

Thesis Topics from the Department

Thesis seminar, Fall 2021, period 1

Women-Only Networking: How Does Homophily-By-Choice Work?

Supervisor: Marjo-Riitta Diehl, Associate Professor, Organization and Management

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In order to offer a “solution” to gender inequality, a burgeoning number of women-only networking events around the world encourage women to connect with one another for the purposes of career progress. However, women-only networking has also been criticized as mere “pink washing” and corporate promotion, which throws female solidarity and support into question. A key challenge is to create benefits from a networking setting purposefully created to tap into individuals’ tendency to associate with similar others, a phenomenon named homophily. Such a tendency of humans to associate with similar others is a well documented social phenomena yet how it functions in the context of women-only networking remains a puzzle and forms the underlying question of this research.

More than one thesis can be conducted on the topic. Methodology can be qualitative or quantitative.

Please not that I am open to supervising also other topics related to gender and careers / leadership.

Possible research questions:

- how does women-only networking compare to men-only networking?
- how does women-only networking and the homophily it implies affect the way how women make sense of their work and career?
- how does women-only networking function on-line? What are the benefits and downsides of women-only on-line networking?

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What is on offer for you:

- a supervisor who is truly into the topic and excited about it!
- some connections and ideas for data collection
- financial support can be considered depending on the exact research plan.
- if more students join, a possibility to join forces in gathering data and learning together!

Tough Managerial Decisions During Organizational Change

Supervisor: Marjo-Riitta Diehl, Associate Professor, Organization and Management

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Nealy each change process enforces managers to face and make tough organizational decisions. A tough decision here implies a decision that is perceived unfair by the affected employees or some other stakeholder. Some evidence suggests that managers suffer from health and sleeping problems or might even voluntarily leave their role or their organization in the aftermath of implementing touch decisions. Yet we do not have a thorough understanding on how managers' handle such situations and how for example their leadership identity is affected by such an experience. This project focuses on the questions of how do managers handle tough decisions during organizational change and how does participation in tough decisions influence managers' leadership. More than one thesis can be conducted on the topic. Methodology is preferable qualitative.

Possible research questions:

- how do tough decisions influence leadership identity?
- what kind of identity work do tough decisions trigger in managers?
- do women perceive and experience tough decisions differently from men, and if so, why?
- how do managers handle tough decisions?

What is on offer for you:

- a supervisor who is truly into the topic and excited about it!
- a basic questionnaire for interviews is available, adjustment done on the basis of fine-tuning and specific interest.
- financial support can be considered depending on the exact research plan.
- if more students join, a possibility to join forces in gathering data and learning together!

Organizational Justice in the Context of Hybrid Work and the Gig Economy

Supervisor: Marjo-Riitta Diehl, Associate Professor, Organization and Management
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Just and fair treatment is a fundamental question at the workplace. The existing literature on organizational justice is rich and has convincingly demonstrated the benefits of fair treatment of employees. However, justice and fairness issues have been defined and looked mainly in the context of traditional organizations. This qualitative research project aims to advance understanding of what fairness means for those employees who work in a hybrid context; or who are engaged as gig workers, working for on-line platforms, or on-call-or or as temporary workers. It is important to ask, how do hybrid workers' and gig workers' conceptualizations and experiences of fairness / unfairness complement or challenge the existing knowledge on organizational justice.

Possible research questions?

- what kinds of issues raise fairness concerns among hybrid and gig workers?
- how do hybrid and gig workers define fairness?
- do women experience justice and fairness differently from men in the context of hybrid work / gig economy?
- How do hybrid and gig workers respond to fairness / unfairness.

What is on offer for you?

- a supervisor who is truly into the topic and excited about it!
- financial support can be considered depending on the exact research plan.
- if more students join, a possibility to join forces in gathering data and learning together!

IB Unit: Headquarters (HQ) Location Project



<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10157369>

A 4,5 year research project on the interplay of **physical and social aspects of location**. It's funded by Wallenberg foundation and Academy of Finland, involving:

- Faculty, doctoral and master students
- Foreign and Finnish companies

The project consists of four work packages, which all will lead to conceptualizing the meaning of location. The project outcomes include:

- Identify all foreign firms' HQ in Finland
- Map all HQ relocation events in Europe between 2000-2019
- Understand the strengths of host locations to attract HQ.

More information: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/departments-of-management-studies/location-research-project>

HQ Location Project Team



Perttu Kähäri,
Professor of Practice



Rebecca Piekkari,
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Linyu Liu,
Doctoral researcher

HQ Location project MSc thesis group

*How are HQ organized
in a digital world?*

*Headquarters in platform
business*

*Evolution of regional
structures*

*Multinational
Enterprises'
Headquarters -
Sustainability
Aspect*

**The purpose is to create interaction and provide additional peer support to MSc thesis students.
The group meets 1-2 times per month, where 2-3 students present and everyone gives feedback.
11 MSc thesis completed in 2020-21 and 11 MSc thesis in progress.**

*Where are HQ located
in Europe?*

*“They suck at making friends!” – Or
what went wrong with Amazon’s
stakeholder communications
regarding HQ2 in New York*

*HQ in Africa – locations
for expansion*

*Nordea HQ relocation:
How is it represented in
media?*

The following topics are our suggestions, but we are also open for other interesting thesis topics in this area.

We also have **Doctoral opportunities** in our project.

Sustainable Headquarters of the Future



Facebook HQ (Cupertino, California 2015)

"The End of the Office: Gehry-Designed Facebook HQ is a Gargantuan, Green-Roofed Gallery"



Google London HQ (London, 2022)

"Google's London HQ to sport largest wooden façade in the world"



Stora Enso HQ (Helsinki, 2024)

"The design is strongly rooted in the location and its history, but at the same time, it looks to the future."

Are you fascinated by architecture, sustainability and HQ building of the 21st Century?

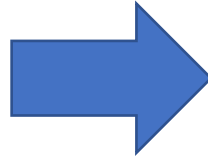
- Sustainability, digitalization and remote work challenge the narrow roles attached to headquarters (HQ)
 - > A workplace transfers to a "culture space" (Fayard et al., 2021), where architecture and design may be used to communicate aspired values and organizational transformation (Cameron, 2003)

Cameron, K. S., 2003. Organizational transformation through architecture and design: A project with Frank Gehry. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12: 88–92.

- Multiple case study on the nexus of MNCs, symbolics and sustainable cities (cases to be

Thesis topic 2

Where is the HQ? Disaggregation of HQ activities

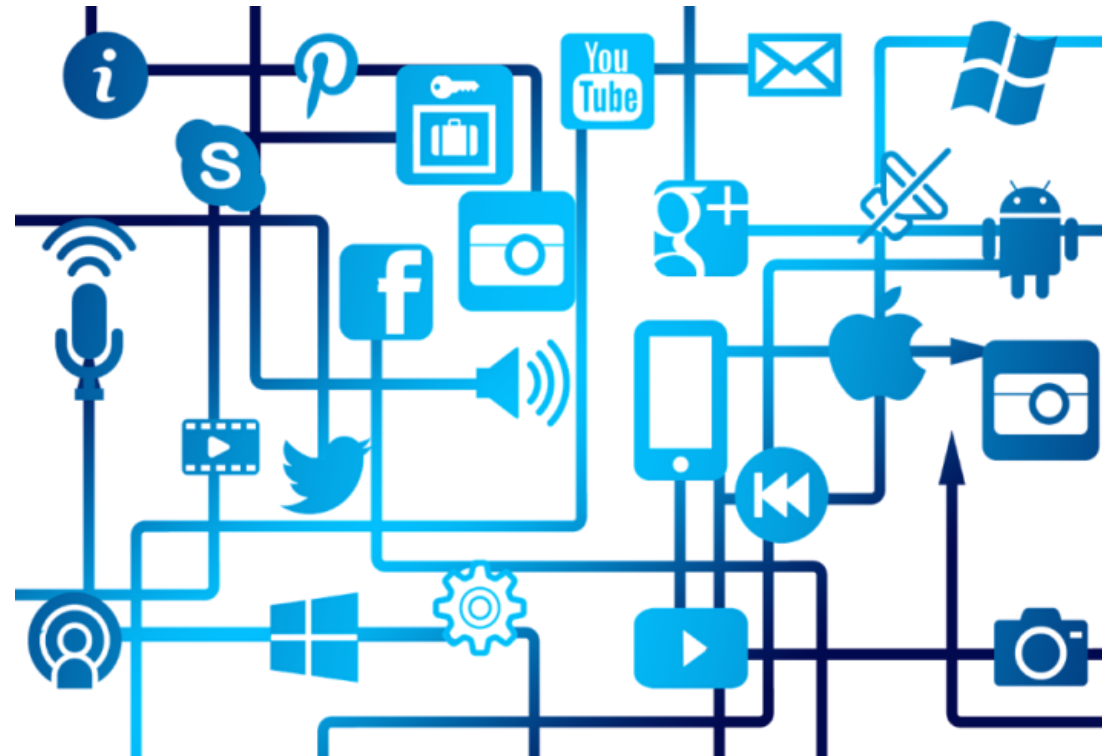


- There is a shift from having a traditional HQ in one location to disaggregating HQ activities across multiple locations, thus having virtual HQ.
- Study will consist of 15-20 interviews of foreign-owned subsidiaries' managers in Finland. They all have expressed their interest for being interviewed so no need to find other interviewees! (Most interviews will be in Finnish).

Careers of HQ managers transcending organizational boundaries and emergence of a transnational class of corporate elites

Various opportunities, e.g.:

- **Qualitative:** Interview corporate elites identified via LinkedIn.
- **Quantitative:** Code and analyze¹ a database on corporate elites' career paths.





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**Please contact Perttu Kähäri if you are
interested in hearing more:**

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