in the same place all day when a good place is found. (6)

Both. Had hoped that I could move around more, but I still really enjoy the premises. (8)

I expected that I would move around the office more than what's actually the case. People are quick to start to "get used" to go to more or less the same area of the office, even though you're not sitting in the exact same spot. (14)

It has partly lived up to my expectations, but people still "reserve" places that they always sit on so it has nonetheless been "fixed seats" for many. (26)

Expectations were that it would be messy to find a place or even know if you would get a place in the morning, but the reality is that the habitual human still controls a lot and that it hasn't really been such a difference, other than that you put your personal belongings in lockers overnight instead of leaving them at your desk. (30)

## 4.2. The Virtual Environment

With the latest technology and with great responsibility, ABW gives employees the freedom to work how and when they want. When asked how they feel that the communication with employees and managers functions in their A-FO, interviewees often state that it is the technology that is the advantage with ABW, and that communication in this way is improved:

Good, very much thanks to new technology and planned focus on ensuring that communication is done in the best way and to incorporate feedback and wishes on improvements. (44)

The social aspect is perceived to be better between the staff who are on site in the office; many issues can be resolved quickly. But we also see opposite tendencies. A disadvantage with ABW is that it is sometimes difficult to find people. Microsoft Teams, Skype and similar is therefore essential.

Hard to find them [employees and managers]. Results mostly in communication via Skype instead. (2)

Quite okay, but as I said, it's sometimes difficult to find people. (1)

Great, can sometimes be difficult to find a specific person but we have an internal communications system. (7)

Usually easy via Skype or [Microsoft] Teams, not always easy to reach people in person at the office. (22)

Very good, but as I mentioned earlier it can sometimes be frustrating to hunt people, both digitally and physically. (33)

Small talks and other social needs need to be planned. With ABW, I only find a colleague when I want something and not just to chat. Before [ABW], you could go to a room where you knew someone was sitting and hang there for a while. (16)

Hard to find your colleagues if you don't know where they are, it means that you always have to call. (27)

It sometimes becomes problematic when you need someone and don't know where that person is. (3)

However, when we ask whether the interviewees experience that ABW affects their productivity and performance in general, the self-perceived overall performance seems to not be affected. About 20 interviewees state they are not affected by ABW at all, while half of the remainder believes that ABW affects them positively, and the other half believes that ABW affects them negatively.

### 4.3. The Behavioral Environment

When the interviewees are asked whether they feel like ABW suits their job description, the responses are widespread. Most interviewees like, as mentioned, ABW and it seems to relate to their job description.

#### Flexible job description:

Think it works well based on the type of job I have, which means that I need to have a lot of dialogue with others and preferably be inspired by others. (40)

Very good when I get in and out of the office on a daily basis, which is facilitated when there are many and flexible workspaces that I can choose from depending on what task I'm currently doing. (10)

#### Desk-bound job description:

We have sensitive information that we cannot leave at the desk when we go and have a cup of coffee, for example. We always need to bring these with us when we leave. (3)

Works okay with my duties, but would have preferred to have a room on my own. My tasks require high concentration and are varied, which means that I need to change places frequently. I need to sit in a quiet zone, but then I often sit in a Skype call/phone which means I need to move on and try to find another place [...]. The days when I have a lot to do I choose to work from home because I need to be able to concentrate. The days I sit in an activity-based office, I have unfinished work assignments because it hasn't been completed due to the difficulty to concentrate. (6)

#### Job description determines:

For me, it fits very well, I have quite a lot of meetings, both external and internal, so activity-based works very well. But sometimes I need to concentrate on reading documents and annual reports and then you need a quieter area with more screens. So if you have a varied job with different types of tasks, it works very well. However, if I had had a more research-based job that requires a lot of textbooks and materials, I would have appreciated my own space. (24)

**The main reasons for the positive attitude towards ABW are that it is social and flexible, creates togetherness, encourages creative thinking when people who not usually meet do meet, and that it enables quick decisions:**

Meetings with a greater variety of people and roles within the company that may not have happened before. [This] often leads to unexpected good contacts and allows us to share knowledge better between different roles. (14)

I feel that we are many people working for the same thing. Before [ABW], it was very much the departments separately. (16)

One of the disadvantages with ABW mentioned is most often related to these social aspects. To not be surrounded by your colleagues and managers, and in that way have that daily human contact, might lead to insecurity and isolation:

The feeling of group connection has diminished and, of course, affected my health in such a way that I don't think it is as fun to go to work, when you don't meet the closest colleagues as often. (18)

People can become invisible and excluded. (2)

No residency, feeling of rootlessness and lack of community. (31)

Much more difficult to "become part of the gang", and to feel the sense of community as a new employee. (22)

Those who are ill may be missed. (13)

Isolating. In a large office with several hundred employees, you don't know who is working on what. Especially new employees testify to this. But also others, because the office has almost doubled in size. (12)

#### 4.4. Management Fads

The interviewees are to a large extent well aware about why their employers introduced ABW from the beginning. It may be due to lack of space, cost-effectiveness, flexibility and/or promotion of collaboration. Some of the interviewees state that it may be because it is trendy right now:

To attract young job seekers to us. (23)

We (company) work with digitalization and our products are about enabling productivity, so for us it's a lot about living as you learn. The job is no longer a place but something you do. We want to enable people to work from wherever they want as long as they get their job done. When the office was transformed into an activity-based office in 2012, a survey was conducted in which it emerged that the employees were still the most creative, focused and engaged in places other than the office. So having a way of working that requires you to sit in a certain place feels quite outdated. Besides, the younger generations (university students, for example) are used to working from libraries, cafes, from home etc., so it's not such a strange thing. (24)

We sell collaboration tools and our founder said many years ago that work is something you do and not a place you go to. And we use our workplace as a showroom! (28)

[...] Also think that there is an aspect of wanting to appear innovative. (37)

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. The Physical Environment

#### 5.1.1. Space, Furnishings and Ergonomics

A common theme found among the interviewees is that there are some exceptions from the A-FO layout, so that some have fixed desks due to special needs, such as medical reasons or privacy for executives. This variation to account for individual needs could be seen in the person-environment relations model as that the objective factors space and ergonomics are adequate, and arranged in an appropriate way. Most of the respondents have many different types of workplaces to choose from depending on task and mood, which indicates that there is some extent of user control in terms of space and furnishings.

However, not all respondents feel that their needs in terms of space and furnishings are fulfilled. Some of them state that in practice, people often remain in the same place all day when a good place is found, and that there is not enough space for everyone to find a desk or a spot suited for their current needs. It can also be seen that many employees, who need to do work and take calls that require secrecy, do not always have an option to be in a private space. This shows that, despite the aim of ABW to facilitate the ability to work from an area that suits one's needs best, employees do not always have user control over their space and furnishings, suggesting that the workstyle in some cases does not fulfill its purpose.

#### 5.1.2. Acoustics

Another common theme that can be seen among the respondents, who express the difficulty of being able to find an appropriate spot, also express a problem with the noise level, and that it is often clamorous and hard to concentrate. This indicates that the lack of user control is extended to include the acoustics factor as well. Some respondents express a need for stability and a sense of calm, which they find is lacking in the A-FO. They explain that the open landscape often results in that people disturb their colleagues by, for example, using multimedia tools and sounds in their meetings. All of the respondents who expressed an issue with the noise also answered that their job requires concentration to quite a large extent or a very large extent. This problem with concentration and being constantly interrupted suggests that the arrangement in terms of acoustics is not sufficient for employees who need a quiet space to be able to concentrate. It could also lead to lower productivity, since the tasks take longer to finish. Others state that they work better with background noise, while a completely quiet environment makes it harder for them to focus, but these are in the minority.

### 5.1.3. Cleanliness

An issue with having to work in spaces where others have left a mess, and constantly having to clean up after others in the office, can also be seen in the data. This suggests that the objective factor cleanliness, in the person-environment relations model, is not adequate. Having to spend time taking care of other people's waste and clutter not only takes time and lowers productivity, but also lowers the work environment satisfaction. In a traditional office, with private offices or desks, this is not an issue to the same extent.

### 5.1.4. Equipment and Way-Finding

Many of the respondents seem to be content with the ability to switch between different areas depending on work task and needs, but some of them express a difficulty with constantly having to move places and to find a suitable space—something that can be time-consuming and interrupt the workflow. Some also state that the need to bring equipment and belongings with you every time you move is inconvenient. A very common theme found among the respondents is the problem with finding each other in the office, when there are no allocated desks, and having to spend so much time looking for someone you need to talk to. This issue will be touched upon further in the virtual environment section about communication, but is something that is also related to way-finding. In the person-environment relations model, the objective factors equipment and way-finding can be argued to be inadequate in terms of how much time has to be spent moving places, carrying your equipment and looking for people.

## 5.2. The Virtual Environment

### 5.2.1. The People-Technology Relationship

In many of the interviews, the relationship between people and technology seems to be a positive one, and that the communication is improved thanks to the technology, that is so essential in ABW. Some respondents claim that the possibilities with the technology of the modern workplace facilitate the development of culture, leadership and individual flexibility, and affect it in a positive way. This indicates a positive people-technology relationship which, according to the STS theory, enhances job satisfaction and increases productivity. Respondents also state that the communication works very well in the office, much thanks to the use of technology. Many interviewees claim that it is difficult to find people, and that communication software such as Microsoft Teams and Skype thus becomes essential. In most cases, it seems like the internal communications system that is used is sufficient, but some state that the “hunting” for people can be a struggle both physically and digitally. There are also signs that, even though many employees see that technology improves communication, it can for some people be disrupted when all discussions need to be planned ahead.

### 5.2.2. Minimal Critical Specification

According to the STS theory, the freedom to decide how and when to do certain tasks is an important way to avoid closing options or inhibiting effective actions, through the principle of minimal critical specification. This flexibility is aided with the help of technology, and is something that many of the respondents express as a positive aspect of their job. Some of them state that they like the flexibility, and that it goes hand in hand with the type of work that they do, and creates more activity and communication between colleagues. This aspect of the virtual environment could therefore be considered to have a positive effect on perceived job quality.

## 5.3. The Behavioral Environment

### 5.3.1. Competence

A recurring theme among the respondents is the expressed focus on how ABW improves various competences being shared with each other to a greater extent, which expands the knowledge throughout the organization. When people share workstations and spaces with people from different departments, with different competence areas, experiences and views, communication across varied parts of the organization is encouraged and knowledge is transmitted in a learning environment. According to Deci and Ryan (2000b), a stimulated competence increases the self-confidence of the individual and thus the intrinsic motivation.

### 5.3.2. Autonomy

Another essential way to increase intrinsic motivation for individuals is, according to Deci and Ryan (2000a; 2000b), to provide them with the right of self-government and increased responsibility. This way, they feel that they are challenged intellectually. This is facilitated through the ability to work flexibly, which is seen in many of the respondents. Some of them have the ability to work both when and where they want, and can work from home if they wish to do so. Others have flexibility in terms of place, but are somewhat restricted in terms of time (e.g. having to work during certain hours). A common theme is that the freedom to work flexibly and to be responsible for how you do your own work is a positive aspect for many, and that it generally helps them to do a better job.

### 5.3.3. Relatedness

The third component of SDT is relatedness, which refers to the feeling of being close to people in your environment, for example colleagues. Many respondents claim that the social aspect of their job, such as networking and collaboration between departments and work groups, is improved in the A-FO. It appears as if this is generally considered a

very positive thing. Others, however, point out that all “small talk” has to be planned when there is no longer the option to just visit someone’s office and “hang there for a while”. The social belonging with the closest colleagues could also be affected negatively when everyone cannot sit and work together. This suggests that an A-FO can be both positive and negative in terms of relatedness.

## 5.4. Management Fads

Some of the respondents seem to be aware of the current trendiness of ABW. By examining the workstyle through the lens of the eight properties of management fads according to Miller et al. (2004), a few things become clear. First of all, the concept of ABW is simple and straightforward. It is very easy to communicate the fundamental ideas of the A-FO and how they work. It is further a workstyle that promises a lot, such as creating a better cost-efficiency balance and increasing employee satisfaction—possibly more than it delivers, considering the varied success found in previous research (Skogland, 2016). The “one size fits all” nature of ABW also suggests that it claims to be universally applicable. However, implementing ABW in an organization is not something that can be done quickly or superficially, so it does not have a step-down capability.

A-FOs are highly in tune with the zeitgeist, since they intend to promote new ways of working and an image of being low-hierarchical and modern (Skogland, 2016). However, as much as it is a novel approach, it does not really challenge any basic managerial values. ABW is not represented by any particular guru or “corporate hero”, but it is portrayed in the media as a “hot” new trend that should be adapted by organizations that want to keep up with the latest developments (Lashbrooke, 2019). This further relates to the lively and entertaining nature of ABW; that it is an interesting and fun concept, both in writing and in practice.

According to the eight properties, ABW is undoubtedly a management fad. It scored positive on as many as seven of the eight properties, which is a great warning sign. However, the authors are still careful to make any conclusions based on these findings alone, since the information used in the analysis is not sufficient to be able to draw such conclusions. Furthermore, only the future can truly tell whether or not ABW will turn out to be a management fad.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

### 6.1. Answer to Research Question

Through a qualitative study, the authors have studied the influence of ABW on perceptions of job quality with focus on real usage and satisfaction levels, related to work tasks, needs and preferences among practitioners. This with the attempt to answer the following research question: *How does activity-based working influence employees' perceptions of job quality?* With this study as a base, the answer to the research question could be summarized as follows: *The employees' job description matters when determining their perceptions of job quality.*

This study does, however, also provide partially concrete answers to the research question. ABW does not fulfill all the respondents' needs in terms of space and furnishings. Neither in terms of acoustics, cleanliness, equipment and way-finding, implying that the physical environment in the A-FO influences employees' perceptions of job quality negatively. However, since the virtual environment fulfills most of the respondents' needs when it comes to minimal critical specification, even if not when it comes to the people-technology relationship, it can be considered to have a predominantly positive effect on perceived job quality. When it comes to competence and autonomy, ABW fulfills almost all of the respondents' needs, while in terms of relatedness, the effect on the perceived job quality can be both positive and negative. That is, the effects on the behavioral environment can be two-sided. With this, no clear conclusion can be drawn from the findings, other than that the employees' job description seems to determine how ABW influences their perceptions of job quality.

### 6.2. Contribution

With this study, the past 10–20 years of research have to a large extent been re-confirmed. There are both pros and cons with ABW. As in previous research, we can also in this study see that ABW seems to facilitate socializing and learning, increase employees' motivation, job satisfaction, productivity and well-being. But ABW can also generate low levels of productivity, health and general dissatisfaction. ABW increases collaboration and flow of information and learning, contributing to a sense of community and thereby boosting productivity, but it can also do the exact opposite. And the list goes on. Some of the employees' perceptions of job quality are positively affected through ABW, some are negative and some are indifferent. Hence, this study further confirms existing research which indicates that ABW does not fit all.

This thesis has, however, shed some light on the fact that it seems that it largely is the job description that determines whether the employees' perceptions of job quality will be positively or negatively affected by ABW. This can be of interest for future research as well as for organizations in practice. This, perhaps, in order for organizations to gain a greater understanding of why their implementation was successful or not from an

employee perspective, or if ABW would fit their organization or not—with focus on ABW in relation to the employees' job descriptions. Managers might benefit particularly by looking at the straightforward examples of difficulties with ABW presented in the empirics section.

### 6.3. Suggestions for Future Research

This is not a cross-case study, since the aim was just to get a nuanced view on how ABW influences employees' perceptions of job quality at large, independently of employers. But when collecting empirical data and beginning to see patterns in that job description seems to matter, the authors would now like to see a cross-case study conducted on this subject. To sample on different working groups within different organizations might gain a deeper understanding of why and how ABW influences employees' perception of job quality.

As stated in the literature review, to the authors' knowledge, no extensive research on the possible faddish nature of ABW has been done to date. The theory of management fads was used mainly as a support theory in this thesis, since prior to the collection of empirical data, the authors only had a loose clue, or feeling, that ABW might potentially be a fad. Since this study undoubtedly indicates upon ABW being a fad, the authors believe that a research question with management fads as the main focus would be interesting to see. Hence, further research is requested within this area. This, despite the difficulties with detecting a management fad before it either has passed and naturally classified itself as one, or has become a management classic. It would be of utmost interest to find out whether ABW actually is a management fad or not.

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## 8. Appendices

### 8.1. Message Sent to Employees

Hi [Name],

A fellow student and I are now writing our bachelor thesis at the Stockholm School of Economics, and could use your help. We are very interested in new, flexible working methods and activity-based offices, and we want to investigate how employees perceive that they are affected by working in an activity-based and/or flexible workplace.

If you work or have worked in an activity-based workplace, we would be very grateful if you wanted to dedicate around 20 minutes to a digital survey, or an interview (preferably via telephone or video conferencing). Please reply as soon as possible if you wish to participate, and I will get back to you with the survey link or suggestion for an interview date.

Under prevailing COVID-19 circumstances, we have difficulties with data collection, and your participation is therefore extremely valuable to us.

Your workplace and your answers will be completely anonymous in the report.

Sincerely,

Ellen Persson/Emma Supponen

### 8.2. Web Survey

Welcome to this survey!

First and foremost, we would like to extend a big thank you to you for choosing to participate in the survey. For us, it is invaluable.

We are two students from Stockholm School of Economics who currently write our bachelors thesis in management, with a particular focus on new, flexible working methods and activity-based offices. We want to explore what it's like to work in an activity-based workplace, and that's where you come into the picture.

The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete, and we would like you to answer as detailed as possible. If you don't know the answer to a question, feel free to skip it. We would like to have spontaneous answers (for example, you don't need to look up any information) and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers are, of course, completely anonymous.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact 23930@student.hhs.se.

Again, thank you for your participation!

Ellen Persson and Emma Supponen

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**Q1 Gender:**

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

**Q2 How old are you?**

- 30 or younger
- 31–40
- 41–50
- 51 or older
- Prefer not to answer

**Q3 What is your job role? Briefly describe what your job entails.**

**Q4 To what extent does your work require ...**

	Very little extent	Little extent	Neither	Quite a large extent	Very large extent	Prefer not to answer
Concentration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone calls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internal meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

External meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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According to our chosen definition, an activity-based office is characterized by two functions: “workspace diversity” (varying environments to support different tasks and preferences) och “non-territorial desk-sharing” (employees do not have specific locations, but instead share workstations and workspaces).

**Q5 What does your work situation look like?**

- I work in an activity-based office at present
- I have worked in an activity-based office before

*NOTE! For those of you who have worked in an activity-based office before: The following questions are formulated in the present, but also applies to those of you who no longer work in an activity-based office.*

**Q6 Is the whole workplace activity-based, or do some have individual rooms? In such cases, specify who has their own rooms, and why.**

**Q7 How long have you been working in an activity-based office?**

**Q8 Have you been working in a “traditional office”, i.e. a non-activity based office?**

- Yes
- No

**If Yes: Q9 What kind of workplace do you prefer?**

- Traditional office
- Activity-based office

**Q10 Please explain why.**

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Remember! Don't google anything—we want to know exactly what you think and feel.

**Q11 Why has your employer chosen to implement an activity-based office in your particular workplace?**

**Q12 What were your expectations before you started working in an activity-based workplace? Describe whether or not the workplace has lived up to your expectations.**

**Q13 Now we would like you to describe the pros of working in an activity-based office. List up to five pros and describe them as comprehensively as you can.**

Pro 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Pro 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Pro 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Pro 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Pro 5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Q14 What are the cons of working in an activity-based office? List up to five cons and describe them as you can.**

Con 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Con 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Con 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Con 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Con 5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Below are five questions about how you feel about working in an activity-based workplace. Please exemplify.

**Q15 How does the activity-based office fit your role/tasks?**

**Q16 How has the activity-based office affected your health/well-being?**

**Q17 Activity-based offices may, for some, imply greater responsibility. How do you relate to that?**

**Q18 How do you feel that communication with employees and managers works in your activity-based workplace?**

**Q19 How does the activity-based workplace affect your productivity and your performance in general?**

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Below are three questions about flexibility. Please respond as comprehensively as possible.

**Q20 Does the activity-based office mean that you can work from home/elsewhere and dispose of your working hours freely?**

**Q21 How do you use the activity-based office in terms of location and movements?**

**Q22 Does the activity-based office fit your lifestyle and/or family situation? How?**

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**Q23 This is the last question. Is there anything else you want to add?**

### 8.3. Interviewees

**Table 1.** A compilation of the interviewees together with their respective job descriptions and preferred office types

1	Business development, where I work to develop current working methods and processes and ensure that we have the right IT system in order to succeed	ABW
2	Project Engineer	Traditional
3	Responsible for the group that works with pay and the group that creates contracts	Only worked in ABW
4	Investigates operational disruptions on [...]	Traditional
5	HR Specialist	Traditional
6	My job involves, among other things, that I conduct analysis of target groups, produce messages and strategies, write news and press releases.	Traditional
7	Administrator of [...]	ABW
8	I manage a group of six people who produce [...]	ABW
9	Business Controller	Only worked in ABW
10	Account Manager, manages and communicates internally for specific accounts as well as sales	ABW
11	I'm CFO of production management and Head of Financial Control. I'm responsible for financial reports and decision-making documents to the board. I have eleven subordinate economists working against all municipal administrations. We work to support the financially responsible.	ABW
12	Chief Assistant	Traditional
13	Head of Market, Business Development and Member Services	ABW
14	I'm an "IT specialist" and [...]	Only worked in ABW
15	Event Manager	Traditional

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16	Working in a marketing department and is responsible for operations. In my role, I have very varied tasks, from traveling and meeting many (lectures and [...]), I have some administrative tasks (budget, business planning, contact with partners etc.) and work with a more creative part, business development.	ABW
17	Business developer within [...]. Prepare to support administrative activities, implement parliamentary legislative changes, support for media and ministries, director-general and more.	ABW
18	Engineer. Currently working on information management.	Traditional
19	Administrative Officer	Traditional
20	Buyers of direct material for production at one of [...] largest industrial companies. This means many cross-functional contacts within the organization as well as with external suppliers.	ABW
21	Administrator/expert on [...]	ABW
22	HR Generalist	Traditional
23	Administrative Assistant. I do pretty much everything that the others should “avoid” dealing with in order to do their job well. We handle all furniture and equipment in the kitchen, the social parts and the personal cabinets. In addition, we add all the office supplies needed and we handle the mail.	Traditional
24	Work as a solution specialist in the field of [...], can best be summarized as a pre-sales role in B2B.	ABW
25	Responsible for [...] within the business segment. Demand the development that needs to happen.	ABW
26	[...] producer, writes script, project manager education project and packages e-lessons for internal training at [...]	ABW
27	Business Development	ABW
28	Partner Development Manager, that is, helping our partners do business [...]	ABW
29	Project Engineer at [...]. Administrative work for the most part, sometimes out in the field.	ABW

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30	Business Development/Product Developer of [...]	ABW
31	I work as a communicator.	Traditional
32	Project Manager	Only worked in ABW
33	I am responsible for the [...]. In short terms, this means that my goal is for each [...] to feel satisfied before, during and after they have been in contact with us.	ABW
34	Support Manager for different environments within a project	ABW
35	Administrative Officer	Only worked in ABW
36	Brand Manager, working with the brand internally and externally as well as some marketing strategy.	ABW
37	Administrative Officer. Working with [...] for various sectors of society. The work entails many meetings and collaboration internally as well as externally.	ABW
38	Head of department for internal operations and service department	ABW
39	Investigator in the [...] area, I work with investigative work and opinion formation.	Traditional
40	Recruiter	ABW
41	Business Development Analyst at [...]	ABW
42	Marketing, planning of marketing activities and projects	ABW
43	Process Owner. Designs and targets [...]	ABW
44	Sales Manager. Helps our partners (Swedish and global) [...] to Swedish companies and organizations.	ABW
45	I work as a [...]. In my role, I answer questions related to the employment [...]. What rights and obligations they have linked to laws and regulations. I work with telephone and mail as a working tool.	Only worked in ABW
46	Payroll Manager	ABW
47	Holding and planning workshops	ABW

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